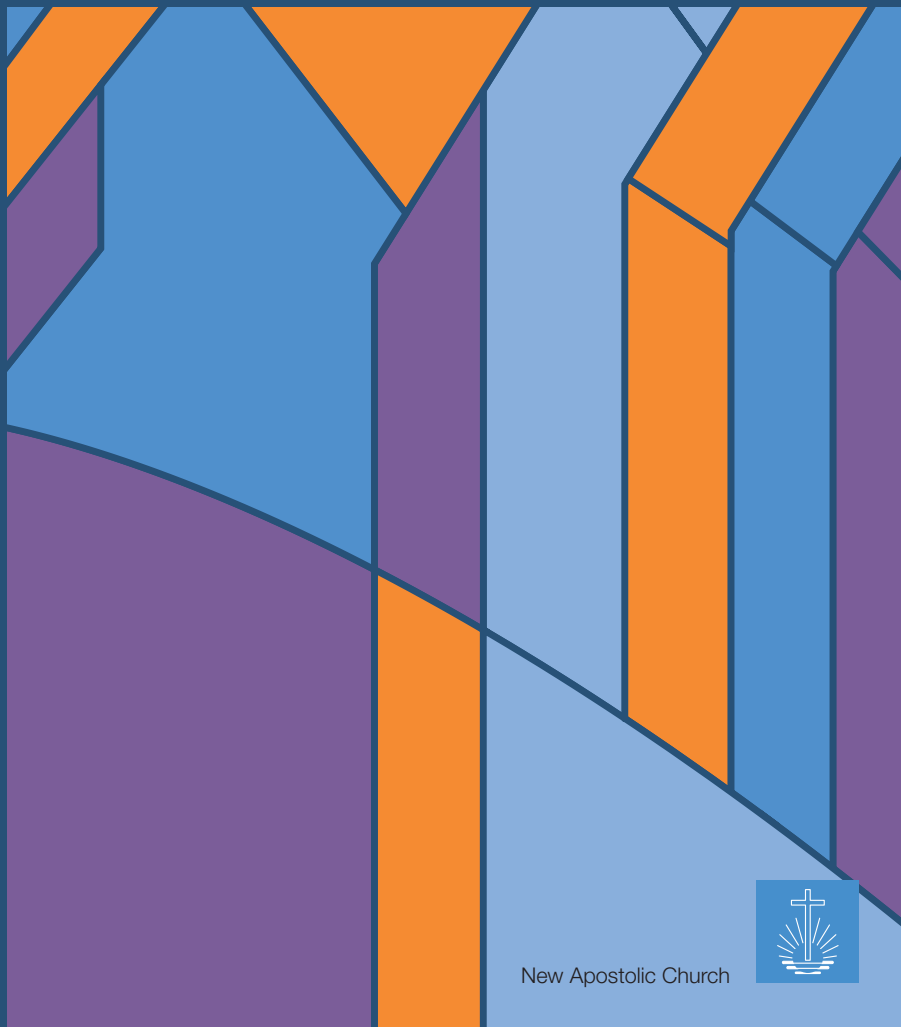


CATECHISM OF THE NEW APOSTOLIC CHURCH

IN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



New Apostolic Church



**CATECHISM OF THE
NEW APOSTOLIC
CHURCH**

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AND ANSWERS**

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Vision and Mission of the New Apostolic Church

Vision

A church in which people feel at home and, inspired by the Holy Spirit and their love for God, align their lives to the gospel of Jesus Christ and thus prepare themselves for His return and eternal life

Mission

Reaching out to all people in order to teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ and to baptise them with water and the Holy Spirit

Providing soul care and cultivating a warm fellowship in which everyone shall experience the love of God and the joy of serving Him and others

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Design: Jennifer Lennermann artdirection | illustration, Essen / Germany
Printing and post-press processing: Friedrich Pustet KG, Regensburg / Germany

Verlag Friedrich Bischoff GmbH, Frankfurt am Main
Order No. 221 012
ISBN: 978-3-943980-30-1
First edition 2015

Foreword

In the year 2012 the “Catechism of the New Apostolic Church” (CNAC) was published simultaneously in English, French, German, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. In the meantime it has been made available at no cost on the internet and has been translated into many other languages.



The present work, the “Catechism of the New Apostolic Church in Questions and Answers”, has been prepared in methodical-didactical format in order to facilitate access to the content of the CNAC. This will also make it possible to impart the doctrine in a suitable manner through church instruction around the world. By way of 750 questions and answers, readers are taken by the hand, so to speak, and led from one statement to the next in a manner that is easy to understand.

The content of the “Catechism of the New Apostolic Church in Questions and Answers” corresponds to the statements of the CNAC. Even in terms of structure, the work is closely modelled after the CNAC. Both books complement one another and can be used parallel to one another.

Many of the Bible quotations referenced are printed in full, resulting in a complete, continuous work. This means that even those readers who do not have a Bible on hand will also find important Bible passages concerning individual teaching contents right before their eyes. Beyond that, the work contains explanations of specific terms. This will help ensure that the remarks presented will also be understood by readers who have no theological knowledge.

Like the CNAC, this version of the Catechism is an appeal to all New Apostolic Christians to occupy themselves intensively with the content of their faith. It is also an invitation to all interested parties to become better acquainted with the New Apostolic doctrine.

May the use of this reference work serve for blessing!

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a vertical line that curves to the right at the bottom, with a horizontal line crossing it.

Jean-Luc Schneider
Zurich, March 2014

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1

THE
REVELATIONS
OF GOD

Holy Scripture

God in nature

Content of faith

God in history

Faith

1

What is the source of our belief in God?

The source of our belief is in God Himself. He allows human beings to recognise Him: He “reveals” Himself.

The knowledge that God exists has been given by God Himself. God does not conceal Himself, but rather allows Himself to be recognised by human beings such that human beings can speak of God and believe in God.

“Because what may be known of God is manifest in them [human beings], for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”

Romans 1: 19-20

2

How does God reveal Himself?

God reveals Himself in different ways, in nature and in history.

3

How does God reveal Himself in nature?

God reveals Himself in nature as the Creator: in the existence of the universe, of mankind, and of animals and plants.

“He waters the hills from His upper chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth.”

Psalms 104: 13-14

4

How does God reveal Himself in history?

God reveals Himself in the history of mankind. For example, He led the people of Israel out of captivity in Egypt and gave them the Ten Commandments. The greatest of God’s revelations in history occurred when He became human in Jesus Christ and when He was active on this earth. He lived 2,000 years ago. God revealed Himself as the Redeemer in Jesus Christ.

→ **Redeemer:** see *Questions 66, 108-109*

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son.”

Galatians 4: 4

5

How does God identify Himself?

God is a spiritual being. He identifies Himself as God,

- the Father, the Creator and Sustainer of the creation (cf. Genesis 1; 8: 21-22),
- the Son, the Redeemer and bringer of salvation (cf. 1 John 5: 20),
- the Holy Spirit, the Comforter and Helper, who leads into all truth (cf. John 16: 13).

6

Where are revelations of God recorded?

Revelations of God are recorded in Holy Scripture.

We understand the term “**revelations of God**” in several ways:

- God allows Himself to be recognised. He provides insight into His being and nature (“Self-revelation” of God).
- God makes His will known to human beings.
- God encounters human beings in His love, especially in His word and in the sacraments.

7

Does God also provide revelations about the future?

Yes, God provides revelations about the future: He has promised that Jesus Christ will return (cf. John 14: 3). God will reveal Himself in perfect fashion to those who will be transformed and caught up to Him at His return (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18). They will then see Him as He is (cf. 1 John 3: 1-2).

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”
1 John 3: 1-2

8

Are there any other insights into God’s actions?

Yes, through the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Apostle ministry, God grants us knowledge and insights about His actions for the salvation of mankind. These are referenced in the Bible and further exposed by the Holy Spirit.

9

How are human beings to conduct themselves with respect to God’s revelations?

Human beings are to believe in God and His revelations. Only through faith can human beings grasp the divine revelations. If they believe, divine matters will be valuable to them and will define their lives.

For example, someone who does not believe in God as the Creator will not see the universe as a work of God in which the Creator has revealed Himself, but rather as the result of coincidental processes unfolding in nature.

10

What do we understand by the idea of faith as a response to God’s revelations?

Faith is indispensable in order to come into the proximity of God, but faith is not something that human beings can bring about on their own. Faith is an act of God’s grace upon a human being, in other words, a gift. Human beings are to have a longing for this gift and are to accept it. Faith leads human beings to recognise God, trust in God, and lead a life in accordance with the will of God.

→ **Faith:** see *Question 239 et seq.*

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”
Hebrews 11: 1

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

Hebrews 11: 6

11

How do human beings come to believe?

Faith is granted and reinforced by the Holy Spirit. Among other things, this comes about through the preaching of the gospel on the foundation of Holy Scripture.

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Romans 10: 17

12

What is Holy Scripture?

Holy Scripture—the Bible—is a collection of writings about God’s activity, promises, and commandments. It consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Holy Scripture attests to the revelations of God, however it is not a complete or exhaustive account of all of God’s deeds. God has seen to it that that which is important for the salvation of mankind has been preserved.

The term ‘**Bible**’ is derived from the Latin word *biblia* which signifies “books, scrolls”.

13

Who is the author of Holy Scripture?

The author of Holy Scripture is God. Human beings, whom the Holy Spirit inspired to this purpose, wrote down that which God revealed. As concerns form and manner of expression, the biblical books bear the mark of their respective authors as well as the world-view and experiences of their time.

In translation, the term ‘**inspiration**’ means: ‘prompting’, ‘breathed in’. Divine inspiration signifies that the Holy Spirit has prompted a human being to do something or has imparted something to a human being.

14

Have the texts of the biblical books been handed down in a reliable manner?

Yes, God has seen to it that the texts of the biblical books have remained unadulterated over the centuries.

15

How did the biblical books come to be collected?

The biblical writings were collected over the course of centuries. This not only came about as the result of human contemplations, but also especially through the will of God.

The Christian canon of the Old Testament is based on the Hebrew canon of Judaism, the writings of which are presumed to have come into being over a timespan of about 1,000 years.

The canon of the New Testament consists of the gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the letters of the Apostles, and one prophetic book, namely the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The writings of Apostle Paul were the first to gain esteem in the early church. The gospels—of which the gospel according to Mark is the oldest— and the other writings were added later on. The writings of the New Testament came into being over the space of approximately 70 years.

In order to preserve and hand down these original accounts of the Christian faith, they were compiled into a collection that ultimately came to be certified as “canonical” in the course of various synods.

The collection of writings that are definitive for the teachings of a particular religion are called a ‘**canon**’. For the Christian faith, these include the writings of the Old and New Testaments.

The term ‘**synod**’ is derived from the Greek word *synodos* and means ‘gathering’ or ‘assembly’. A synod is understood as the assembly of an ecclesiastical body that has the authority to pass binding resolutions.

16

What is the structure and content of Holy Scripture?

Holy Scripture is divided into two main parts, namely the Old Testament—which deals with the time before the birth of Christ—and the New Testament, which begins at the time of Christ’s birth.

17

What is the content of the Old Testament?

The Old Testament contains vivid accounts of the creation and of the first human beings, as well as texts concerning the origins and history of the people of Israel. Furthermore, the Old Testament contains songs of praise to God, as well as admonitions and promises to human beings.

18

What is the content of the New Testament?

In the four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, the New Testament gives an account of Jesus Christ, His Apostles, and the early Christian congregations. It also contains letters from the Apostles which were written to congregations as well as individual persons. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, the only prophetic book of the New Testament, deals with the return of Jesus Christ and other events of the future.

19

How are the books of the Old Testament organised? How many of them are there and in what order do they appear?

The Old Testament is comprised of seventeen historical books, five doctrinal books, and seventeen prophetic books..

The seventeen historical books are:

- the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)
- the book of Joshua
- the book of Judges
- the book of Ruth
- the two books of Samuel
- the two books of the Kings
- the two books of the Chronicles
- the book of Ezra
- the book of Nehemiah
- the book of Esther

The five doctrinal books are:

- the book of Job
- the book of Psalms
- the book of Proverbs
- the book of Ecclesiastes
- the Song of Solomon

The seventeen prophetic books are:

- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations of Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- Daniel
- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah



- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi

20

What books of the Bible are numbered among the Apocrypha?

The fifteen Apocryphal books are:

- the two books of Esdras
- Tobit
- Judith
- The Rest of Esther
- The Wisdom of Solomon
- Ecclesiasticus
- Baruch
- The Song of the Three Holy Children
- The History of Susanna
- Bel and the Dragon
- The prayer of Manasses
- The three books of the Maccabees¹

The term '**Apocrypha**' is derived from the Greek word *apokryphos*, which means "hidden, dark". The Apocrypha ("hidden Scriptures") are biblical books that are not contained in all editions of the Bible. They represent a binding link between the Old and New Testaments, and contain statements of faith that are important for understanding the New Testament.

21

What value does the New Apostolic Church assign the Apocrypha?

In the New Apostolic Church, the Apocrypha are assigned the same value as the other writings of the Old Testament.

22

How are the books of the New Testament organised? How many of them are there, and in what order do they appear?

The New Testament consists of five historical books, 21 doctrinal books, and one prophetic book.

The five historical books are:

- The gospel according to Matthew
- The gospel according to Mark
- The gospel according to Luke
- The gospel according to John
- The Acts of the Apostles

The 21 doctrinal books are:

- The epistle of Paul to the Romans
- The two epistles of Paul to the Corinthians
- The epistle of Paul to the Galatians
- The epistle of Paul to the Ephesians
- The epistle of Paul to the Philippians
- The epistle of Paul to the Colossians
- The two epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians
- The two epistles of Paul to Timothy
- The epistle of Paul to Titus
- The epistle of Paul to Philemon
- The epistle to the Hebrews

- The epistle of James
- The two epistles of Peter
- The three epistles of John
- The epistle of Jude

The prophetic book is:

- The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Apocalypse)

23

What is the significance of Holy Scripture for the New Apostolic Church?

Holy Scripture is the foundation for the doctrine of the New Apostolic Church. Verses taken from Holy Scripture are also the basis of the sermon in the divine services.

24

Who is commissioned to interpret Holy Scripture?

The proper understanding of Holy Scripture can only be opened up in all its depth through the activity of the Holy Spirit. It is part of the commission of the Apostles of Jesus to interpret Holy Scripture for doctrine and practice of faith.

"Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

1 Corinthians 4: 1



¹ Some English-language publications of the Bible include three books of the Maccabees, however, the third book is widely considered non-canonical.

25

What is meant by the expression: “Jesus Christ is the centre of the Scripture?”

The central element of Holy Scripture is Jesus Christ. That is what is brought to expression with the words: “Jesus Christ is the centre of the Scripture”. It is for this reason that even the Old Testament must be interpreted on the basis of Him. The Old Testament prophesies, and prepares the way for, the arrival of the Messiah. The New Testament relates of Jesus’ activity in the present and the future.

→ *Messiah*: see *Question 112*

26

What is the significance of Holy Scripture for believers?

Holy Scripture is of great significance in the life of the believer: it comforts and edifies, provides orientation and admonition, and promotes knowledge and faith.

27

What are contributing factors in strengthening the believer’s faith through the study of the Bible?

The fear of God and sincere prayer for the correct understanding of Holy Scripture are principles for strengthening faith through the study of the Bible.

28

What is the foundation and content of Christian faith?

Christians believe in the one God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Belief in the triune God has been made accessible to mankind by Jesus Christ.

The Son, Jesus Christ, spoke of His heavenly Father, in whom human beings are to believe. On several occasions, God, the Father, attested that Jesus Christ is His Son (cf. Luke 3: 22; 9: 35).

Finally, Jesus Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would come as a Comforter and Helper.

“Baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Matthew 28: 19

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”

John 14: 26

→ *Concerning the fundamentals of the Christian faith*:

see also *Questions 34 and 35*

2 THE CREED

*Father, Son,
Holy Spirit*

*The New Apostolic
Creed*

The Apostolicum

Confession

29

What is a creed?

A creed is a summary of the essential content of a doctrine of faith. Such a creed contains all the things which the members of a particular religious denomination profess.

It is by way of its creed that a religious denomination distinguishes itself from another.

30

Are there biblical creeds?

Yes, even the Old Testament contains texts that bring common convictions of faith to expression. In one such creed it says: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!” (Deuteronomy 6: 4). This profession, entitled “Hear, O Israel”, was one that the Israelites expressed together. Thereby they attested their be-

lief in the one God in a time when the nations around them venerated many different gods.

The New Testament contains texts which employ specific formulations expressing that God grants salvation in Jesus Christ.

Examples of such New Testament creeds are:

- “Jesus is the Lord!” (Romans 10: 9);
- “*Maranatha*” (1 Corinthians 16: 22) = “O Lord, come”
- “The Lord is risen indeed” (Luke 24: 34)

“[...] if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Romans 10: 9-10



31

How did the first Christian creeds come into being?

The first Christian creeds are called the “early church creeds”. They came into being between the second and fourth centuries AD. It was during this time that the doctrine of the trinity of God and the doctrine of the essence of Jesus Christ, that is, of His nature, were formulated.

This had become necessary because there had been disputes about various contents of faith. For example, there was the opinion that Jesus Christ did not really die on the cross and that He did not really resurrect. The function of the creeds was to distinguish the faith from these heresies.

32

Which statements became part of the content of the Christian creeds?

The deciding factor as to whether a statement about the nature and activity of God could be incorporated into the creeds was its agreement with the doctrine of Christ and His Apostles.

33

Which are the most important of the early church creeds?

The two most important early church creeds are the Apostolic Creed (“Apostolicum”) and the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople.

The basic features of the Apostolicum were compiled in the second century

and lightly supplemented in the fourth century. The Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople is the result of the Council of Nicaea (in the year 325 AD) and the Council of Constantinople (in the year 381 AD). The main purpose of this creed was to enshrine the profession of the trinity of God.

A **council** is an assembly of senior religious dignitaries, who come together to discuss important matters of faith.

34

What is the text of the Apostolicum?

“I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal [catholic] church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”

The term ‘**catholic**’ is derived from the Greek word *katholikós* and means “all-encompassing”, “universal”. The term ‘catholic’ in the two early church creeds does not refer to any specific church as an institution, but rather to the church of Christ in its universality.

35

What is the text of the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople?

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds (aeons), Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin Mary, and was made man; He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; from thence He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. In one holy universal [catholic] and apostolic church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

36

What significance do the early church creeds have for the New Apostolic Church?

The doctrine of the New Apostolic Church is based upon Holy Scripture. The early church creeds summarise important contents that are attested in Holy Scripture.

The New Apostolic Church professes belief in the triune God, in Jesus Christ as true God and true Man, in Jesus' birth by the virgin Mary, in the sending of the Holy Spirit, in the church, the sacraments, the expectation of the return of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead, as formulated in the two early church creeds.

Despite the differences between the individual denominations, these professions constitute a binding element among Christians.

The term ‘**confession**’ can mean “creed” or “church affiliation”. The different Christian denominations can also be described as different “confessions”.

37

What is the text of the New Apostolic Creed?

“I believe in God, the Father, the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, entered the realm of the dead, rose again from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. He is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from where He will return.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the one, holy, universal, and apostolic church, the community of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and life everlasting.

I believe that the Lord Jesus rules His church and thereto sent His Apostles, and until His return still sends them, with the commission to teach, to forgive sins in His name, and to baptise with water and Holy Spirit.

I believe that those designated by God for a ministry are ordained only by Apostles, and that authority, blessing, and sanctification for their ministration come forth out of the Apostle ministry.

I believe that the Holy Baptism with water is the first step to a renewal of a human being in the Holy Spirit, and that the person baptised is adopted into the fellowship of those who believe in Jesus Christ and profess Him as their Lord.

I believe that Holy Communion was instituted by the Lord Himself in memory of the once brought, fully valid sacrifice, and bitter suffering and death of Christ. The worthy partaking of Holy Communion establishes our fellowship with Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is celebrated with unleavened bread and wine; both must be consecrated and dispensed by a minister authorised by an Apostle.

I believe that those baptised with water must, through an Apostle, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to attain the childhood in God and thereby the prerequisite for becoming a firstling.

I believe that the Lord Jesus will return as surely as He ascended into heaven and that He will take to Himself the firstfruits of the dead and living who have hoped for and were prepared for His coming; that after the marriage in heaven He will return to earth with them to establish His kingdom of peace, and that they will reign with Him as a royal priesthood. After the conclusion of the kingdom of peace, He will hold the Last Judgement. Then God will create a new heaven and a new earth and dwell with His people.

I believe that I am obliged to obey the worldly authorities provided no godly laws are thereby transgressed.”

38

How did the New Apostolic Creed come into being?

The New Apostolic Creed is the result of the Apostles' interpretation of Holy Scripture and the early church creeds.

In terms of content and language, its present form has come into being in line with ongoing developments in doctrine and deepening knowledge.

It was formulated in the awareness that God's love, grace, and omnipotence cannot be exhaustively described. These will always be greater than anything human beings can ever say about them. Thus the creed does not draw any boundaries that would deny other Christians access to salvation.

→ **Salvation:** see Questions 243 et seq.

39

What is the significance of the New Apostolic Creed?

In ten Articles of Faith, the New Apostolic Creed brings the doctrine of the New Apostolic Church to binding expression. It also has the function of defining the attitude of faith of New Apostolic Christians.

Beyond that, the creed serves to make other people familiar with the most important elements of the New Apostolic faith.

40

What is the structure of the New Apostolic Creed?

The first three Articles of Faith largely correspond to the Apostolicum. They deal with the triune God. The Fourth and Fifth Articles describe the activity of the Apostles, and the Fifth Article also goes on to describe the activity of the other ministers. The Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Articles explain the three sacraments. The content of the Ninth Article of Faith centres on hope for the future (eschatology). The Tenth Article of Faith deals with the Church's relationship to the authority of the state.

The term '**eschatology**' denotes the "doctrine of the last things". This can be related to the future of an individual human being ("personal eschatology") as well as to the completion of salvation history ("universal eschatology").

41

What is the content of the First Article of Faith?

The First Article of Faith deals with the creatorship of God, the Father.

→ **God, the Father:**

see Questions 37 and 67 et seq.

42

What is the content of the Second Article of Faith?

The Second Article of Faith speaks of Jesus Christ, the foundation and content of Christian faith.

→ **Jesus Christ:**

see Questions 37 and 93 et seq.

43

What is the content of the Third Article of Faith?

The Third Article of Faith professes belief in the Holy Spirit, that is, the third person of the Godhead, as well as belief in the church, the community of the saints, and further salvation.

→ **Holy Spirit:**

see Questions 37 and 197 et seq.

In the narrower sense, the "**community of the saints**" includes all believers who are reborn out of water and the Holy Spirit, who allowed themselves to be prepared for the day of the Lord by the Apostles of Jesus Christ, and who are accepted by Him as His bride. Those who belong to this fellowship will only be revealed at the return of Christ. In the broader sense, the "community of the saints" includes all those who are numbered among the church of Christ. The term thus refers to all those who already today receive salvation from Jesus Christ. The "community of the saints" will be revealed in its completion and perfection in the new creation.

44

What is the content of the Fourth Article of Faith?

The Fourth Article of Faith states that Jesus Christ rules His church and that the sending of the Apostles is an expression of this rule.

→ **Apostle:** see Questions 37, 421, and 453 et seq.

45

What is the content of the Fifth Article of Faith?

The Fifth Article of Faith has to do with the spiritual ministry.

→ **Ministry:**
see Questions 37 and 411 et seq.

46

What is the content of the Sixth Article of Faith?

The Sixth Article of Faith talks about Holy Baptism with water.

→ **Baptism with water:**
see Questions 37 and 481 et seq.

47

What is the content of the Seventh Article of Faith?

The Seventh Article of Faith deals with Holy Communion.

→ **Holy Communion:**
see Questions 37 and 494 et seq.

48

What is the content of the Eighth Article of Faith?

The Eighth Article of Faith talks about Holy Sealing.

→ **Holy Sealing:**
see Questions 37 and 515 et seq.

49

What is the content of the Ninth Article of Faith?

The Ninth Article of Faith speaks of the return of Christ and the events following it.

→ **Doctrine of future things, return of Christ:**
see Questions 37 and 549 et seq.

50

What is the content of the Tenth Article of Faith?

The subject of the Tenth Article of Faith is the relationship between the Christian and the state.

→ **The New Apostolic Church as part of society:**
see Questions 37 and 745 et seq.

THE TRIUNE GOD

The gospel

The visible and invisible creation

Man in the image of God

The one God

The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ

Love

God, the Father

God, the Son

God, the Holy Spirit

The resurrection

51

Who is the triune God?

God is a spiritual, perfect, and completely independent being. He is eternal, without beginning and without end. The one God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

When we talk about “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”, we are not referring to three different gods, but rather three persons who are the one God.

→ *The Trinity of God:*

see Questions 61 et seq., 198

52

What characteristics of God do we know?

Human beings are incapable of fully describing God. However, we know some of God’s characteristics: He is the One God (the only God), the Holy One, The Almighty, the Eternal, the Loving One, the Gracious One, the Righteous One, and the Perfect One.

53

What does it mean when we say: “God is the One God”?

There is only one God. Belief in the One God is a fundamental profession of the Old and New Testaments, and is thus also fundamental to the Christian faith.

‘**Monotheism**’ is the designation for the doctrine that there is only a single God. Monotheistic religions include, for example, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God.’”

Isaiah 44: 6

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one...”

Mark 12: 29

54

What does it mean to say: “God is the Holy One”?

Holiness is part of God’s nature, being, and activity. Holiness incorporates majesty, inviolability, and separateness from the profane. God’s word and will are likewise holy.

The holiness of God sanctifies the place where He reveals Himself.

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!”

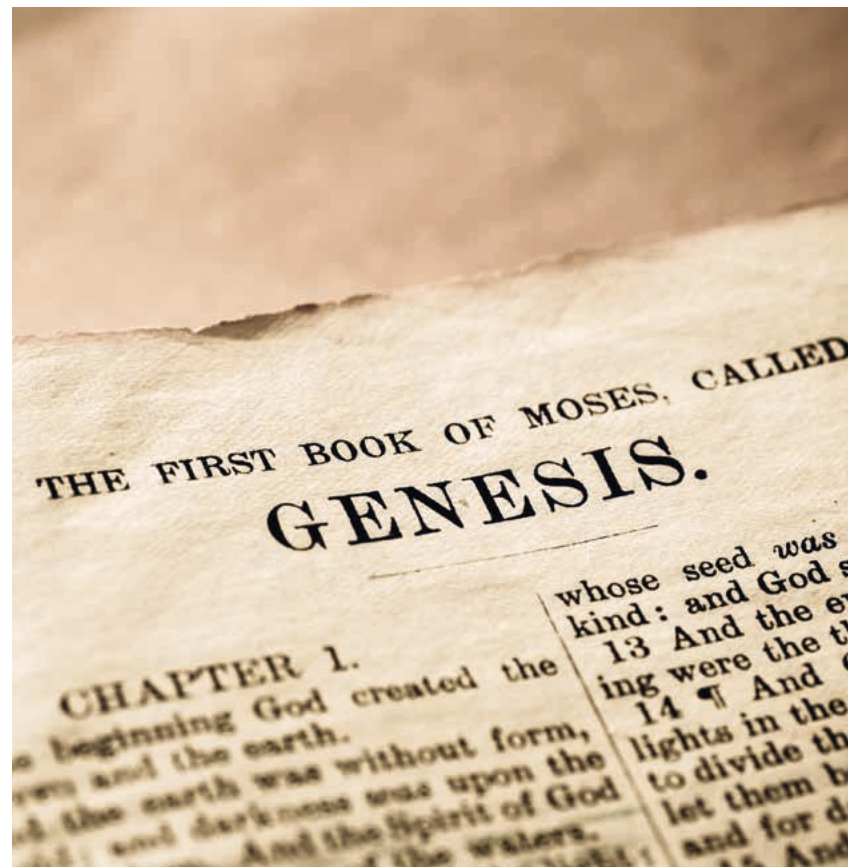
Isaiah 6: 3

55

What does it mean when we say: “God is the Almighty”?

God can do all things. Nothing is impossible for Him. God’s will and activity cannot be limited by anyone.

The creation clearly demonstrates that God is almighty. All things have been created through His word alone. He has created everything that exists—including everything that we human beings can see, and everything that we cannot see—from nothing. It will also be through His omnipotence that the new creation will come into being.



God’s omnipotence also includes His omniscience and omnipresence.

→ *New creation: see Question 581*

“But He said, ‘The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.’”

Luke 18: 27

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”

Hebrews 11: 3

56

What does it mean to say: “God is the Eternal”?

God is without beginning and without end. There are no chronological limitations for Him. God is the Creator of time and is Lord over it.

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”

Psalms 90: 2

57

What does it mean when we say: “God is the Loving One”?

Already in the old covenant, God revealed Himself as the Loving One by electing the people of Israel and liberating them from captivity in Egypt. He revealed Himself to all mankind as the Loving One by sending His Son for the salvation of all human beings.

Apostle John wrote: “And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4: 16).

“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you.”

Jeremiah 31: 3

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

John 3: 16

58

What does it mean when we say: “God is the Gracious One”?

God turns to mankind in mercy, grace, patience, and kindness (cf. Psalm 103: 8). That God is gracious is demonstrated first and foremost by the fact that He accepts human beings, who are entangled in sin, and forgives sin. Also included here is the fact that God became human in Jesus Christ.

No one can earn the grace of God. It is a gift.

59

What does it mean to say that “God is the Righteous One”?

Everything that God does is right. He makes no mistakes. “His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice” (Deuteronomy 32: 4). Human beings can depend on God’s righteousness and reliability: “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5: 24).

Another expression of God’s righteousness are His laws, for example, that human beings reap what they sow (cf. Galatians 6: 7), and that the wages of sin is death (cf. Romans 6: 23).

However, God’s grace stands above everything else. This too is part of His righteousness. Through Jesus Christ, sinners—who have only earned punishment—can receive grace. As a result, God will no longer hold their sins and transgressions against them.

“The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.”

Psalm 119: 160

“Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgements.”

Revelation 16: 7

“[They are] justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 3: 24

60

What does it mean to say: “God is the Perfect One”?

God’s works are good and His ways are right. He does not act on the basis of any external necessities or constraints, but solely on the basis of His own perfect will. God is completely free in His decisions.

God’s perfection incorporates truth. With God there is no lie, deception, or uncertainty, nor is there any difference between His will and His actions.

Human beings can experience the perfection of God in Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ was the only one on earth who was perfect, that is, without sin, without error, in word or deed.

“As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.”

Psalm 18: 30

61

What does it mean when we talk about the “triune God”?

When we talk about the “triune God”, we mean that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the one God. Here we are not referring to three gods, but rather one God in three persons.

62

Why do Christians believe that God is triune?

Both the Old and New Testaments contain many references to the trinity of God. It is on the basis of these biblical attestations that Christians believe in the triune God.

63

What references to the triune God are there in the Old Testament?

The first such reference to the trinity of God is found in Genesis 1: 26: “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” The use of the plural “Let Us” is a reference to the activity of God in several persons.

God appeared to Abraham in Mamre in the form of three men (cf. Genesis 18). This is understood as a reference to the trinity of God.

It is the same with the threefold blessing (“Aaronic blessing”), which Aaron spoke over the people of Israel (Numbers 6: 24-26).

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

Numbers 6: 24-26



64

What references to the trinity of God are recorded in the New Testament?

When Jesus, the Son of God, was baptised in the Jordan, heaven opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove. From heaven, the Father attested: “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1: 10-11). The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were thus present together.

The three divine persons are also mentioned in the Great Commission which Jesus issued to His Apostles: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28: 18-19).

The wording of the benediction recorded in 2 Corinthians 13: 14 likewise refers to the trinity of God: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God [the Father], and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!”

65

When was the doctrine of the trinity of God formulated?

The trinity of God has existed from eternity. The doctrine of the trinity of God was formulated in the Councils of Nicaea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD).

The doctrine of the trinity of God is among the fundamental statements of the Christian faith.

→ **Council:**

see explanation to Question 33

66

What is the relationship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to one another?

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are names for the three divine persons. Although they are to be distinguished from one another, they are nevertheless the one God.

In Christian tradition, each of the three divine persons is assigned a particular point of emphasis:

God, the Father, is the Creator of heaven and earth.

God, the Son, is the Redeemer who became human and gave His life as a sacrifice for the redemption of mankind.

God, the Holy Spirit, is the Maker of the new creation: He sees to it that the salvation of God is made accessible to mankind and that the new creation comes to its completion.

→ **New creation:**

see Questions 528 et seq.

67

What does the term “Father” mean when it is used in relationship to God?

When the term “Father” is used in relationship to God, it is associated with divine aspects of creatorship, authority, and loving care. God is the source and sustainer of that which He has created. In this respect, all human beings are able to address God, who is their Creator, as “Father”.

→ **See also Child of God:**

explanation of Question 530

68

What do we know about God as the Creator?

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1: 1), both the visible—that is, the material creation—and the invisible. Everything has emanated from God’s creative activity.

God has created from nothing and without any template: “God [...] calls

those things which do not exist as though they did” (Romans 4: 17). He has also fashioned things and living beings from matter He had previously created (cf. Genesis 2: 7-8, 19) and has laid His laws into them. All created things are subject to Him.

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. [...] Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.”

Genesis 2: 7-8, 19

69

What does the creation tell us about God?

The creation and the laws by which it functions bear witness to God’s wisdom, the magnitude of which cannot even be imagined by man. In admiration the psalmist exclaims: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork” (Psalm 19: 1).

70

In what span of time did God create the world?

God created the world in six “days of creation”. The term “day of creation” refers to a period of time whose duration

is not precisely specified. A “day” in the creation of God is not to be equated with a day according to our reckoning of time.

Genesis 2: 2 states: “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had done.”

“[...] that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

2 Peter 3: 8 (excerpt)

“For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past.”

Psalm 90: 4

71

What does the Bible relate about God’s creation?

The Bible relates that heaven and earth, the light, the shape of the earth, the sun, the moon and stars, the plants and animals, as well as human beings, came into being through the word of God. Everything was very good (cf. Genesis 1: 31).

72

Does the creation of God only consist of that which human beings can grasp with their senses?

No. There is also an invisible creation of God. Its mysteries elude human inquiry—like God Himself. Holy Scrip-

ture nevertheless contains references to realms, occurrences, conditions, and beings outside of the material creation.

73

What belongs to the invisible creation?

The invisible creation incorporates the realm where God rules, the angels, the immortal souls of human beings, as well as the realm of the dead.

→ *Realm of the dead:*

see Questions 537 et seq.

74

Is the Devil part of the invisible creation?

The Devil was originally one of the angels. As such he is part of the invisible creation. This angel rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven and the fellowship of God with his followers owing to his disobedience, envy, and lies.

→ *Evil: see Questions 217 et seq.*

“For [...] God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell.”

2 Peter 2: 4

“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”

Jude 6

75

What are angels?

Angels are spiritual beings created by God. They are part of the invisible creation. In individual cases they can become visible to human beings in accordance with God’s will.

76

What is the task of the angels?

It is the task of the angels to worship God, fulfil His commissions, and thereby serve Him.

God’s love for human beings is also revealed in that he allows angels to serve human beings. From Matthew 18: 10 we may even conclude that children have special angel protection.

“I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One. [...] For not of any favour of mine, but by the will of our God I came; wherefore praise him for ever.”

Tobit 12: 15, 18

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 18: 10

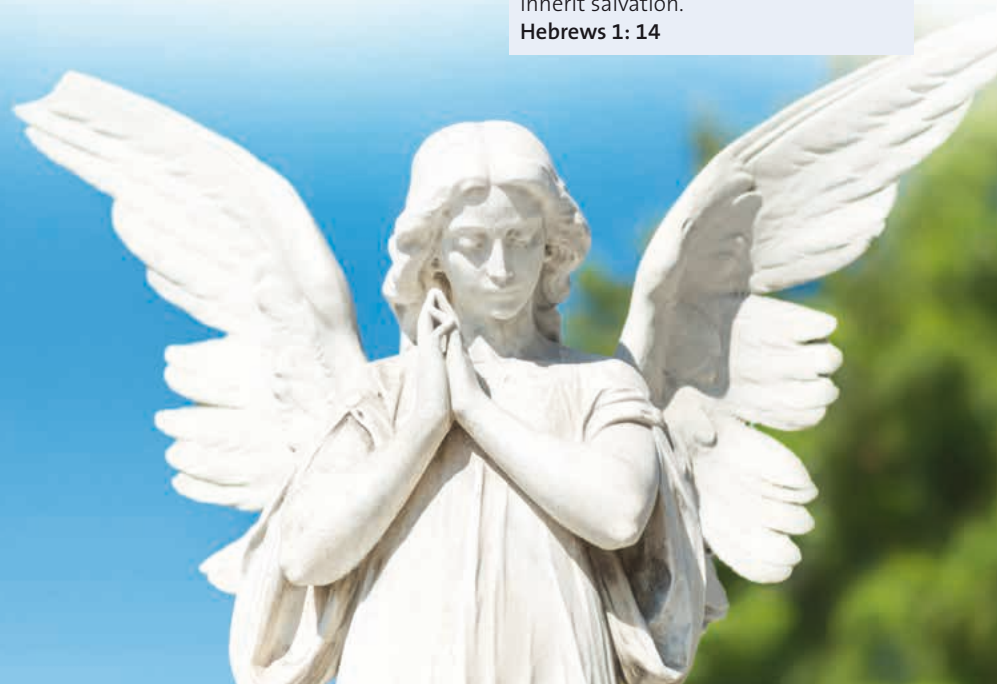
77

Should angels be worshipped?

No, because angels only act in accordance with the will of God. For this reason it is not to them, but to God alone, that thanks and worship are due.

Angels are “all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation.”

Hebrews 1: 14



78

Why should human beings concern themselves with the invisible?

Man is an entity consisting of spirit, soul, and body (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5: 23). The body is mortal and thus belongs to the visible creation of God. Soul and spirit thus belong to the invisible creation of God. Because soul and spirit continue to exist even after physical death, it is important to concern oneself with the invisible.

The attitude which a person adopts toward God during earthly life will have consequences for his existence in the beyond. This insight can help him resist the temptations of the Devil and lead a life that is pleasing to God.

The significance of the invisible is clarified by Apostle Paul: “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4: 17-18). Occupying themselves with the invisible therefore helps human beings process that which they experience.

79

How should human beings concern themselves with the invisible?

They should concern themselves with the invisible by turning to God and worshipping Him.

However, it is against the will of God to occupy oneself with the invisible in the form of necromancy or conjuring the dead (spiritism) (cf. Deuteronomy 18: 10 et seq.; 1 Samuel 28).

“There shall not be found among you anyone who [...] practises witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord.”

Deuteronomy 18: 10-12

Practices of conjuring spirits, especially the spirits of deceased persons, are designated as “**spiritism**” (Latin *spiritus* = spirit).

80

What is the position of man in the creation?

Human beings belong as much to the visible as to the invisible creation because they possess both a material nature (body) and a non-material nature (soul and spirit).

Of all creatures, God conferred on human beings a special position, and thereby brought them into a close relationship to Himself: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1: 26-27).

The term ‘**material**’ is derived from the Latin word *materia*, which means “substance”, “content”. That which is visible, substantial, and physically tangible is thus described as “material”.

By contrast, the term ‘non-material’ is used to describe that which is spiritual, invisible, and intangible for human beings.

81

What does it mean to be created in the image of God?

Through His Word God created everything and called man by name. Man has thus been addressed (“You may eat...”) and loved by God. He can listen to God’s address and respond to the love of God.

It is because God addresses man, provides for him, and allows him to share in divine characteristics such as love, reason, and immortality, that man is in the image of God.

God is independent, that is, completely free. He has also given man, who has been created in His image, the opportunity to decide freely for himself. At the same time, the freedom with which he has been endowed makes man responsible for his actions (cf. Genesis 2: 16-17).

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”

Genesis 2: 16-17

82

Are man and woman both created equally in the image of God?

Yes, man and woman are both created equally in the image of God. Thus they are both like Him in their nature.

83

Does being “in the image of God” mean that God and man have the same nature and the same form?

No. The fact that man has been created in the image of God does not imply that one can draw any conclusions about God’s nature or form from the person of a human being.

84

What is the relationship between man and His Creator?

Human beings are dependent on God in their existence.

Human beings have the capacity to recognise God their Creator, to love Him, and to praise Him. Thus human beings are oriented to God, regardless of whether or not they believe in Him.

85

What task does man have in the visible creation?

God has assigned human beings their living environment and given them the commission to have “dominion” over the



earth—that is, to shape it—and to protect it (cf. Genesis 1: 26, 28; Psalm 8: 6).

“Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

Genesis 1: 28

86

How are human beings, as the image of God, to conduct themselves within the creation?

Human beings are accountable to God, the Creator, for the way they treat the creation. They can deal freely, but not recklessly, with the creation. As the image of God they are to treat all life and their habitat in accordance with the divine nature: with wisdom, goodness, and love.

87

Were the first human beings allowed to do as they pleased without restriction?

No. As the Creator, Lord, and Lawgiver, God gave Adam and Eve the commandment not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden. In so doing He tested man to see how they would deal with the freedom of decision that had been conferred upon them as the image of God. At the same time He warned them about the consequences of violating this commandment.

→ *Image of God: see Question 81*

88

How did the fall into sin come about?

Through the influence of the evil one, who came to them as a serpent, the first human beings entered into temptation. They transgressed the commandment they had been given by God. Thereby human beings became sinners.

89

What is associated with the fall into sin?

Separation from God, spiritual death, was the direct consequence of the fall into sin. From then on, human beings had to lead a troubled existence on earth, which would end with physical death (cf. Genesis 3: 16-19).

Since the fall into sin, mankind has been sinful, that is to say, enmeshed in sin and thus incapable of living without sin.

→ *Spiritual death: see Question 532*

“Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. [...] For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 3: 17, 19

90

Do human beings have to remain in spiritual death?

Human beings cannot undo the condition of separation from God on their own. But even as sinners, human beings are not without the comfort and help of God. God does not leave them in spiritual death: with the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, His sacrificial death, and resurrection, God has created the opportunity for all human beings to be delivered from spiritual death.

The first reference to the sacrifice of Christ was given to human beings when God said the following to the serpent: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3: 15).

91

What does it mean to say that God created human beings as an entity consisting of spirit, soul, and body?

Spirit, soul, and body are interconnected. They permeate and influence one another.

The body comes into being through procreation and thus shares in the nature and form of the parents. The soul is created directly by God. So it is that God still continues to act in the present as the Creator of every individual person.

Through the soul and spirit, which are not definitively distinguished from one another in the Bible, human beings are able to partake in the spiritual world, to recognise God, and to have a relationship with Him.

'Soul' and 'spirit': The immortal soul should not be confused with the human "psyche", which is also more colloquially designated as "soul". Likewise, the intellect should be distinguished from the spirit.

92

What happens after a human being's physical death?

The human body is mortal, whereas the soul and spirit are immortal. After the death of the body, a human being continues to live on as an entity consisting of soul and spirit. Death does not put an end to human personhood. This personhood is then expressed through soul and spirit.

At the resurrection of the dead, soul and spirit will be united with a resurrection body.

→ *Life after physical death:*
see *Question 531 et seq.*

93

Who is God, the Son?

God, the Son, is the second person of the triune God. There is no hierarchical difference between God, the Father and God, the Son, even though the terms "Father" and "Son" might suggest an order of precedence. Father and Son are both equally true God. They are of the same essence.

94

Who is Jesus Christ?

In Jesus Christ God, the Son, became human and yet remained God. He was born in Bethlehem of the virgin Mary.

→ *Jesus Christ, God and Man:*
see *Question 103 et seq.*

"And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn

Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'"

Luke 2: 1-14

95

What references to the birth of Jesus are there in the Old Testament?

In the Old Testament we find, among other things, the promise of prophet Isaiah: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7: 14).

The prophet Micah foretold the place of Jesus' birth: "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5: 2).

Isaiah described Jesus with names that emphasise His uniqueness: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son

is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder, and His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9: 6).

→ *Immanuel ("God with us"):*
see *Question 115*

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law."

Galatians 4: 4

→ see also *Question 4*

96

Who prepared the way for Jesus?

John the Baptist was the one who prepared the way for Jesus. This forerunner of Jesus promised by God (cf. Malachi 3: 1) preached repentance and proclaimed Jesus Christ as the Redeemer: "I indeed baptise you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3: 11).

According to the biblical record, John the Baptist was the first to expressly refer to Jesus as the Son of God and also proclaim this to the people.

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light."

John 1: 6-8

"And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

John 1: 34

97

How did John the Baptist describe Jesus Christ?

When Jesus came to John, the latter said: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples, and looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’ The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus” (cf. John 1: 29, 35-37).

98

What does the term “Lamb of God” mean here?

The designation “Lamb” is intended to introduce Jesus as the Redeemer, and is reminiscent of Isaiah 53: 7: “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.” Since ancient times, lambs were considered the sacrificial animals of preference in the Old Testament. The image of the slaughtered “Lamb of God” is a reference to the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

99

What is the significance of Jesus’ sacrificial death for us?

Through His sacrificial death, the Son of God established the way for sinners to be delivered from spiritual death and attain eternal life: “In this the love

of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4: 9-10).

→ **Spiritual death:**

see Questions 89 and 532

100

What does it mean when it says that Jesus Christ is God’s “only begotten Son”?

The designation of Jesus as God’s “only begotten Son” means that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is unique and eternal.

The Son of God is not part of the creation like mankind, nor can He be compared to the angels, who have a beginning. He is without beginning and without end. He is God, and thus of the same essence as the Father and the Holy Spirit. Thus He has always been—that is, even before all creation—in fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit (pre-existence).

The term ‘**pre-existence**’ is derived from the Latin words *prae* and *existentia*, which mean “before” and “existence”, respectively. In relation to Jesus Christ, pre-existence means that the Son of God is from eternity, which means that He has always existed, even before the creation and His incarnation.

101

How is it to be understood that the Son of God is described as the “Word” (“logos”)?

God created and ordered all things in a meaningful way through the Word (“Then God said...” Genesis 1: 3). Thus the Word is the source, from whom all things emanate.

The designation “Word” (= Greek *logos*) is also used for the Son of God in the first chapter of the gospel of John. This is a reference to the fact that God, the Son is just as much the Creator as God, the Father and God, the Holy Spirit.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1: 1-3, 14

102

What does it mean when John says: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us...”?

John 1: 14 states that the Son of God (the “Word”) became “flesh”, that is, a real human being. He was born in Bethlehem, grew up in Nazareth, and learned the profession of a carpenter there. He died in Jerusalem: He was crucified on Golgotha.

103

As a Man, was Jesus Christ the same as other human beings?

Yes, in His human nature Jesus Christ was the same as other human beings. In His human existence He had a body and the corresponding needs. He felt hunger when He was in the desert. He felt thirst when He came to Jacob’s well. He rejoiced at the marriage in Cana and wept when His friend Lazarus died. He also wept when He stood in front of Jerusalem and the people did not recog-



nise Him as the Son of God. He suffered pain from the scourging of the soldiers.

However, He distinguished Himself from other human beings in that He came into the world without sin and never sinned. He was obedient to God, the Father, right up until His death on the cross.

104

While on earth was Jesus exclusively a Man?

No. While on earth He was both Man and the Son of God, that is, true God.

Jesus Christ is true Man and true God: He has two natures, a human one and a divine one.

105

What passages in Holy Scripture attest that Jesus Christ is also always true God?

It was only as true God that Jesus Christ was able to say: “I and My Father are one” (John 10: 30), and thereby express that He is identical in essence with the Father.

At Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan, a voice from heaven was heard saying: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3: 17). During His transfiguration, the Father likewise emphasised that Jesus is the Son of God: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” (Matthew 17: 5). The words of Jesus: “He who has seen

Me has seen the Father” (John 14: 9) also attest that He is God.

106

Which of His deeds show that Jesus Christ is true God?

The miracles that He performed show that Jesus Christ is true God. Nature was subject to Him because He calmed a storm and walked on the waters of Lake Gennesaret. He showed Himself to be Lord over life and death by healing the sick and raising the dead. When He multiplied the loaves and fish and thereby fed thousands of people, and when He turned water into wine, His actions far surpassed the capacities of any human being. He was Lord over sin and repeatedly forgave sins.

→ *Jesus’ miracles:*

see Questions 140 et seq.

“God was manifested in the flesh.”

1 Timothy 3:16

“This (Jesus Christ) is the true God and eternal life.”

1 John 5: 20

107

What does the name “Jesus” mean?

The name “Jesus” means “The Lord saves”.

When the angel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus, He also declared the name of the Child. He said to Mary: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall

call His name Jesus” (Luke 1: 31). Joseph was likewise told what the Child was to be called: “[...] and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1: 21).

Thus it is already clear from His name that Jesus is the promised Deliverer and Redeemer.

108

How can we recognise that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer?

In His deeds, Jesus Christ revealed Himself as the Redeemer (= Saviour) sent by God: “The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matthew 11: 5). That Jesus Christ is the Redeemer is clear especially in the fact that He proclaimed the will of God and gave His life for the redemption of mankind, that is, for their liberation from sin and guilt.

109

Is redemption only possible through Jesus Christ?

Yes. Redemption is only possible through Jesus Christ. Only in Him is salvation accessible for mankind.

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4: 12

110

What is meant by the term ‘majestic titles’ of Jesus?

‘Majestic titles’ are names and designations for the Son of God which are used in Holy Scripture to describe various characteristics of His unique person.

The word ‘majestic’ is used to describe a person descended from nobility who has an especially elevated position, for example a king or an emperor.

111

What is meant by the majestic title of “Christ”?

“Christ” originally comes from the Greek language (*Christos*) and means “Anointed One” in translation.

In Old Testament times, kings were anointed with oil (cf. Psalm 20: 6). This act signified consecration to a holy service. Jesus is described as the “Anointed One” because He is Lord over all, because He reconciles mankind with God, and because He proclaims the will of God.

The majestic title “Christ” is so closely associated with Jesus that it has become a proper name: Jesus Christ.

112

What does the majestic title “Messiah” mean?

The word “Messiah” comes from Hebrew and also means “Anointed One” in translation. That Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ awaited by Israel is stated expressly in the New Testament.

113

What does the majestic title “Lord” signify?

In the Old Testament, the designation “Lord” is most often used in reference to God. In the New Testament, this majestic title is also applied to Jesus Christ. The designation “Lord” thus identifies the divine authority of Jesus Christ. It therefore far transcends any other form of respectful address. When Jesus is called “the Lord” it is also intended to express that Jesus is God.

114

What does the majestic title “Son of Man” mean?

When the term “Son of Man” is used as a majestic title, it is not referring to the son of a man, but rather a heavenly being that judges and rules over mankind.

At the time of Jesus, devout Jews were expecting the “Son of Man” who would assume rule over the world from God. According to John 3: 13, Jesus also identifies Himself as the Son of Man who came down from heaven. As such He has power to forgive sins and save (cf. Matthew 9: 6).

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19: 10

115

Are there any other majestic titles of Jesus?

Yes. Holy Scripture mentions other such majestic titles of Jesus: “Immanuel”, “Servant of God”, and “Son of David”.

The Hebrew name *Immanuel* means “God with us”. Jesus Christ bears the majestic title *Immanuel* because God is manifest among mankind in Him to offer them help.

The designation “Servant of God” is used in Holy Scripture for outstanding persons who stand in the service of God. When Jesus is designated as the “Servant of God”, this is a reference to His service and suffering for mankind.

In the New Testament, “Son of David” is a designation for Jesus Christ. Already at the beginning of the gospel of Matthew we read: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham” (Matthew 1: 1). This means that the promises given to David are fulfilled in Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Samuel 7; Acts 13: 32-37).

116

In what way did Jesus Christ fulfil His divine commission?

Jesus Christ acted in the capacity of King, Priest, and Prophet.

When one thinks about a king, one thinks of ruling and governing. In the time of the Old Testament the function of a priest was to mediate reconciliation between mankind and God. A prophet proclaims the divine will and foretells coming events. Jesus Christ performed all of this in perfect fashion.

117

What does it mean when we refer to “Jesus Christ—the King”?

At His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus identified Himself as the King of peace and righteousness. Even before Pilate, a representative of the worldly power of Rome, Jesus professed that He was King and a witness of the truth.

However, Jesus’ kingship was not rooted in any earthly regency and was not manifest in outward power. The authority with which He acted and the

power with which He performed miracles demonstrate that He is King.

The royal dignity of Jesus Christ is also emphasised in Revelation, where He is described as “the ruler over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 1: 5).

“Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’”

John 18: 37

Significant kings in the history of the people of Israel:

- King Saul
- King David
- King Solomon
- King Hezekiah

118

What does it mean when we refer to “Jesus Christ—the Priest”?

The most important task of the priests in the time of the Old Testament was to bring sacrifices to God in order to thereby find grace before God. Jesus Christ is a Priest who stands above all others as He is the true High Priest. He sacrificed His sinless life so that human beings could be saved from spiritual death and attain eternal life.

In Old Testament times, high priests had the function of bringing the sins of the people to God. For this purpose they would enter the holiest space of the temple (the “Most Holy Place”) once each year—namely on the Day of Atonement—and intercede for the

people. Unlike the high priests of the old covenant, Jesus Christ had no need to be reconciled with God. Rather He Himself is the Reconciler who forgives sins.

→ *Jesus’ sacrificial death:*

see Questions 98 et seq., 177 et seq.

Significant priests in the Old Testament:

- Melchizedek
- Aaron
- Eli
- Zadok

119

What does it mean when we refer to “Jesus Christ—the Prophet”?

God promised Moses: “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him” (Deuteronomy 18: 18). This Prophet is a reference to Jesus Christ.

As Prophet, Jesus Christ proclaimed the will of God. He shows the way to life and reveals future events. In His farewell discourses He promises the Holy Spirit. In the book of Revelation He unveils the course of salvation history right up to the new creation.

The statements He makes are eternally valid: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Mark 13: 31).

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those

days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.”

Matthew 24: 21-22

“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

Luke 21: 25-28

Significant prophets in the history of the people of Israel:

- Moses
- Samuel
- Elijah
- Elisha
- Jeremiah
- Isaiah
- John the Baptist

120

Where do we read of the person and activity of Jesus Christ?

The four gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament give an account of the life and activity of Jesus Christ. The intention of the evangelists (authors of the gospels) was not to write a biography of Jesus, however. Rather, they profess the belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.

→ *Messiah: see Question 112*

121

How did the Son of God enter into His human existence?

The Son of God was born as a human being of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem. His birth is described in the gospels according to Matthew and Luke. Jesus was born at the time when Herod ruled Judea as king and when Augustus was Caesar in Rome.

Jesus did indeed live. He is thus a personage of world history and not merely some figure from the world of poetry or legend.

122

What events preceded the birth of Jesus?

The angel Gabriel brought the virgin Mary the message: “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1: 31-33).

The angel also explained to Mary that she would become pregnant by the Holy Spirit: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1: 35).

123

Who were Jesus' parents?

Mary was the biological mother of Jesus. Joseph adopted Jesus as a son. It is for this reason that Joseph is also mentioned in Jesus' family tree.

"Now Jesus [...] being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli ..."

Luke 3: 23

124

What do we know about the birth of Jesus?

Caesar Augustus had ordered a census to be taken. For this, each person had to make his way back to "his own" city, in other words, the hometown of his family. For this reason Joseph, who was a descendant of David, went with Mary to the "city of David", namely Bethlehem. There they were unable to find lodging. So it was that Mary must have given birth to her Son in a stable, because she placed Him in a manger: "And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2: 7).

From these events it is clear that God became human in very poor conditions.

125

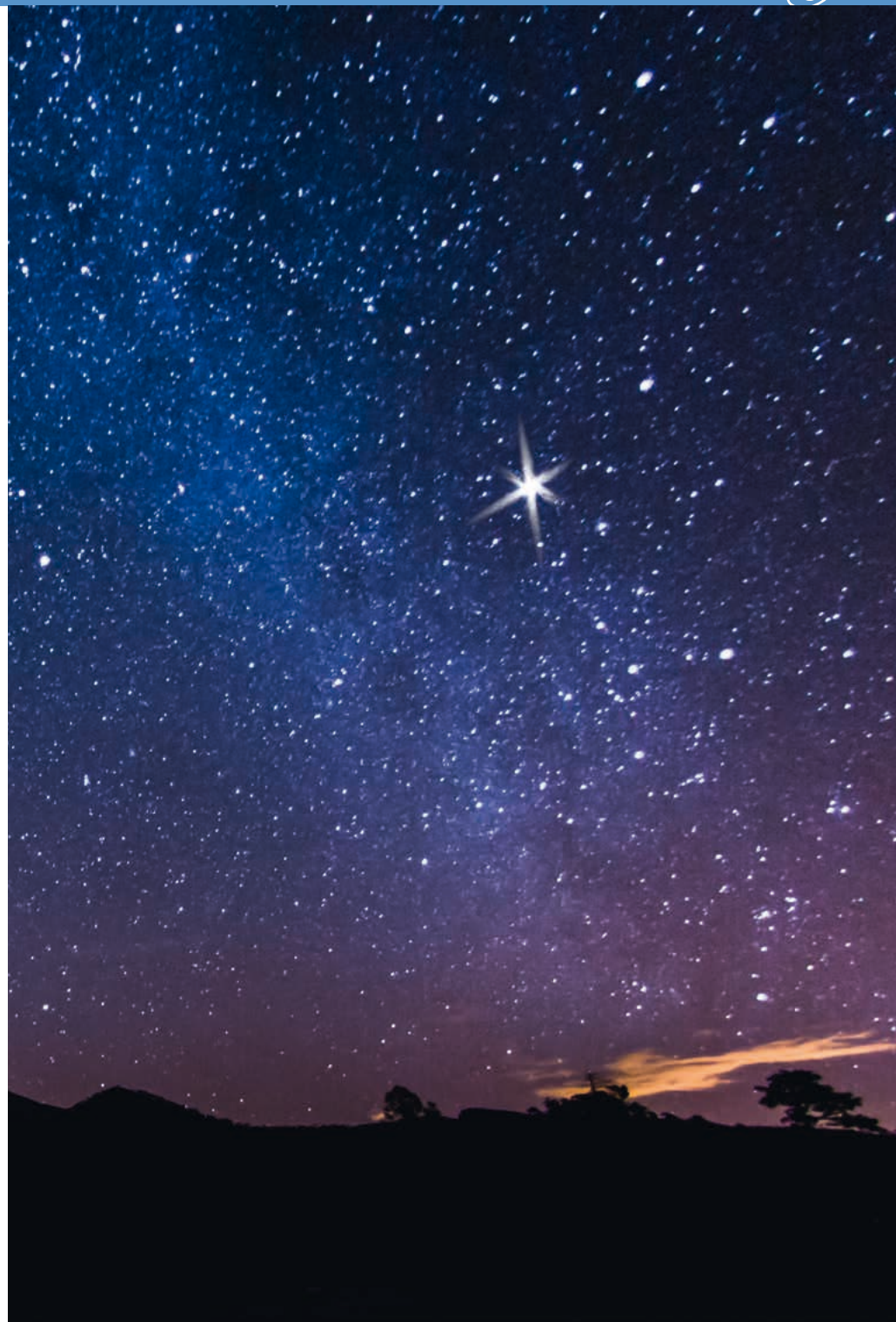
What occurred at the same time as the birth of Jesus?

Angels appeared and proclaimed the glad tidings to shepherds who were watching their flocks in a field near Bethlehem: "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2: 11; cf. also Micah 5: 2).

The gospel of Matthew relates that there was also a star which announced the birth of Jesus. Wise men (magi) from "the East" (the orient) had followed the star and come to Jerusalem in order to worship the "new born King": "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2: 2). They were sent by King Herod to Bethlehem: "And behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was" (Matthew 2: 9).

These events refer to the uniqueness of the birth of the Son of God.

Scholars from the Orient who occupied themselves with interpreting stars and dreams were described as '**Magi**'.



126

What occurred after the birth of Jesus?

Since King Herod believed a king who would one day topple him from the throne had been born in Bethlehem, he sought to kill the Child. He had all children in Bethlehem aged two and under killed (cf. Matthew 2: 16-18).

127

How did God protect the Child Jesus?

Through a dream, God told Joseph, Mary's husband, to flee to Egypt with her and the Child (cf. Matthew 2: 13-14). After King Herod died, they moved back to Nazareth in Galilee.

128

What is known about Jesus' childhood?

Luke 2: 52 states that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. In Luke 2: 41-49 we read that the twelve-year-old Jesus had conversations with the teachers in Jerusalem, who were "astonished at His understanding and answers".

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men."

Luke 2: 52

129

What preceded Jesus' teaching activity?

Jesus allowed Himself to be baptised by John the Baptist in the Jordan. Immediately following His baptism by John, the Holy Spirit descended visibly upon Jesus. In a voice from heaven, God, the Father, then testified: "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased" (Luke 3: 22). Through this event it was announced to the world that Jesus is the Son of God.

130

Why did Jesus allow Himself to be baptised by John?

Jesus was without sin. Nevertheless, He allowed Himself to be baptised unto repentance by John the Baptist in the Jordan. This act of baptism—which was an expression of repentance—makes it clear that He abased Himself and subjected Himself to the same act that must be performed upon all sinners.

"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.'"

Matthew 3: 15

131

What transpired after the baptism of Jesus?

Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit "to be tempted by the Devil" (Matthew 4: 1). Jesus stayed there for

40 days and was tempted several times by the Devil. Jesus resisted the temptations and rejected the Devil. Afterward, angels came and ministered to Jesus (cf. Matthew 4: 11).

132

What is the significance of Jesus' temptations?

By resisting these temptations, Jesus already revealed Himself as victor over the Devil before even beginning His public activity.

The first man, Adam, had not resisted temptation. Adam became a sinner, and with him all human beings. In contrast to this, Jesus remained without sin. Thereby He created the conditions required for all sinners to find their way back to God.

→ *Original sin: see Question 482*

133

At what age did Jesus begin to teach?

Jesus began to teach in Galilee at approximately 30 years of age (cf. Luke 3: 23).

134

What was the focus of Jesus' teaching?

The focal point of His teaching was the proclamation of the kingdom of God: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1: 15).

135

What is meant by the "kingdom of God"?

The "kingdom of God" is not a national territory, nor is it a political sphere of dominion. Rather the "kingdom of God" means that God is present and rules among mankind.

In the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the "kingdom of God" has come to all people (cf. Luke 17: 21). Jesus Christ is the ruler, He creates justice, He grants grace, He turns to the poor and needy, and He brings salvation.

"Kingdom of God" also has a future significance—it will begin with the "marriage of the Lamb" and endure eternally in the new creation (cf. Revelation 21: 1-3).

→ *Marriage of the Lamb:*

see Questions 566 et seq.

→ *Kingdom of peace:*

see Questions 575 et seq.

→ *New creation: see Question 581*

→ *"Your kingdom come":*

see Question 635

The gospel of Matthew uses the term "**kingdom of God**" synonymously with "kingdom of heaven".

The term "kingdom of God" is a designation for the presence and regency of God among mankind. It was already possible to experience this in the time of Jesus. Today too the "kingdom of God" is present and perceptible in the church of Christ, in which Jesus Christ is at work—in other words, in word and sacrament. On the other hand, we also await the future "kingdom of God". This kingdom will be manifested in the "marriage of the Lamb", in the kingdom of peace, and in the new creation.

136

What does it mean to “repent”?

“To repent” means to turn away from evil and turn to God. Those who repent are prepared to change their attitude in order to fulfil the will of God.

137

What does the term “gospel” mean?

“Gospel” means “glad tidings” or “good news”. It is the message of the grace, love, and reconciliation that God grants us in Jesus Christ.

138

What is Jesus’ position on the Law of Moses?

The Mosaic Law was of the highest binding authority for the people of Israel. Its fulfilment was considered a prerequisite for the proper relationship between human beings and God. Jesus made it clear that He possessed greater authority than Moses, and that He was Lord over the Law. He summarised the Law into the single commandment to love God above all things, and one’s neighbour as oneself (cf. Matthew 22: 37-40).

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil.”

Matthew 5: 17

“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind’ (Deuteronomy 6: 5). This is the first and great commandment. And the

second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’ (Leviticus 19: 18). On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 22: 37-40

139

What was one of the first things Jesus did at the beginning of His teaching activity?

Jesus called disciples (cf. Mark 1: 16 et seq.). From among them he appointed twelve, “that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach” (cf. Mark 3: 14).

Disciples of Jesus are those who follow the gospel in word and deed.

140

What miracles did Jesus perform?

The miracles performed by the Son of God are of various kinds and include healing of the sick, casting out evil spirits, raising the dead, miracles of nature, miracles of feeding, and gift miracles.

141

Why did Jesus perform miracles?

Jesus performed miracles in order to demonstrate the Almighty and Loving God’s merciful devotion to suffering mankind in Him. These miracles reveal the glory of the Son of God and His divine authority.

142

What healings of the sick do the gospels relate?

The gospels relate that Jesus healed blind, lame, deaf, and leprous people. These healings point to the divine nature of Jesus Christ, who acted as God when He spoke to the people of Israel: “I am the Lord who heals you” (Exodus 15: 26). These miracles of healing were always closely linked to the faith of the affected individuals (cf. e.g. Luke 18: 35-43).

143

What is related about Jesus casting out evil spirits?

The gospels relate that Jesus cast out demons—which according to the understanding of the time were also the cause of various sicknesses—and so healed people. Jesus Christ was even recognised as Lord by the demons (cf. Mark 3: 11).

The New Testament describes ‘demons’ as evil spirits opposed to God, who according to the understanding of the ancient world, caused illness and sought to control human beings.

144

Of what miracles of raising the dead do the gospels relate?

The gospels describe three cases in which Jesus brought dead human beings back to life: the daughter of Jairus (cf. Matthew 9: 18-26), the young man of Nain (cf. Luke 7: 13-15), and Lazarus,

the brother of Mary and Martha (cf. John 11: 1-44).

The miracles in which Jesus raises the dead make it clear that Jesus Christ is also Lord over death. At the same time they are a reference to the hope that the dead will one day resurrect to eternal life.

145

Of what miracles of nature do the gospels relate?

Jesus had power over the wind and the sea. They were “obedient” to Him (cf. Matthew 8: 27): when He ordered the storm to be still, the winds ceased and the waters became calm. Thereby Jesus showed His power over the elements.

Jesus’ control over the forces of nature underline that the Son of God is just as much the Creator as God, the Father (cf. John 1: 1-3).

146

Of which miracles of feeding do the gospels relate?

All the gospels relate the miracle that Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish (cf. e.g. Mark 6: 30-44). Beyond that, the gospels of Matthew and Mark tell of the feeding of the four thousand (cf. Matthew 15: 32-39 and Mark 8: 1-9).

These miracles are reminders that God provided food (manna) during the journey of the people of Israel through the desert. Furthermore, these events are a reference to Holy Communion.

147

Of what gift miracles do the gospels relate?

Jesus also performed miracles in which human beings received an abundance of earthly gifts. Examples of such gift miracles include Peter's miraculous catch of fish. The latter had worked all night together with other fishermen, but had caught nothing. At Jesus' word, the fishermen cast out their nets once again and made such a great catch of fish that the nets began to tear and the boats nearly sank (cf. Luke 5: 1-11).

At the wedding in Cana, Jesus turned water into wine (cf. John 2: 1-11). This too is a gift miracle and thus a sign of the divinity of Jesus Christ.

148

How did Jesus teach the people His doctrine?

Jesus preached to the people. His best known sermon is the "Sermon on the Mount", which is recorded in the gospel of Matthew. The "beatitudes" are recorded at the beginning of the "Sermon on the Mount".

The beatitudes

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake."

Matthew 5: 3-11

149

What is meant by the "beatitudes" of Jesus?

The "beatitudes" from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount are found in the gospel of Matthew. Here Jesus shows how one can share in the "kingdom of heaven", which has become present in Him. He designates those people as "blessed" (happy) who live in the manner described there.

→ *Kingdom of heaven:*

see Question 135

150

How did Jesus make the gospel understandable?

In His sermons, Jesus often spoke in parables, which are figurative narratives. These stories are taken from the daily lives of His listeners so that they might better understand them. With these parables, Jesus illustrated the main content of the gospel.

More than 40 parables are recorded in the first three gospels.

"All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.'"

Matthew 13: 34-35



151

What major statements of the gospel are illustrated in parables?

In these parables, Jesus illustrated major statements about the kingdom of God, the commandment to love one's neighbour, the attitude of man's heart, and the coming of the Son of Man.

→ **Kingdom of God:**

see explanation of Question 135

→ **Son of Man:** see Question 114

152

How did Jesus explain the beginning and the growth of the kingdom of God?

Jesus explained this in the parable of the mustard seed. Thereby he showed the humble beginnings of the kingdom of God as well as its development and growth.

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed [...] which indeed is the least of all the seeds, but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. Another parable He spoke to them: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.’”

Matthew 13: 31-33

153

How did Jesus explain that something extremely valuable is offered in the kingdom of God?

The parable of the pearl of great price showcases those individuals who recognise the wealth hidden in Jesus Christ, accept it, and give up everything else just to have it. In another passage, Jesus underlines this with the admonition: “But seek first the kingdom of God...” (Matthew 6: 33).

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Matthew 13: 44-46

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

Matthew 6: 33

154

How did Jesus explain the love that prevails in the kingdom of God?

With the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus showed that God strives to help all human beings, even those who seem to be lost. The parable of the prodigal son illustrates God's love for the sinner.

“So He spoke this parable to them, saying: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!” I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.’”

Luke 15: 3-7

155

Which parable calls for us to love our neighbour?

The greatest of the commandments are to love God and our neighbour. With the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus illustrated who this neighbour is, and that loving our neighbour means that

we must not close our eyes to the distress of others, but rather provide help.

→ **The double commandment of love:**
see Questions 282 et seq.

“Then Jesus answered and said: ‘A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, “Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.”’”

Luke 10: 30-35



156

What are the parables that relate to the attitude of man's heart?

The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector illustrate that it is not those who laud themselves for that which they can do, that which they have, and that which they are, but rather those who come before God seeking grace in humbleness who will be justified.

The parable of the unmerciful servant calls upon those who have received God's grace to likewise show grace to others. Those who recognise the magnitude of God's love will feel the need to reconcile with their neighbour.

"Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess." And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'"

Luke 18: 9-14

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, "Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all." Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, "Pay me what you owe!" so his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you all." And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?" And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses'."

Matthew 18: 21-35



157

What did Jesus reveal in the parables of the coming of the Son of Man?

In the parables of the coming of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ spoke of His return.

In Matthew 24: 37-39 a comparison is made between the time before Jesus' return and the days of Noah. What is clear from this is that the return of Christ will be sudden and surprising.

This message is also imparted by the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (cf. Matthew 25: 1-13). From this we learn to watch and be prepared for the return of the Lord.

"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in to marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not

know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

Matthew 24: 37-39

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins

came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you now neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

Matthew 25: 1-13

158

What images did Jesus use to describe Himself, and what do they mean?

The gospel of John contains statements by Jesus which can be described as "images". Through them, Jesus clearly describes His nature. Seven such striking statements of Jesus begin with the words "I am". In them He speaks of Himself metaphorically as the "bread of life" (John 6: 35), the "light of the world" (John 8: 12), the "door" to salvation (John 10: 9), the "good shepherd" (John 10: 11), and as the "vine" (John 15: 5).



Beyond that, Jesus Christ describes Himself as the "resurrection" (John 11: 25), and as the "way", the "truth", and the "life" (John 14: 6).

All of this means that Jesus alone can grant access to God, the Father and that Jesus is the source of salvation.

159

Which of the disciples were especially close to Jesus?

The twelve Apostles were especially close to Jesus and He had a special relationship of trust with them:

- When other disciples failed to understand Jesus and stopped following Him, the Apostles remained with Him (cf. John 6: 66-69).
- Only the Apostles were with Him when He instituted Holy Communion (cf. Luke 22: 14 et seq.).
- By washing their feet, Jesus gave the Apostles an example of humble service (cf. John 13: 4 et seq.).

- It was to the Apostles that He addressed the farewell discourses recorded in John 13-16 before His death, and it was to them that He promised the Holy Spirit.
- It was to the Apostles that He gave the promise of His return (cf. John 14: 3).
- It was to the Apostles that He showed Himself repeatedly after His resurrection (cf. Acts 1: 2-3).
- It was to the Apostles that He, prior to His ascension, gave the commandment: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28: 19, 20).

"To [them] He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."

Acts 1: 3

"[Jesus] rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. [...] 'For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.'"

John 13: 4-5, 15

160

What marked the start of the sufferings of Jesus Christ?

The sufferings of Jesus began with His entry into Jerusalem: "Now when they drew near Jerusalem [...] He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them 'Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" say, "The Lord has need of it." [...] Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: 'Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' (Mark 11: 1-9). – Despite all this rejoicing, Jesus Christ knew that the mood of the people would soon change and that He would have to follow the way of the cross.

The **sufferings of Christ** are often described with the word 'Passion', which derives from the Latin word *passio*, meaning "suffering".

"Foal": a term used to describe a young donkey.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Zechariah 9: 9

161

What events followed Jesus' entry into Jerusalem?

Jesus cleansed the temple by driving out the merchants and money changers. Thereby He made it clear that the temple, the house of God, is holy, and not a place for conducting business.

In Bethany Jesus was anointed with costly oil of spikenard. This transpired in accordance with His own words foreshadowing His impending death, as the dead were often anointed with precious oils in those days (cf. Mark 14: 8).

Jesus had many enemies among the Pharisees and Sadducees, which included the chief priests. They plotted to kill Him, and so His situation became more and more menacing.

Oil of spikenard: spikenard is a plant that grows in the area of the Himalayas (e.g. India, Bhutan, and Nepal). A fragrant juice was extracted from its roots, which was mixed with anointing oil. Spikenard was already exported to the Mediterranean region in ancient times. Because it came from so far away, it was also very expensive.

Pharisees and Sadducees were representatives of the best known religious groups in Judaism at the time of Jesus' activity on earth.

The Pharisees strove to observe the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law very strictly in order to thereby gain merit before God through works. This kind of devotion to God is often criticised in the gospels since it can lead to self-righteousness and hypocrisy. It was from the Pharisees that modern Judaism developed.

The Sadducees rejected any belief in angels or the resurrection of the dead. Their ranks primarily included the affluent levels of the population, as well as the priests of the temple in Jerusalem. After the destruction of the temple, the Sadducean school of Judaism was dissolved.

In addition to the Pharisees and Sadducees, there were also the Essenes, a third group within ancient Judaism.

162

Who betrayed Jesus Christ?

One of the twelve Apostles, Judas Iscariot, visited Jesus' enemies prior to the Passover feast. "Then [...] Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?'" (Matthew 26: 14-16). These men offered him 30 pieces of silver. This was the amount that was generally paid for a slave. Thereby a prophecy of Prophet Zechariah was fulfilled (cf. Zechariah 11: 12-13): the Lord was, so to speak, placed on the same level as a slave (cf. Exodus 21: 32).

"Then I said to them, 'If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.' So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter."

Zechariah 11: 12-13

163

How did Jesus institute Holy Communion?

Jesus was together with the twelve Apostles and celebrated the feast of Passover with them. Judas Iscariot, who had previously visited Jesus' enemies in order to betray Him, was thus also present.

As they sat together at the table, the Lord instituted Holy Communion: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26: 26-28).

During this meal Jesus identified His betrayer, Judas Iscariot. After this the latter left their fellowship. He went away "and it was night" (John 13: 30).

→ **Holy Communion:**

see *Questions 494 et seq.*

164

What happened in the Garden of Gethsemane?

After the Last Supper, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane with the eleven remaining Apostles. The human nature of the Son of God became evident in His dread over the impending crucifixion. In humbleness He knelt down and wrestled in prayer: "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22: 42). Jesus thus subjected Himself completely to His Father's will—He was prepared to bring the sacrifice. After this an angel appeared and strengthened Him (cf. Luke 22: 43), but the Apostles were sleeping. Shortly thereafter, Jesus was arrested.



The Garden of Gethsemane

165

How did the arrest of Jesus occur?

While Jesus was asking the Apostles to watch with Him, a large group of armed soldiers sent by the chief priests arrived. Judas Iscariot led them to Jesus and betrayed Him with a kiss: “Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him” (Matthew 26: 48).

“Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’”

Matthew 26: 40-41

166

How did the Apostles behave?

To protect Jesus, Simon Peter drew the sword and cut off the ear of the servant of one of the chief priests (cf. John 18: 10). Jesus, however, held him back and healed the servant.

Jesus did not make use of His divine power, but allowed Himself to be arrested. Thereupon the Apostles left Him and fled.

Later that same night, when Simon Peter was accused of being a disciple of Jesus, He denied it. He denied the Lord three times.

“Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, ‘You also were with Jesus of Galilee.’ But he denied it before

them all, saying, ‘I do not know what you are saying.’ And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, ‘This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth.’ But again he denied with an oath, ‘I do not know the Man!’ And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, ‘Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you.’ Then he began to curse and swear, saying, ‘I do not know the Man!’ Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So he went out and wept bitterly.”

Matthew 26: 69-75

167

Did Jesus later reproach the Apostles for their behaviour?

No. Jesus even knew the human weaknesses of His Apostles, but He did not reproach them for these. After His resurrection, He came to them with a greeting of peace.

168

What happened after Jesus’ arrest?

The high council, the chief priests and scribes, accused Jesus of blasphemy and condemned Him to death. The fact that He claimed to be the Son of God was interpreted as blasphemy.

169

What did Judas Iscariot do after Jesus’ sentencing?

After Jesus had been condemned to death, Judas Iscariot regretted his betrayal and brought the 30 pieces of silver back to the chief priests. These men no longer wanted anything to do with him. He threw the money into the temple, then went out and hanged himself (cf. Matthew 27: 1-5).

170

How did Jesus fare before Pilate and Herod?

After Jesus had been condemned by the high council—the highest authority in Judea—He was given a hearing before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. The latter was responsible for the area since the Jews were under Roman rule at the time.

Pilate saw no fault in Jesus and thus sent Him to Herod (who was surnamed Antipas), the king of the Jews. Since the Jews were forbidden by the Romans to carry out a death sentence, Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate. The latter had Jesus scourged. The people demanded Jesus’ crucifixion and accused Him of having exalted Himself over the Roman emperor as the “King of the Jews”. This offence was punishable by death (cf. John 19: 12).

Pilate thought he knew a way to grant Jesus His freedom: since it was customary for one convicted individual to be

pardoned at the Passover feast, the people were to decide whether Jesus or the criminal Barabbas should be released. Stirred up by the chief priests and elders, the people chose Barabbas. In order to bring to expression that he was not responsible for what was to follow, Pilate washed his hands before the people and said: “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person...” (Matthew 27: 24). He had Jesus scourged once again and then turned Him over to the soldiers for crucifixion.

Jesus’ birth occurred during the rule of Herod I. When Jesus was led before Pontius Pilate, Herod Antipas, the son of Herod I, reigned in Galilee.

Scourging was a means of corporal punishment and torture in antiquity, by way of which a person would be struck with whips, rods, or canes by his tormenters. The gospels tell of the scourging of Jesus, while the Acts of the Apostles record the occasions on which the Apostles had to endure scourging.

171

How did Jesus conduct Himself in His sufferings?

Jesus endured all the mistreatment, humiliation, and mocking to which He was subjected. When a crown of thorns was placed upon His head in derision, He endured this with holy dignity.

172

Where did Jesus' suffering end?

Jesus was nailed to the cross on Golgotha. Two criminals were crucified along with Him. The cross of Jesus stood between theirs. Here the words of Isaiah 53: 12, namely that the Lord would be numbered with the transgressors, were fulfilled. In other words, He was treated like a criminal. The heavy sufferings of Jesus ultimately led to a cruel death struggle before He finally died, hours later.

Crucifixion was a mode of execution commonly practised in antiquity, by way of which the condemned would intentionally die a slow and tortured death. For this he was either bound or nailed to an upright post, with or without a cross beam.

173

Who is to blame for the death of Jesus?

On account of the Roman governor's involvement, the conviction and execution of Jesus was no longer only a matter concerning the Jews: Gentiles had also shared in it.

All human beings of all time periods are sinners and charge themselves with guilt. Jesus died for the sins of all mankind. For this reason, all human beings also ultimately bear the blame for Jesus' death.

174

What were the last words of Jesus on the cross?

Traditionally, the final words of Jesus, which are recorded variously in the gospels, are arranged in the following sequence:

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23: 34).

Jesus interceded for all those who had brought Him to the cross and who were unaware of the scope of their actions. Here the commandment to love one's enemies was fulfilled in unparalleled fashion (cf. Matthew 5: 44-45, 48).

"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23: 43).

Jesus addressed these words to the remorseful criminal who had asked Him for grace and professed Him as Saviour. Here "Paradise" was understood to be the dwelling place of the devout and righteous in the beyond.

"Woman, behold your son!"—"Behold your mother!" (John 19: 26-27).

Jesus entrusted His mother Mary to the care of Apostle John. This demonstrates the love and care of Christ, who still took care of the needs of others, despite His own need.

In Christian tradition, Mary is interpreted as a symbol of the church. This church was thus commended to the care of the Apostle ministry, represented here by John.

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15: 34).

When death is near, devout Jews address these words from Psalm 22 to God. On one hand, they thereby lament the feeling of God's distance, but on the other hand also profess their faith in His power and grace. Jesus likewise made use of this statement, which was commonly used by those in mortal agony.

"I thirst" (John 19: 28).

In His death struggle Jesus was thirsty and thus wanted something to drink.

These words are associated with Psalm 69: 21: "They also gave me gall for my food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink". This is interpreted to mean that Jesus had to drink the "cup of suffering" in its entirety, in other words, that He had to suffer until the end.

"It is finished!" (John 19: 30).

It was about the ninth hour, which is in the early afternoon, that these words were spoken. Jesus had brought the sacrifice for the redemption of mankind.

"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23: 46).

This makes it clear that, even in the moment of death, Jesus Christ fully trusted in His Father.

175

What events accompanied the crucifixion of the Lord?

When Jesus died on the cross, the earth shook and rocks were split. The veil of the temple, which separated the holiest space (“the Most Holy Place”) from the rest of the temple, was torn in two. This signified that the Old Testament’s sacrificial service was no longer necessary, owing to the death of Christ. His sacrifice opened the way to God.

When the Roman captain and the soldiers guarding Jesus on the cross felt the earth shake, they cried out: “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27: 54). Thereby even the Gentiles professed that Jesus is the Son of God.

Old covenant/new covenant: On Mount Sinai, God made a covenant with the people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The mark of the old covenant was circumcision. The old covenant also includes the Mosaic Law, in which the will of God comes to expression. The new covenant was established with Jesus’ sacrificial death. This new covenant no longer applies to the Jews alone, but to all human beings. Anyone can share in the new covenant through baptism with water.

176

What happened to the body of Jesus?

Joseph of Arimathea, who was part of the high council, asked Pilate for the

body of Jesus, because he wanted to put Him into a tomb. Together with Nicodemus, who had gone to the Lord one night and been taught by Him (cf. John 3: 1-2), he brought the body of Jesus into a tomb that had never been used before, which had been hewn from the rock. A stone was rolled in front of the tomb. The chief priests had the tomb guarded by soldiers to prevent the disciples from taking the body away.

“On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, ‘Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, “After three days I will rise.” Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, “He has risen from the dead.” So the last deception will be worse than the first.’ Pilate said to them, ‘You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how.’ So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.”
Matthew 27: 62-66

177

To what purpose did Jesus have to suffer and die?

God, the Son, became human in Jesus and came into the world in order to take the sins of mankind upon Himself. He brought the sacrifice by His own free will in divine love in order to deliver mankind from death. The power of sin is great, but the power of divine

love, which is demonstrated by the fact that Jesus Christ surrendered His life, is even stronger.

→ *Deliverance from spiritual death / Redemption: see Questions 89-90, 108-109, 215-216*

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”
John 15: 13

178

What significance does the suffering and death of Jesus thus hold for mankind?

The sacrificial death of Jesus is the foundation of a new relationship between mankind and God. Sinful man can now find his way back to God.

179

Does the Old Testament make reference to the suffering and death of Jesus Christ?

Yes. Isaiah 53: 3-5 describes a suffering servant of God who is abased. There it says: “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief [...] Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows [...]. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” These are references to the suffering of Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death.

180

Did Jesus Himself give any reference to His suffering and death?

Yes, Jesus made many references to His suffering and death, but also to His resurrection.

After Peter had told Him: “[You are] the Christ of God”, Jesus made reference to His impending suffering and death: “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day” (Luke 9: 22).

Jesus spoke similar words following the events on the Mount of Transfiguration: “The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day” (Mark 9: 31).

Before His entry into Jerusalem He told His Apostles: “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again” (Matthew 20: 18-19).

When He spoke to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus stated that He would resurrect after three days. Here he recalled the story of the Prophet Jonah: “For as Jonah was three days in and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12: 40).

181

What do the letters of the Apostles have to say about the sacrificial death of Jesus?

The significance of Jesus' sacrificial death is described as follows in 2 Corinthians 5: 19: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." In 1 John 3: 16 it says: "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us."

In his arguments with heretics who sought to deny the humanity of Jesus Christ and His resurrection, Apostle Paul made it clear "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15: 3-4).

182

What does the cross signify?

The cross of Christ is a sign that God has reconciled sinful mankind to Himself. In the ancient world, crucifixion was an expression of defeat: a shameful end for a despised person who had been cast out of human society. In the case of Jesus, however, this apparent defeat is a victory: through His death on the cross, He has achieved a work of salvation beyond compare.

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

1 Corinthians 1: 18

183

What happened after Jesus died?

After Jesus Christ had died, He entered the realm of the dead. In 1 Peter 3: 18-20 it says that, after His death, the Son of God preached to those who had been disobedient to God in the time of Noah. He did this in order to offer salvation: "For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4: 6).

Just as the Son of God had turned to sinners on earth, so He now turned to the dead. Since He brought His sacrifice, salvation has also been possible for the dead.

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water."

1 Peter 3: 18-20

184

By what power did Jesus Christ resurrect?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an act of the triune God:

- On the one hand, the power of God, the Father, is revealed in that He raised Jesus from the dead: "The God

of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree" (Acts 5: 30).

- On the other hand, the words of God, the Son, were fulfilled: "I have power to lay it [My life] down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10: 18).
- Finally, the activity of God, the Holy Spirit, is also attested: "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8: 11).

The power of God over death is shown by the fact that Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead.

185

Are there any witnesses to the resurrection of Christ?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ occurred without any human witness to the event. Nevertheless, the resurrection of the Son of God is attested in many places in Holy Scripture. One such testimony is the empty tomb. Other evidence includes the various appearances of the Risen One over the 40 days between His resurrection and ascension: these are specifically named individuals to whom He showed Himself and who recognised Him.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is not wishful thinking on the part of His followers, but a real event. It did indeed occur.

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the Apostles."

1 Corinthians 15: 3-7

186

What significance does the resurrection of Christ hold for mankind?

Jesus Christ is risen. As a result, believers have justified hope in their own resurrection and eternal life: "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15: 20-22).

Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is necessary because His resurrection shows that Jesus is the Saviour of the world (cf. 1 Corinthians 15: 14).

→ **Saviour: see Question 108, also 110 et seq.**

187

What appearances of the Risen One are attested in the New Testament?

The risen Jesus appeared to His disciples on several occasions. Following are some examples:

Mary of Magdala and other women were the first witnesses of the Risen One. “And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying ‘Rejoice!’ So they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him” (Matthew 28: 9).

Though unrecognised by them at first, the Risen One accompanied the disciples who were travelling to the village of Emmaus. He explained the Scriptures to them and finally broke bread with them, after which they recognised Him (cf. Luke 24: 13-35).

On the evening of His resurrection Jesus appeared in the midst of His disciples. As the Risen One and Lord over death and sin He gave the Apostles authority to make the forgiveness of sins accessible to mankind: “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20: 19-23).

On another occasion the Lord appeared to some of the disciples on the Sea of Tiberias and gave Apostle Peter the commission to “tend” the “lambs and sheep of Christ”—in other words, to care for all the members of the church (*Petrine Office*; cf. John 21: 15-17).

The Risen Lord also showed Himself to His Apostles “by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1: 3).

In 1 Corinthians 15: 6, Apostle Paul mentions that the risen Jesus was seen by more than five hundred brethren at once.

→ *Forgiveness of sins: see explanation of Question 415, Questions 644 et seq.*
→ *Office of Peter: see Question 457 and explanation of Question 457*

“But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’ Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, ‘Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him, ‘Rabboni!’ (which is to say, Teacher).”
John 20: 11-16

188

How did the chief priests behave after the resurrection of Jesus?

When the chief priests learned of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they bribed the soldiers with money and said: “Tell them, ‘His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we slept’” (Matthew 28: 13).

189

What is the resurrection body of Christ?

The resurrection body is liberated from finiteness and mortality. It is no longer bound to space and time. The resurrection body of Christ is a body that never becomes sick, never ages, and never dies. It is a glorious body.

It was in this glorious body that the Lord appeared in the midst of His disciples. He walked through closed doors, broke bread with the disciples, showed them His wounds, and ate with them. Thereby He made it clear that He was not a “spirit” but rather that He was physically present with them as Jesus Christ.

“Resurrection” does not signify a return to earthly existence.

→ *Resurrection: see Questions 535, 559*

“Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut [...] Jesus came and stood in the midst.”
John 20: 19

“Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.”

Luke 24: 39, 40

190

What happened at the ascension of Jesus Christ?

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. There are eyewitnesses to this event. After He had spoken to His Apostles and blessed them, He was taken up into heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. As they looked into heaven after Him, two angels stood beside them and said: “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1: 11).

“I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.”
John 16: 28

191

Where did Jesus Christ go when He ascended into heaven?

Jesus Christ returned to the Father and “sat down at the right hand of God” (Mark 16: 19).

192

What does it mean to say that “Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God?”

Those who stood or sat at the right hand of a ruler in antiquity shared in the latter’s power and authority. The image that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of God therefore points to the fact that He shares in the fullness of the power and glory of God, the Father.

Jesus Christ desires to share this glory with His own in the future. It was for this reason that Jesus prayed as follows in the intercessory prayer: “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory” (John 17: 24). This plea will be fulfilled when Jesus takes His own unto Himself from among the dead and the living, after which they will be with Him forever.

→ *Rapture: see Questions 559 et seq.*

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17

193

Is Jesus Christ also present on the earth now that He has ascended?

Yes. Jesus Christ is also present on earth even after His ascension through the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, who is at work in the church

in the present. Thereby Jesus Christ has fulfilled His promise: “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28: 20).

→ *Holy Spirit: see Questions 197 et seq.*

194

What did Jesus mean when He said: “I will come again”?

Jesus told His disciples: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14: 3). Jesus Christ will come again—this time as the bridegroom.

When He returns as the bridegroom, He will take unto Himself those of the dead and the living who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and have allowed themselves to be prepared for this event. The return of Christ is near.

→ *Future hope:*

see Questions 549 et seq.

195

How else is the return of Jesus Christ described?

The event of the return of Jesus Christ is also described as the “day of the Lord”, the “day of Christ”, the “future of our Lord”, the “revelation of Christ’s glory”, the “appearing” or “return of the Lord”, and the “return of Christ”.

This event is not the Last Judgement, but rather the moment when the bride of Christ will be caught up to heaven for the marriage of the Lamb.

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”

Revelation 19: 7

196

What references to the return of Christ do we find in the New Testament?

The New Testament, and in particular the letters of the Apostles, reinforce the promise of the return of Christ. The Apostle concludes his first letter to the congregation in Corinth with the greeting: “O Lord, come!” (cf. 1 Corinthians 16: 22).

Apostle James calls for patience until the coming of the Lord, “for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (James 5: 8). The letter to the Hebrews also admonishes patience: “For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry” (Hebrews 10: 37).

The second epistle of Peter (cf. 2 Peter 3: 9) is addressed to all who would deny that Jesus is coming again. This letter rules out even the possibility that the fulfilment of the promise of His return is being delayed.

197

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is true God. He is the third person of God, who is worshipped as Lord and God along with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit emanates from God, the Father, and the Son. The Holy Spirit lives in eternal fellowship with them and, like them, is universally active.

‘Universal’: the persons of the God-head not only work in one place and are not confined in any way, but rather

work always and anywhere they wish, both here and in the beyond.

198

How does the Holy Spirit show Himself as a divine person?

The Holy Spirit shows Himself as a person of the trinity of God by sending human beings to spread the gospel, just as God, the Son. Acts 13: 4 relates: “So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.”

He stands by those who profess the Lord when they are in distress: “Do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (Luke 12: 11, 12).

The Holy Spirit teaches the messengers of God: “But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2: 10).

→ *Trinity: see Questions 51, 61 et seq.*

199

By what other names is the Holy Spirit also known?

The Holy Spirit is also known as the “Spirit of God”, the “Spirit of the Lord”, the “Spirit of truth”, the “Spirit of [Jesus] Christ”, the “Spirit of His Son”, and the “Spirit of glory”. Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter and Helper.

200

What does it mean to say that “the Holy Spirit is a Comforter and Helper”?

Jesus Christ is the Comforter, Helper, and Advocate for His own. In the farewell discourses before His arrest and crucifixion, He promised to send the Holy Spirit as a further Comforter and Helper: “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever” (John 14: 16). The Holy Spirit accompanies the believers. He stands by them in all situations of life.

201

What does it mean to say that “the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth”?

The Holy Spirit makes clear what is pleasing to God and that which opposes God’s will. As the Spirit of truth, it identifies truth and falsehood. The Holy Spirit sees to it that the message of the sacrificial death, resurrection, and return of Christ is preserved and spread throughout the ages.

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.”

John 15: 26

202

What does it mean to say that “the Holy Spirit is the power from on high”?

The designation “power from on high” indicates that the activity of the Holy Spirit incorporates the powerful intervention of God. As the “power from on high” (Luke 24: 49), the Holy Spirit moves and fills human beings, and strengthens them in the endeavour to live in accordance with the favour of God and prepare themselves for the return of Christ.

203

How can we recognise the activity of the Holy Spirit?

The activity of the Holy Spirit becomes clear in that God became human in Jesus Christ: the Holy Spirit came upon Mary (cf. Luke 1: 35), and she became pregnant.

We also recognise the activity of the Holy Spirit in that He grants human beings knowledge of divine truth (relations and insights). Concerning this, Jesus said: “But the [...] Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14: 26). It is in this manner that we today experience the activity of the Holy Spirit in the sermon, especially in that He keeps alive Jesus Christ’s promised return.

The Apostles fulfil their tasks because they are filled with the Holy Spirit. “And when He [Jesus] had said this,

He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 20: 22).

204

What is the gift of the Holy Spirit?

A distinction must be made between the Holy Spirit as a person of the Godhead and the Holy Spirit as a gift of God.

The Holy Spirit as a gift of God is a power that emanates from the triune God. The believer who receives this gift is at the same time filled with the love of God.

Baptised individuals who receive the gift of God, thereby also receive childhood in God.

→ *Holy Spirit: see Questions 198 et seq.*

→ *Child of God:*

see explanation of Question 530

→ *Holy Sealing:*

see Questions 515 et seq.

205

How does one receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?

The gift of the Holy Spirit is granted by God through the laying on of hands and prayer of an Apostle. This is shown, for example, in the events that transpired in Samaria.

"Now when the Apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they

laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."
Acts 8: 14-17

206

Is the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Old Testament?

Yes. Whenever we read of the "Spirit of God" in the Old Testament, this is a reference to the Holy Spirit. He is not yet portrayed there as a divine person.

207

Was the Holy Spirit also active in the time of the Old Testament?

Yes. Holy Scripture mentions the activity of the Holy Spirit on many occasions. The Holy Spirit inspired human beings so that they could act as instruments in accordance with the will of God. For example, He was active in the prophets of the Old Testament and spoke through them. Through the Holy Spirit, promises concerning the coming of the Messiah were brought forth.

208

Was the Holy Spirit also given as a gift in the time of the Old Testament?

No. The Holy Spirit only filled human beings temporarily in the time of the Old Testament. It only became possible for human beings to receive the Holy Spirit as a sacramental gift after the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

→ *The Holy Spirit as a sacramental gift: see Questions 428, 440, 523 et seq.*



209

When were the promises concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit fulfilled?

On the fiftieth day after Easter, namely on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out over the disciples of Jesus gathered in Jerusalem.

210

How did the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occur?

The Bible relates the following: "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2: 1-4).

The Holy Spirit filled the Apostles and all those who were with them as an enduring gift, as power from on high (cf. Luke 24: 49).

211

Was the Holy Spirit still active after the time of the early Apostles?

Yes, the Holy Spirit has been active right into our time. This is how we experience the presence of God.

The Lord Himself made reference to the future activity of the Holy Spirit: "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; [...] whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come" (John 16: 13).

212

Where is the Holy Spirit active today?

The Holy Spirit is active wherever there are people who believe in Jesus Christ, profess Him as Lord, and conduct their lives in accordance with His will.

213

Is the Holy Spirit active in the sacraments?

Yes. All three divine persons are active in the sacraments. Therefore whenever the triune God is active, the Holy Spirit, as a person of the Godhead, is involved.

The sacraments are dispensed in the name and power of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Thereby the sacraments have the power to impart salvation.

→ **Sacraments:** see Questions 472 et seq.

214

What is the connection between the activity of the Holy Spirit and the Apostle ministry?

The Apostles have been sent by Jesus Christ. Through them He offers mankind redemption. They exercise their ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. This also has its effect in the dispensation of the sacraments, in the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, and in the spread of the gospel, as well as in keeping alive the promise of Christ's return. It is in this manner that the bride of Christ is prepared for the return of Jesus Christ.

→ **Bride of Christ (bridal congregation):**
see Questions 387, 555, 561 et seq.

MAN IN NEED OF REDEMPTION

Blessing

Jesus, the Mediator

Redemption

Sin Salvation

Guilt

Evil

215

Why are human beings in need of redemption?

Since the fall into sin, all human beings have been sinners: they have been tempted to sin by the evil one. No human being can live without sin. Each one is mired in sin. It is from this condition that God desires to liberate—in other words, redeem—mankind.

→ *The fall into sin and its consequences: see Questions 88 et seq.*

216

What does “redemption” mean?

The original meaning of “redemption” had to do with the act of untying ropes and shackles. In the context of the sacrifice of Jesus, “redemption” refers to the liberation of human beings bound by the shackles of the evil one.

217

Where does evil come from?

It is impossible to rationally comprehend or explain where evil comes from.

218

What is evil?

Evil is a destructive power opposed to God.

219

How does evil reveal itself?

Evil reveals itself in various ways, for example, in the form of destruction, lies, envy, or greed. It ultimately leads to death.

220

Does evil also exist as a person?

Yes. Evil is also manifest as a person and, among other things, is called the “Devil” or “Satan” (cf. Matthew 4: 1; Mark 1: 13). As an enemy of Christ, he is also described as the “Antichrist”.

221

How did evil come to mankind?

God gave human beings the opportunity to decide for obedience or disobedience toward Himself. When human beings turned away from God and decided for disobedience toward Him, evil was manifest. Evil is thus not created by God, but likely permitted by Him in that He did not prevent human beings from making their own decision.

222

Will evil always exist?

No. Evil will not always exist. The power of the evil one has already been broken by Jesus Christ. In 1 John 3: 8 it says the following concerning this: “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

After the kingdom of peace, evil will be given one last opportunity to stand up in opposition to God. Thereafter it will be fully neutralised. In the new creation, evil will have no place.

→ *Kingdom of peace: see Questions 575 et seq.*

223

What is related in Holy Scripture concerning the fall into sin?

God had commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which stood in the middle of the garden of Eden. God also

made them aware of the consequences of breaking this commandment: “For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2: 17). The Devil influenced the first human beings and awakened doubt in God’s word: “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3: 4, 5). Adam and Eve gave in to temptation. They rebelled against God, transgressed His commandment, and ate of the fruit of the tree. This disobedience toward God is described as the fall into sin.



224

What were the consequences for mankind of the fall into sin?

The fall into sin brought about changes in the lives of human beings, which they could not reverse. They began to be afraid of God and hid themselves from Him. The relationship of human beings toward one another also suffered, as did their relationship with the creation.

Since then, the life of man has been filled with toil—and has been limited: “For dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3: 19).

Another consequence of the fall into sin was the separation between mankind and God: God drove the first two human beings from the garden of Eden (cf. Genesis 3: 23-24).

“Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.”
Genesis 3: 23-24

225

What was God’s position toward fallen mankind?

God’s love for mankind remained intact even after the fall into sin. Despite their disobedience, God attended to them: in His loving care, God even clothed Adam and Eve with tunics of skin (cf. Genesis 3: 21).

The love of God for fallen mankind is revealed in perfect fashion in the send-

ing of Jesus Christ, who conquered sin. “Therefore, as through one man’s offence judgement came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Romans 5: 18-19).

226

How was the further development of mankind after the fall into sin?

After the fall into sin, the sins of mankind increased at an appalling rate: first Cain slew his brother Abel even despite God’s warning (cf. Genesis 4: 6-8).

As time progressed, human beings began to sin more and more. God decided to punish them and sent the great flood. Only Noah found grace in the eyes of God. At God’s commandment Noah built an ark in which he and his family were saved (cf. Genesis 6: 5-7, 17-18).

Even after this judgement, human beings persisted in their disobedience toward God. For example, the Bible tells of the tower of Babel. God caused the builders of the tower to fail in their endeavour owing to their arrogance and striving for fame: He confused their languages so that they could no longer understand one another (cf. Genesis 11: 1-8).

“Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel and killed him.”
Genesis 4: 8

227

Did the fall into sin have consequences for all human beings?

Yes. Since the fall into sin, all human beings have been subject to the power of sin. Sin leads to separation from God, in other words, spiritual death: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5: 12). The inclination to sin (concupiscence) remains present within mankind. Human beings cannot return to a state of sinlessness through their own power.

→ **Spiritual death:**
see *Questions 89 et seq.*

Inclination to sin (concupiscence):

Through the fall into sin, a predisposition to sin came into being in man. This is called ‘concupiscence’. It is from this that all sinful thoughts and deeds originate. Even though sins can be forgiven, the inclination to sin remains intact.

228

Did the fall into sin also have consequences for the creation?

Yes. Mankind’s fall into sin had far-reaching consequences for the creation: the ground was cursed: “Because you have [...] eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and

you shall eat the herb of the field” (cf. Genesis 3: 17, 18). The creation, which was originally perfect, has since been damaged. The creation must also be liberated from the curse that rests upon it.

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption. [...] For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.”
Romans 8: 20-22



229

What is sin?

Sin is everything that opposes the will of God and is contrary to His being. This includes all words, deeds, and thoughts that are contrary to the will and being of God. It is also sin to intentionally neglect to do good (cf. James 4: 17). Human beings incur guilt with God with every sin they commit.

230

What is the distinction between sin and guilt?

Sin is absolute. It can therefore not be relativised. It separates from God.

By contrast we may assume that God, in His righteousness and mercy, assesses the degree of guilt an individual incurs with Him through sin differently in each case.

Explanation concerning the **extent of guilt incurred**: A distinction must be made in assessing the amount of guilt associated with a sin, for example, if someone has stolen out of hunger or to satisfy a craving for some luxury. In both cases a sin has been committed, namely a violation of the Seventh Commandment. However, the degree of guilt a person incurs through this sin can be different. In His omniscience, God will always be fair in judging the degree to which a person has incurred guilt through this sin. Certain influences and situations to which people are exposed, for example, societal structures, situations of need, and pathological dispositions, will also play a role.

231

How can this separation from God be undone?

In order to enter into the nearness of God, sin must be forgiven.

→ *Forgiveness of sins: see Question 652*

232

Who defines what is sinful?

God defines what constitutes sin. By no means can human beings define this for themselves.

233

How can we recognise what is sinful?

We learn what is sinful—in other words, what is contrary to the will of God—from Holy Scripture. This includes:

- violations of the Ten Commandments (cf. Exodus 20: 20),
- breaking vows given to God (cf. Deuteronomy 23: 22),
- refusing to believe in Christ (cf. John 16: 9),
- stinginess, envy, and the like.

This is also made clear to us in the sermon inspired by the Holy Spirit.

234

With what gifts did God equip sinful mankind?

God has endowed human beings with a conscience, reason, and faith. When human beings make use of these gifts, it is the correct response to God for the care He shows them.

235

How are we to engage the conscience, reason, and faith?

The conscience, reason, and faith are always to be aligned with Jesus Christ.

236

What is the purpose of the conscience?

The conscience can help a human being make decisions that correspond to the will of God. The conscience distinguishes between what is good and what is evil. In addition, if the conscience is governed by reason and faith, it allows human beings to recognise whether they have incurred guilt before God or their neighbour through their conduct.

237

What is the function of reason?

Reason can lead human beings to conduct themselves in a manner pleasing to God. Reason is demonstrated when human beings are able to account for their actions before God and their neighbour. Reason is also necessary in order to understand the gospel and profess one's faith.

238

Are there limitations to human reason?

Yes. In its finiteness, human reason is incapable of grasping God in His endlessness. God's nature and actions far

surpass all human reason (cf. Philippians 4: 7). As a result, reason cannot be the measure of all things.

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4: 7

239

What is faith?

Faith incorporates trust, obedience, and loyalty toward God. From it, human beings gain confidence in God's mercy and help. In Hebrews 11: 1 it says the following concerning this: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

240

How does a human being come to believe?

Faith always starts with God, who reveals Himself through His word and His works. Faith is a gift of God. True faith is based on God's grace of election.

At the same time, faith is an obligation for human beings. Whether and to what degree a human being comes to believe is also dependent on his own effort: a person must want to believe. For this reason it is necessary to pray for faith.

“Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”

Mark 9: 24



241

What is the task of the believer?

Human beings are called upon to accept God's word, trust in it, and act in accordance with it. Jesus Christ demanded: "You believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14: 1). He promised that "whoever believes in Him should not perish but

have everlasting life" (John 3: 16). He also emphasised the consequence of unbelief in all its implications: "For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8: 24).

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
Romans 10: 17

242

What can faith help achieve?

Belief in Jesus Christ is a prerequisite for salvation. One must believe

- that God reconciles sinners to Himself,
- that human beings can become children of God (cf. John 1: 12),
- that human beings can enter into eternal fellowship with God.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him [God]."
Hebrews 11: 6

243

What is meant by the term "salvation history"?

Holy Scripture uses the term "salvation" in the sense of "deliverance", "protection", and "redemption. The term "salvation history" is understood to mean the activity of God that allows human beings to receive salvation.

244

What is meant by the term "plan of salvation"?

The events between the fall into sin and the new creation are described as God's "plan of salvation". We human beings may not know the entire plan of God in all its fullness, but from the course of salvation history we can recognise that it is God's intention to help mankind.

245

How will salvation history transpire?

The manner and measure of salvation varies throughout the different phases of salvation history, however, God's will to save—which is valid for all people of all time periods—stands above everything.

246

What was the object of hope for salvation in the time of the Old Testament?

In Old Testament times, the hope of salvation was primarily focused on deliverance from earthly need and captivity. Israel's hope for salvation eventually started to focus more and more clearly on the expected Messiah, however.

247

What is the foundation for salvation?

Jesus Christ is the author of eternal salvation: "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5: 9). He is the only Mediator between God and man (cf. 1 Timothy 2: 5). Acts 4: 12 attests: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Jesus Christ is the Saviour sent by God. He is the Redeemer who has conquered sin. In Him human beings find salvation from the harm caused by sin: the sacrifice that Jesus brought on the

cross makes liberation from sin—and the undoing of permanent separation from God—possible.

“Mediator”: On the one hand Jesus Christ is a “Mediator” in the sense that He mediates between God and mankind. This means that He represents mankind before God, and God before mankind. He is the Advocate of mankind before God, and acquaints human beings with the divine will. On the other hand, as “Mediator” He is also the way of salvation that leads back into fellowship with God.

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all.”

1 Timothy 2: 5, 6

248

Who is able to attain salvation?

Salvation through Jesus Christ is offered to all human beings, both living and dead.

249

In what phase of God’s plan of salvation do we live?

Today we are living in that phase of the divine plan of salvation in which the bridal congregation is being gathered and prepared for the return of Christ. To this end, the Apostles impart salvation through the proclamation of God’s word and the dispensation of the sacraments.

→ **Bridal congregation:**
see Questions 455, 557, 561 et seq.

250

How can salvation be attained today?

No one can attain salvation on his own. Human beings attain salvation by believing in Jesus Christ and availing themselves of the sacraments and the word of God, which Jesus Christ has made available for the salvation of the world.

→ **Sacraments:** see Questions 472 et seq.

251

What form of salvation will the bridal congregation experience at the return of Christ?

The bridal congregation will already enter into eternal fellowship with God at the return of Christ in the marriage feast in heaven.

252

When will God’s plan of salvation be fulfilled?

According to Holy Scripture, the plan of salvation will be fulfilled in the new creation.

253

What is the basis for our election by God?

Election is always rooted in God’s will. No one can influence the decision of God.

254

Why does God elect people?

God calls individuals or groups of people out of humanity because He has a specific purpose in mind for them. He thereby makes them responsible to Him.

255

Are there examples of election in the Old Testament?

Yes. Already in the creation there is a reference to divine election: of all His creatures, God elected man and gave him the commission to make the earth subject to him.

Many other examples of election can be found in the Old Testament:

- Noah was elected to build the ark.
- Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were elected so that all families of the earth would be blessed through them.
- Moses was elected to lead the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt, and Joshua was elected to bring them to the Promised Land.
- The people of Israel had also been elected: “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you” (cf. Deuteronomy 7: 6-8).

“For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity.”

Wisdom of Solomon 2: 23

256

Are there examples of election in the New Testament?

From among His disciples, Jesus elected the Apostles and sent them into all the world with the commission to teach and baptise. Thus the election of the people of God is no longer limited to Israel, but incorporates all those who believe in Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile. Thus the people of the new covenant has been chosen by God (cf. 1 Peter 2: 9).

Peter was elected to a special function in the church, namely the Petrine office.

→ **Petrine office:**

see explanation of Question 457

Since Old Testament times, all non-Israelite nations were designated as “Gentiles”. These were people who did not serve the God of Abraham, but rather served other gods. Even in New Testament times, non-Jews were designated as Gentiles, whether or not they had been baptised.

257

Can anyone lay claim to election by God?

No. No one has any right to God’s election because it is rooted in God’s free decision. Election cannot be comprehended with human reason.

258

What does election signify from the perspective of the gospel?

From the perspective of the gospel, election is a gift of God's love. Human beings have the freedom to decide whether to accept or reject this gift.

Election by God does not mean that the actions of human beings are predetermined.

259

What is the result of accepting this election?

God elects human beings for their own salvation as well as the salvation of others. Whenever God elects anyone, there is a certain task or responsibility associated with it. Acceptance of one's election in faith means following Jesus Christ, the author of salvation, conscientiously. This involves arranging one's life in accordance with the gospel. This attracts the blessing of God.

Election also has effects for the future: when Jesus Christ establishes His kingdom of peace, the royal priesthood will proclaim the glad tidings of salvation in Christ to all human beings. Those who partake in the first resurrection are elected to this task.

→ **Salvation:** see Questions 243 et seq.

→ **Royal priesthood:** see Question 577

→ **First resurrection:**

see Questions 574, 575

260

What is blessing?

Blessing is an expression of God's loving care, which no one can earn. To be blessed means to receive good things from God. Blessing contains divine strength as well as the assurance that God grants His help and guidance. The opposite of blessing is curse.

261

How is blessing attained, and how does it unfold?

God often imparts His blessing through human beings who have been commissioned by Him to this end. No one can bless himself.

Blessing can unfold when it is grasped in faith. Whether it has enduring effects also depends on the attitude and conduct of the person being blessed.

Blessing is a gift of God that can always be renewed. Blessing can, however, also extend beyond the person who received it to future generations.

262

How is God's blessing revealed in the creation?

God has blessed His creation and laid the law of multiplication into everything that lives. He has entrusted the creation to man and has blessed him for the task associated with this.

Although this blessing of God was limited in its effect through the curse of sin, it was not suspended. God even renewed it after the great flood. The

promise of God clearly states what this blessing includes: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22).

The New Testament also attests to this blessing in the creation: "For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God" (Hebrews 6: 7). This blessing serves to the benefit of all human beings.

"For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

Matthew 5: 45b

263

How was blessing experienced in the old covenant?

The promise of blessing is a component of the covenant which God made with Israel. In the old covenant, the blessing of God was revealed primarily through earthly wellbeing. For example, this included such things as victory in battle against enemies, long life, wealth, numerous descendants, and fertile land.

Abraham was blessed by God: "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12: 2-3).



This blessing extended beyond the promise of personal wellbeing. It also enabled Abraham to become a blessing for others.

→ **Old covenant:**

see explanation of Question 175

264

What were the implications for the Israelites if they accepted or rejected the blessing of God?

For the Israelites, the blessing of God depended on whether or not they obeyed God's commandments and served Him alone. Disobedience toward God was associated with curse for the people. This decision lay in the hands of the people themselves: "Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 11: 26-28).

265

From whom does blessing emanate in the new covenant?

Divine blessing in the new covenant emanates from Jesus Christ.

→ **New covenant:**

see explanation of Question 175

266

How did Jesus bless?

Jesus blessed through His word, His miracles, and His conduct. He placed His hands upon children to bless them, and forgave sinners. The greatest blessing is that He gave His sinless life as a sacrifice for the reconciliation of all human beings.

→ **Jesus' sacrificial death:**

see Questions 90, 99, 177 et seq.

267

Where does the emphasis of the blessing of Jesus Christ lie?

The blessing of God, which is made accessible through Jesus Christ, has its emphasis in the spiritual domain. Concerning this, Ephesians 1: 3 states: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

268

What constitutes this spiritual blessing?

This blessing includes

- election before the foundation of the world (cf. Ephesians 1: 4),
- redemption and forgiveness of sins (cf. Ephesians 1: 7),
- insight into the will of God (cf. Ephesians 1: 9),
- predestination as heirs of future glory (cf. Ephesians 1: 11),

- the knowledge of divine truth in the gospel (cf. Ephesians 1: 13),
- sealing with the gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. Ephesians 1: 13).

269

How can this blessing be attained and how should it be treated?

Many divine blessings are made accessible to the believers in the divine service. Sacrifice also brings blessing—this is the fundamental experience of the Christian.

Human beings are called upon to pray for the blessing of God and to conduct themselves in such a manner as to show themselves worthy of this blessing.

Believers demonstrate their gratitude for the blessing of God through a life defined by the fear of God, obedience, and faith.

→ **Sacrifice and blessing:**

see Question 738

270

What constitutes the fullness of blessing?

The fullness of blessing consists of sharing in the glory of God eternally.

271

Did God give His people a law in the old covenant?

Yes. God gave the people of Israel a law through Moses. It is contained in the Torah and is called the "Mosaic Law". Its principal contents are summa-

risied in the Ten Commandments. The commandments to love God and one's neighbour are also part of the Mosaic Law.

272

What is the purpose of the Mosaic Law?

The Mosaic Law provides instruction for God-pleasing conduct. It is a help in life given by God, which shows the way to goodness and helps avoid evil.

"He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"
Micah 6: 8

273

How was the Mosaic Law assessed in Old Testament times?

In Old Testament times, the Mosaic Law was considered the highest binding order by the people of Israel. It was understood as the path to salvation. People assumed that human beings could please God and be accepted by Him by strictly observing this law.

274

How is the Mosaic Law assessed from the perspective of the gospel?

From the perspective of the gospel, the Mosaic Law is not the way to salvation, but it points to the way that leads to salvation: Jesus Christ.

No one can keep the whole of the law. For this reason it is not possible to attain salvation through one's own endeavour alone. The individual must come to the conclusion: "I am a sinner and need forgiveness of sins." However, forgiveness of sins requires belief in Jesus Christ.

→ **Salvation, attaining salvation:**
see Questions 243, 248 et seq.

275

What is the content of the gospel?

The content of the gospel includes the activity of God in Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind. The gospel encompasses everything that Jesus taught and everything that has to do with His person, from His birth to His crucifixion, to His resurrection, and His return. The gospel makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation.

276

What other names are there for the gospel?

The gospel is also known as the "message of the cross" (1 Corinthians 1: 18) and the "word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5: 19).

277

What is the relationship between the law and the gospel?

Both the law and the gospel reveal God's will to help sinners come to salvation.

The law primarily lists commandments and prohibitions that instruct human beings with regard to God-pleasing actions. The only human being who perfectly fulfilled this law without any violations is Jesus Christ: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil" (Matthew 5: 17).

The elements of the Mosaic Law that are always valid and necessary were summarised by Jesus Christ into the commandment to love God and one's neighbour: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. [...] You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22: 37, 39).

After His resurrection, He explained to the disciples that everything written in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, had found its fulfilment in Him (cf. Luke 24: 44).

From this follows that Christ is both the fulfilment and the goal of the law. The old covenant's understanding that the law was the way to salvation has come to an end through Christ. Jesus has established a new way, the way of grace.

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Romans 10: 4

278

What are the fundamental prerequisites for obtaining the grace offered in the gospel?

First of all, the individual must recognise that he is a sinner. Then he must come to believe that it has become possible for the sinner to be reconciled with God through Jesus Christ, and that the sinner can attain the righteousness valid before God through belief in Christ: "Therefore, as through one man's offence judgement came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life" (Romans 5: 18).

Righteousness before God /

justification: to be righteous before God—in other words, to have attained justification—means: the believer is pleasing to God. God accepts the sinner, and grants him grace and forgiveness.

279

What is the relationship between a person's good works and his redemption?

Redemption cannot be earned through good works. It can only come from the grace of Christ. This requires belief in Christ.

Good works are the expression of a living faith. Thus an individual's faith should lead him to strive for holy conduct, which is also demonstrated in his works.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." The response of the individual to this should be to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."

Titus 2: 11-14

5 GOD'S COMMANDMENTS

The golden rule

Love for God

Love for our neighbour

God's will

The Ten Commandments

280

What is the function of God's commandments?

God has given commandments to mankind. In them He proclaims His will for the benefit of mankind. The commandments bring to expression how human beings should structure their relationship with God. In addition, the commandments are the foundation for positive relationships between human beings.

281

With what attitude should human beings obey the commandments of God?

Those who recognise God in faith as the Almighty, Omniscient, and Loving One will inquire into His will, and will endeavour to align their thoughts and actions with the will of God, that is, in accordance with His commandments.

In the knowledge that God gave the commandments out of love for mankind, the commandments are not fulfilled out of fear of punishment, but out of love for God.

282

What is the greatest commandment?

When asked which was the "greatest commandment in the law", Jesus responded with two quotations from the Mosaic Law: "You shall love the Lord

your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22: 36-40). The commandment to love God and one's neighbour is also known as the "dual commandment of love".

→ *Love for one's neighbour:*
see also *Question 155*

283

What is the basis of man's love for God?

Man's love for God is based on God's love for mankind. Man seeks to reciprocate this love: "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4: 19).

284

What does the commandment to love God demand, and what does this require?

Love for God is to characterise a person's being and define his conduct.

The commandment to love God applies to the person as a whole and requires his full effort: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12: 30). This signifies undivided devotion to God.



285

What is the commandment to love one's neighbour?

"You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12: 31; cf. Leviticus 19: 18).

286

What does the commandment to love one's neighbour demand?

The commandment requires human beings to treat all other human beings with love. It sets clear limits to egoism.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Luke 10: 25-37), Jesus illustrated that loving one's neighbour involves being merciful and acting accordingly.

Just how seriously Jesus meant these words can be inferred from His exhortation to even love one's enemies.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven."
Matthew 5: 43-45

287

Who is this "neighbour"?

On the one hand, the example of the Good Samaritan demonstrates that this neighbour is anyone who is in need. On the other hand, the neighbour can also be the one who helps. Our neighbour can be anyone with whom we come into contact.

288

Did Jesus say anything else about the commandment to love one's neighbour?

In addition to the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus summarised the following principles on neighbourly love in the so-called "golden rule".

The term "**golden rule**" was coined in Europe in the seventeenth century in reference to the statement contained in Matthew 7: 12. Today the "golden rule" is a widely held principle in interpersonal relationships even outside of Christianity.

289

What does the "golden rule" state?

The "golden rule" is understood as a reference to the words of the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7: 12).



290

How is the love for one's neighbour to be revealed in the congregation?

That which Jesus taught His Apostles also applies to the congregation: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you [...] By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13: 34-35). This instruction to His disciples thus even transcends the "golden rule".

The commandment to love one's neighbour, to support one's fellow human being and help in situations of need, should be especially evident in the congregation: "Let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6: 10). All who belong to the congregation have a duty to treat one another with sincere compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

291

What does this "love for one another" produce in the congregation?

"Love for one another" enables us to accept our brother and sister as they are (cf. Romans 15: 7), and protects against irreconcilability, prejudices, and contempt. It is a power that strengthens the cohesion in the congregation, awakens empathy and understanding for one another, and promotes willingness to help one another.

From the "**high song of love**":

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

1 Corinthians 13: 4-7

292

What is the text of the Ten Commandments?

The First Commandment: "I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before Me."

The Second Commandment: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

The Third Commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

The Fourth Commandment: "Honour your father and your mother, that your

days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you."

The Fifth Commandment: "You shall not murder."

The Sixth Commandment: "You shall not commit adultery."

The Seventh Commandment: "You shall not steal."

The Eighth Commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour."

The Ninth Commandment: "You shall not covet your neighbour's house."

The Tenth Commandment: "You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's."

The designation "**Ten Commandments**" or "Decalogue" is derived from the biblical formulation "ten words" (*deka logoi*) in Exodus 34: 28 and Deuteronomy 10: 4. The Bible firmly establishes the count of the commandments at ten, but does not number them. This has led to differing ways of counting them. The counting method in use in the New Apostolic Church dates back to a tradition from the fourth century AD.

293

To whom were the Ten Commandments given?

God gave the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai (cf. Exodus 19: 20). They were written upon stone tablets.

294

What significance did the Ten Commandments hold for the people of Israel?

The Ten Commandments regulated the conduct of the Israelites toward God as well as one another. The proclamation of the Ten Commandments was part of the covenant which God made with the people of Israel. The observance of the commandments was compulsory and was blessed by God. Even the children among the people of Israel already learned the commandments by heart.

To this day, the Ten Commandments have retained their great significance within Judaism.

“So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.”
Deuteronomy 4: 13

295

Did Jesus and His Apostles comment on the Ten Commandments?

Yes. Jesus reinforced the Ten Commandments. He even sharpened some of the commandments by giving them a deeper meaning and expanding their original scope.

His Apostles ultimately made it clear that breaking even one of the commandments amounted to a violation of the law as a whole: “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2: 10).

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgement.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement.”

Matthew 5: 21, 22

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Matthew 5: 27-28

296

To whom do the Ten Commandments apply?

In the Ten Commandments, God is addressing all human beings. The individual bears responsibility to God for his conduct and the way he leads his life.

297

How are God's commandments to be seen in relationship to the laws of the state?

God's commandments stand above the laws of the state. The sole deciding factor in deciding whether God's commandments have been violated is the will of God, and not that of any legislator.

298

What does it mean to violate the commandments of God?

Every violation of God's commandments is a sin. Sin causes human beings to incur guilt before God. The measure of the guilt arising from this sin can vary. God alone determines the magnitude of guilt. In individual cases it might even be that hardly any guilt is incurred before God as a result of a particular sin.

→ *Relationship between sin and guilt: see Questions 230 and explanation of Question 230*

299

How can the whole law be fulfilled?

The whole law could be fulfilled by loving God and one's neighbour in perfect fashion (cf. Romans 13: 8, 10). This was only possible for Jesus Christ.

→ *The law: see Questions 138, 271 et seq.*

300

What is the First Commandment?

“I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.”

301

What does the First Commandment mean?

The First Commandment means that God is Lord over all things. Only He,

the Creator of all things, is worthy of worship and veneration. His will is to be obeyed.

302

What is the significance of the First Commandment in the Old Testament?

Polytheism prevailed in the countries surrounding Israel. With the First Commandment God made it clear that He is the only God. Accordingly, only He is to be worshipped, and only He is to be served. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6: 4-5).

→ *Monotheism: see explanation of Question 53*

The term ‘**polytheism**’ is derived from the Greek words *poly* and *theos*, which mean “many” and “god”, respectively. The term is thus used in reference to the worship of several deities. – Even King Solomon, when he was old, turned away from the living God and sacrificed to the idols of the Moabites and Amorites (cf. 1 Kings 11: 7-8).

303

What does the prohibition to worship other gods imply?

Any veneration or worship of anything—other than God, the Creator—that could be regarded by human beings as a deity is sin. This includes the

worship of living beings, natural phenomena, objects, and real or fictional spiritual beings.

Accordingly it is a violation of the First Commandment to regard statues, animal figurines, stones, amulets, constellations, mountains, trees and fire, storms, etc., for example as gods.

The fabrication and worship of the golden calf in the time of the Old Testament also represented a violation of this commandment of God: "So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a moulded calf. Then they said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!'" (cf. Exodus 32: 3-4).

304

How are we to understand the prohibition of producing and worshipping images?

Exodus 20: 4-5 forbids creating images of that which God has created: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them."

The prohibition of creating and worshipping images must be seen in the context that there were images and statues that were venerated and worshipped as deities at the time.

305

Are we forbidden to paint pictures or take photographs?

No, we are not forbidden to produce images, sculptures, photographs, or cinematic presentations. Such things should not be venerated or worshipped, however.

306

What is the significance of the First Commandment in the New Testament?

The First Commandment states that there is only one God. This is the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the New Testament, the First Commandment is not only applied to God, the Father, but rather also to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

→ *Trinity: see Questions 61 et seq.*

307

What does the First Commandment mean for us today?

The First Commandment calls upon us to honour God out of love. We worship God in adoration, obedience, and the fear of God. The fear of God develops from our love for God. It is not an expression of fear, but of humbleness, love, and trust in God.

It is important to accept God as He has appeared to the world: in Jesus Christ (cf. John 14: 9).

It is a violation of this commandment to make a god, as it were, of power, honour, money, idols, or even one's own person, to which all other things are

subordinate. Likewise, it is a violation of the First Commandment to develop conceptions of God based on our own wishes or views. It is also a violation against this commandment to see gods in statues, trees, natural phenomena, etc. Beyond that, other acts that contradict the First Commandment include Satanism, fortune telling, magic, witchcraft, spiritualism, and necromancy.

The term '**magic**' is derived from the Greek and translates to mean "sorcery", or "illusion". Magic also incorporates the notion that one can influence or control people, animals, and even events and objects by way of specific actions (rituals) and/or words (magical formulas). Magic is often associated with the evil one.

Fortune tellers are people who are convinced that they can see into the future or foretell future events. They make their predictions on the basis of mysterious signs which they interpret accordingly. At the time of the old covenant, fortune telling was common practice in the royal courts, however, it was strictly forbidden to the people of Israel.

Necromancy is a special form of fortune telling: those who practise it try to contact the dead in order to ask them about future events; cf. 1 Samuel 28: 3 et seq.

"Ascribe greatness to our God."

Deuteronomy 32: 3

308

What is the Second Commandment?

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not

hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

309

What does the Second Commandment mean?

The Second Commandment warns that one should keep all things that have to do with God and His name holy.

310

What is the significance of the Second Commandment in the Old Testament?

When God identified Himself to Moses in the burning bush, He gave His name. "I AM WHO I AM." Here the name is not merely a mark of distinction. This name also describes the being of its bearer. Thereby God announces that He is changeless and eternal in His being. Individual human beings experience God in different ways, but God nevertheless remains changeless.

The being and majesty of God must not be infringed in any way. Out of reverence, devout Jews never utter the name "I AM WHO I AM" (Hebrew: *Yahweh*) aloud. Thereby they seek to avoid any—even unintentional—misuse of God's name.

"And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you''"

Exodus 3: 14

311

What is the significance of the Second Commandment in the New Testament?

Human beings are to speak of God in love, reverence, and full awareness of their responsibility.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He instructed them to address God as the “Father in heaven” (cf. Matthew 6: 9).

When Jesus brought to expression: “And I have declared to them Your name” (John 17: 26), He was thereby illustrating the nature of God, namely love (cf. 1 John 4: 16).

312

What does the Second Commandment mean for us today?

We are to keep all things that have to do with God and His name holy. This applies to our thoughts, speech, and conduct of life.

As Christians we are especially committed to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As children of God, who bear the name of the Father and the Son, we have a great responsibility to keep the name of God holy.

313

How might one take the name of God in vain?

Blasphemy is a serious abuse of the name of God, by way of which God is intentionally vilified, derided, or berated. Anyone who curses using the name

of God or invokes God while telling a lie is taking the name of God in vain. Even the careless use of the names “God”, “Jesus Christ”, or “Holy Spirit” in loose talk or jokes is a violation of the Second Commandment.

In the course of history, people have frequently **taken God's name in vain** in order to enrich themselves, wage wars, (e.g. the crusades), discriminate against other human beings, or to torture and kill—all in the name of God.

314

What is the consequence of violating the Second Commandment?

The Second Commandment is the only Commandment that contains a threat of punishment in the case of its violation. The Bible does not tell us what this punishment consists of. For us, the primary motivation for keeping this commandment should be love for God and reverence, not the fear of punishment.

315

Is it a violation of the Second Commandment to swear while invoking the name of God?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus forbade swearing. It should be understood that this applies to frivolous swearing in daily life, but not, for example, to taking an oath in a court of law.

If someone calls upon God as witness in a mandatory oath formulation (“So help me God”) in order to bring to expression his obligation to be truthful



to God, he thereby publicly professes his faith in the omnipotent, omniscient God.

316

What is the Third Commandment?

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

317

What is the meaning of the Third Commandment?

The Third Commandment is an exhortation to set aside one day of the week in order to worship God and occupy oneself with His word. For Christians this

is the Sunday—the day on which Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead.

318

What is the significance of the Third Commandment in the Old Testament?

God rested on the seventh day of the creation and hallowed it. The day of rest has been given to us as a holiday in which we are to thank God for His work of creation and honour Him.

Already before the law was given on Sinai, God had designated the Sabbath as the day that was to be kept holy. During the journey of the people of Israel through the desert, Moses proclaimed:

“This is what the Lord has said: “Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord” (Exodus 16: 23).

On the Sabbath, the people of Israel were to rest from their work and turn to God without distraction. The Sabbath served to praise the Creator and commemorate the liberation of Israel from captivity in Egypt. Those who honoured the Sabbath and avoided personal business and idle talk (cf. Isaiah 58: 13-14) were promised blessing.

319

What is the significance of the Third Commandment in the New Testament?

Keeping the Sabbath—the seventh day of the Judaic calendar—holy was part of the law for the Israelites. Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and healed the sick, which was a kind of work, according to the understanding of the Israelites, and thus a violation of the commandment. Here Jesus, the Lord over the Sabbath, made it clear that doing good to others is more valuable than a purely formal fulfilment of the Third Commandment.

‘Synagogues’ are places of worship in which Judaic congregations have gathered for divine service since their captivity in Babylon. These were verbal divine services that consisted of prayer, reading from Holy Scripture, and interpreting it.

“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”
Mark 2: 27



320

Why do Christians hallow the Sunday as the “Sabbath”?

Christians hallow the Sunday as the “Sabbath” because Jesus resurrected from the dead on a Sunday. Thus the fact that Christians hallow the Sunday is also a profession of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A reference to the significance of the Sunday as the holy day of the Christians can be found in Acts 20: 7: “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul [...] spoke to them...” Here as well as in 1 Corinthians 16: 2, it is the first day of the week—the Sunday—that is set aside.

321

How do we keep the Sunday holy?

The Sunday should be a day of rest and a day of celebration for the soul. Above all, we keep the Sunday holy by worshipping God in divine service, absorbing His word in faith, having our sins forgiven, and partaking worthily of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Keeping the Sunday holy also entails that we preserve and intensify the effects of the divine service upon us.

Those who cannot attend divine services hallow the Sunday by seeking a connection with God and the congregation in prayer. This applies, for example, to those who have to work, as well as the sick, the disabled, or the aged.

The commandment to keep the Sabbath holy calls upon believers to examine their activities to determine the degree to which these are consistent with the purpose of the day that is dedicated to the Lord.

322

What is the Fourth Commandment?

“Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.”

323

What is the meaning of the Fourth Commandment?

The Fourth Commandment is directed to all people of all ages and requires them to show the respect and appreciation due their father and mother. It is the only commandment that promises a reward.

324

What is the significance of the Fourth Commandment in the Old Testament?

Like the Mosaic Law in general, the Fourth Commandment is linked to the





desert migration of the Israelites. The people were to provide help and support to older members of their families, and thereby show them honour. The promise of “long days” was understood as wellbeing in earthly life.

In Israel, the commandment was also understood as an instruction to adults to take care of those who had grown old and tend to them in the case of illness.

→ *Mosaic Law: see Questions 272 et seq.*

325

What is the significance of the Fourth Commandment in the New Testament?

We read that the twelve-year-old Jesus was obedient to His mother Mary and her husband Joseph: “Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them” (Luke 2: 51).

Jesus’ care for His mother can be clearly inferred when He commended her to the care of Apostle John, even in the hour of His death (cf. John 19: 27).

The letters of Apostle Paul expressly admonish children to be obedient to their parents.

326

What does the Fourth Commandment mean for us today?

No matter their age, children have a duty to honour their parents. The way in which this commandment is concretely put into practice may vary depending on age, social environment, and societal practices.

A child’s duty to obey is, however, limited by the reference of Apostle Peter: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5: 29).

The term “**social environment**” refers to a person’s living conditions, which include heritage, family and relatives, income and wealth, education, profession, religious affiliation, and other conditions of life.

327

How is the promise of a “long life” to be understood today?

When children honour their parents out of love and gratitude, and thus appreciate them, obey them, and take care of them, the blessing of God will rest upon them. This blessing will reveal itself primarily in spiritual gifts.

In the understanding of the people of the Old Testament, “long life” was an expression of God’s blessing. In the new covenant, the blessing of God is demonstrated primarily in spiritual gifts.

Spiritual gifts come from God and make the believer “rich”. Among others, these spiritual gifts include love, patience, joy out of the Holy Spirit, knowledge of the truth of the gospel, childhood in God, forgiveness of sins, the sacraments, hope in the fulfilment of God’s promises, and sharing in these promises.

→ *Spiritual blessing: see Question 268*

328

Does the Fourth Commandment also imply certain duties for the parents?

Yes. In their lifestyle and in their duty to raise the children, parents carry a great responsibility and are to see to it, through their own God-pleasing conduct, that they do not make it difficult for their children to esteem their parents. If parents do not fulfil these duties, they cannot expect obedience from their children either.

Under no circumstances can the Fourth Commandment be used to justify a child’s duty to obey if such obedience would result in a violation of a divine commandment by either the parents or the child.

329

What is the Fifth Commandment?

“You shall not murder.”

330

What is the meaning of the Fifth Commandment?

Life is given by God. He alone is Lord over life and death. No human being has the right to terminate a human life.

331

What is the significance of the Fifth Commandment in the Old Testament?

The literal translation of the commandment from the Hebrew text is: “You shall not murder”. Accordingly, the Fifth Commandment forbade the unauthorised killing of human beings. It quite expressly did not apply to military service or the death penalty.

332

What is the significance of the Fifth Commandment in the New Testament?

Jesus did not confine the observance of this commandment to its literal fulfilment. The important thing for Him was the individual’s inner attitude.

It was for this reason that He said: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgement.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement” (Matthew 5: 21-22). In 1 John 3: 15 the Apostle supplements this as follows: “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer.”

333

What is the significance of the Fifth Commandment for us today?

The beginning and end of human life lies in the hand of God alone. Only He is Lord over life and death.

This commandment continues to apply today even though violence often prevails on earth and though many people have little regard for the lives of others. In addition to the prohibition against terminating human life, it also implies a duty to respect, protect, and preserve human life.

Any violation of the Fifth Commandment is sin. The guilt before God resulting from it may vary (cf. Question 230).

334

Is an abortion a violation of the Fifth Commandment?

Yes. Unborn life is to be respected and protected because it is to be assumed that a human life given by God exists from the moment of conception onward.

335

Does the Fifth Commandment also apply to suicide?

Yes, because a human life given by God is terminated.



336

Is killing in self-defence a violation of the Fifth Commandment?

Yes, even killing in self-defence is a violation of the Fifth Commandment.

337

What does the commandment say about killing in war?

Killing in war is a violation of the Fifth Commandment. For the individual, the commandment implies a responsibility to avoid killing wherever possible. In individual cases it may be that one's actions barely incur any guilt before God in such situations.

→ *Guilt before God: see Question 230*

338

Is euthanasia a violation of the Fifth Commandment?

Anyone who provides active euthanasia—that is, who performs actions that lead to the death of a dying person—violates the Fifth Commandment.

Passive euthanasia—that is, the decision not to take any measures to prolong life—is not considered a violation of the Fifth Commandment, provided certain strict conditions are met. The decision to abstain from taking any measures to prolong life is first and foremost up to the patient himself. In the event there is no advance medical directive, this decision should be made solely in consultation with doctors and relatives after a responsible assessment of the patient's best interests.

339

How should the death penalty be assessed from the perspective of the Fifth Commandment?

No human being has the right to end a human life. Thus the death penalty is a violation of the divine order. In addition, the New Apostolic Church does not recognise the death penalty as a suitable deterrent or means of community protection.

340

Does the Fifth Commandment also apply to the killing of animals?

No. The killing of animals is not covered by the Fifth Commandment. God expressly allows for animals to serve as food for human beings (cf. Genesis 9: 3). Nevertheless, even the life of the animals is to be respected. This derives from mankind's responsibility to preserve the creation.

341

What is the Sixth Commandment?

“You shall not commit adultery.”

342

What is the meaning of the Sixth Commandment?

Marriage is the lifelong union between a man and a woman as desired by God. It is based on an act of free will which is expressed in a public vow of fidelity.

Any married individual who has sexual intercourse with anyone other than his / her spouse commits adultery. Likewise, anyone who has sexual intercourse with a married person commits adultery.

343

What is the significance of the Sixth Commandment in the Old Testament?

Already at the time of the Old Testament, marriage was considered a cov-

enant protected by God and blessed through prayer. At that time, adultery was punished by death.

“And after they were both shut in together, Tobias rose out of the bed, and said, ‘Sister, arise, and let us pray that God will have pity on us.’ Then began Tobias to say, ‘Blessed art Thou, O God of our fathers, and blessed is Thy holy and glorious name for ever; let the heavens bless Thee and all Thy creatures.’”

Tobit 8: 4-5

344

What is the significance of the Sixth Commandment in the New Testament?

Jesus Christ gives unequivocal support to monogamy (marriage to one partner). This is the form of matrimonial

cohabitation of man and woman desired by God and appropriate to believing Christians.

Jesus also expanded the interpretation of the Sixth Commandment beyond its original meaning. In the Sermon on the Mount He said: “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5: 28). This means that “adultery of the heart”, in other words, adultery played out in thought, can occur despite an outwardly blameless conduct of life.

‘**Monogamy**’ describes the situation where a man is married to only one woman and a woman is married to only one man.—The Old Testament often speaks of ‘polygamy’ (marriage to several partners) in the sense that one man was married to several women.



345

What does the New Testament have to say about divorce?

In the New Testament, divorce is considered a violation of the Sixth Commandment: “Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Mark 10: 9). The only exception in which divorce was permissible was in the case of adultery committed by one’s spouse (cf. Matthew 19: 9).

The New Testament’s statements concerning divorce served, above all, to improve the situation of the woman, who only had very limited rights in antiquity. The woman was thus to be protected from being arbitrarily cast aside by her husband.

346

What does the Sixth Commandment mean for us today?

Marriage is intended to be permanent (cf. Matthew 19: 6; Mark 10: 9). In view of this, it is advisable to protect and promote marriage.

The commandment also implies that both partners should be devoted to one another in faithfulness. The obligations arising from the commandment include the sincere endeavour on the part of both partners to pursue their path of life together in love and the fear of God.

347

What is the position of the New Apostolic Church toward divorced individuals?

Divorced and separated persons have their place in the congregation and are cared for by their ministers in unbiased fashion. Divorced and separated persons are not excluded from receiving the sacraments.

Divorced persons who wish to remarry will receive a wedding blessing upon request. This is intended to give them the opportunity to make a new start.

It should always be kept in mind that Jesus did not treat people with harsh punishment, but rather with love and grace (cf. John 8: 2-11).

348

What is the Seventh Commandment?

“You shall not steal.”

349

What is the meaning of the Seventh Commandment?

It is forbidden to take the goods or possessions of another person. One is not permitted to unlawfully acquire or damage the property of others.

350

What is the significance of the Seventh Commandment in the Old Testament?

Originally the commandment against stealing applied first and foremost to kidnapping. There the purpose was to protect free men from being kidnapped, sold, or held captive. While it was possible to redress property offences by material compensation (atonement), kidnapping was punished by death in Israel: "He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21: 16).

The theft of another person's property was also punishable. The Mosaic Law required compensation: "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep" (Exodus 22: 1).

351

What is the significance of the Seventh Commandment in the New Testament?

Jesus described theft as a sin. Theft has its source in the heart of the individual: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man" (Matthew 15: 19, 20).

352

What does the Seventh Commandment mean for us today?

In the literal sense, theft occurs when material or intellectual property is taken away from others. However, usury, exploitation of a situation of need, embezzlement, fraud, tax evasion, corruption, and squandering money entrusted to one's care must also be seen as violations of the Seventh Commandment.

In addition, the Seventh Commandment instructs us not to rob our neighbour of his honour or reputation, and not to attack his human dignity.

Usurers take advantage of others by demanding an excessive, unreasonable price for goods or services.

Embezzlement occurs when a person misappropriates the assets of others which were entrusted to his care.

On one hand, the term '**corruption**' refers to services performed (but primarily money given) in order to obtain something one is not entitled to obtain (bribery). On the other hand, corruption also occurs when a person allows himself to be bribed.

353

What is the Eighth Commandment?

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour."

354

What is the meaning of the Eighth Commandment?

"False witness" is an untrue statement with respect to someone else. Every "false witness" is a lie. The heart of the commandment is the instruction to speak and act truthfully.

355

What is the significance of the Eighth Commandment in the Old Testament?

Originally the Eighth Commandment applied to false statements made in court. Both false accusation and untrue testimony were considered "false witness" in the sense of this commandment. If the court discovered that a witness had made a false statement, this witness would receive the punishment which would have applied to the defendant had he been found guilty (cf. Deuteronomy 19: 18-19).

356

What is the significance of the Eighth Commandment in the New Testament?

Jesus Christ referred to the Eighth Commandment on several occasions. He pointed out that the violation of this commandment is an expression of an improper attitude and that it defiles a person (cf. e.g. Matthew 15: 18-20).

357

What does the Eighth Commandment mean for us today?

Today the meaning of the Eighth Commandment transcends the original prohibition against untruthful speech and actions. White lies, half-truths, and statements intended to conceal the true facts, as well as slander, are thus also violations of the Eighth Commandment. Bragging and exaggeration, duplicity and hypocrisy, spreading rumours, defamation and flattery are likewise expressions of untruthfulness.

Everyone is called upon to strive for sincerity and truthfulness. Our conduct in society and in business should also be oriented by the Eighth Commandment.

Untrue assertions about another person which do him harm, do injury to his honour, or offend him are described as **defamation or slander**.

358

What duties result for Christians from the Eighth Commandment?

Christians are called upon to give true witness by believing in the gospel, proclaiming it, and conducting themselves in accordance with it.

359

What are the Ninth and Tenth Commandments?

“You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour’s.”

360

Why are the Ninth and Tenth Commandments often summarised into one?

The last two of the Ten Commandments are very closely linked in content. They are thus often counted as one commandment.

There are various versions of these two commandments in the Bible. Exodus 20: 17 mentions the neighbour’s house first, while Deuteronomy 5: 21 mentions the neighbour’s wife first.

361

What is the meaning of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments?

The core of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments is the statement: “You shall not covet”. This does not prohibit every form of human desire, only the sinful lust after the wife or property of one’s neighbour.

If this desire is directed at that which is dear and valuable to another person, or that which belongs to him, it

becomes sinful lust. Then it will have a destructive effect. Desire can develop into greed and most often has its source in envy.

362

What is the significance of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments in the Old Testament?

Since the beginning of time, Satan has sought to tempt human beings to sin by awakening within them the desire and lust for forbidden things.

The Old Testament relates an example of the extreme consequences that resulted from King David’s desire for the wife of his neighbour. This desire eventually led him to deceive, commit adultery, and commit murder (cf. 2 Samuel 11).

363

What is the significance of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments in the New Testament?

If sinful craving is not restrained, it will soon be put into deed. The consequences are described in James 1: 15: “Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

Galatians 5: 19-25 shows that sinful cravings lead to sinful actions. These are described as the “works of the flesh”. The Bible counters these cravings with the term “self-control”. This is manifested in moderation and abstinence.

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practise such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

Galatians 5: 19-25

364

What is the meaning of the Ninth and Tenth Commandments for us today?

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments assign mankind the task of watching over the purity of their hearts. They are to fight off any temptation to sinful actions.

“As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.”

1 Peter 1: 14-15

6 THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

Bridal congregation

Christians

The church

The Lord's work of redemption

Apostles

Mission

Apostolicity

365

What does the term “church” mean in general?

The term “church” has three different meanings in general usage. On the one hand, it is used in reference to a Christian place of worship (e.g. the local parish) in which the believers gather for divine service. Another meaning of “church” refers to the congregation in a particular place. Beyond that, “church” can be used in reference to a Christian community (denomination), for example the New Apostolic Church or the Catholic Church.

‘Denomination’, derived from the Latin *denominatio*, (“identification”, “naming”), is a non-judgemental term for a religious community.

366

What does “church” mean with respect to faith?

In reference to faith the term “church” does not refer primarily to the church building, but to the institution that has the function of imparting salvation in Christ to human beings. Those people who belong to the church are called to have eternal fellowship with God.

Beyond that, “church” denotes the fellowship of the believers with the triune God already in the present, in that He turns to the believers, who bring Him worship and praise, in word and sacrament. In the church, the believers have fellowship with one another. The focal point of church life is the divine service.

367

Is church necessary?

Yes. Church is necessary for being a Christian, because it is only there that we hear the word of God, receive the sacraments, and experience fellowship with God and with one another. As a whole, these elements are indispensable for attaining salvation. Without church this is impossible for human beings.

→ **Salvation:** see *Questions 243, 248*

368

Who established the church?

Jesus Christ established the church. He not only left instructions, but rather also created an institution for imparting salvation, namely His church. It thus has its source in the Son of God who came to the earth and worked among human beings as a human being Himself: He called human beings to follow Him as

His disciples, preached, performed miracles, forgave sins, and promised and sent the Holy Spirit.

The person and deed of Jesus Christ are fundamental prerequisites for the existence of the church.

369

Who is the “head” of the church of Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ is the “head” of His church.

370

What are the functions of the church of Jesus Christ?

The church of Jesus Christ has two functions. The first is to make salvation and eternal fellowship with God available to human beings. Its second function is to allow human beings to bring adoration and praise to God.



371

Is there a difference between the church of Jesus Christ and the New Apostolic Church?

Yes, there is a difference. The one church of Jesus Christ is revealed in varying ways and to varying degrees in the New Apostolic Church and in the other Christian churches.

→ See also *Question 386*

372

With what actions did Jesus Christ establish the church?

Jesus Christ established the church through the following significant actions: He

- gathered disciples (cf. Mark 1: 16 et seq.),
- preached about the kingdom of God (cf. Mark 1: 14-15),
- elected the Apostles (cf. Luke 6: 12-16),
- instituted the Petrine office (cf. Matthew 16: 18),
- celebrated Holy Communion for the first time (cf. Matthew 26: 20-29),
- brought His sacrifice on Good Friday (cf. Matthew 27: 50),
- resurrected from the dead on Easter (cf. Matthew 28: 1 et seq.),
- gave the Apostles the commission to proclaim the gospel and baptise in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (cf. Matthew 28: 19-20),
- sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (cf. Acts 2: 1 et seq.).

373

Are there references to the church of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament?

Yes, the Old Testament contains references to the church of Christ, for example:

- the ark: within it, Noah and his family found deliverance from the great flood. The ark served to deliver Noah and His family. Similarly, the church of Christ serves for the deliverance of the sinner (cf. 1 Peter 3: 20-21).
- The Ten Commandments which Moses received on Mount Sinai: in these the will of God comes to expression. This was proclaimed to the assembled people of Israel through Moses, the servant of God. In the church of Christ, the divine will is proclaimed to an assembly of people, namely the congregation, through the preaching of the gospel.

374

How is the church of Jesus Christ described in the New Testament?

The New Testament uses various images and examples to describe the nature of the church of Jesus Christ. The “body of Christ” is one of the most important images for the church. In this image, the church is compared with a body: “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ” (Romans 12: 4, 5).

375

What does the image of the body of Christ mean?

The image of the body of Christ refers to all those who belong to Jesus Christ because they are baptised, believe in Him, and profess Him as their Lord. Just as the members of the body belong to a single organism, so all the baptised belong to the church of Jesus Christ.

376

What parallel is there between the church and the person of Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ has two natures. These are also reflected in the church.

Whenever we speak of the two natures of Jesus, we mean that Jesus Christ is both true God and true Man at the same time. This can also be seen in examples from His life: when He brought the dead man Lazarus back to life, He did so as true God (cf. John 11: 43-47). As true Man, He suffered from hunger and thirst, for example, just like any other human being (cf. John 4: 7).

The divine nature of Jesus was invisible, while His human nature was visible.

It is the same with the church: it has an invisible side and a visible side. As with the two natures of Jesus Christ, both of these are inseparably linked with one another.

→ *The two natures of Christ:*
see *Questions 103 et seq.*

377

How do we experience the invisible side of the church of Jesus Christ?

Among other things, we experience the invisible side of the church in its effects of salvation. These are invisible to human beings and can only be grasped in faith.

For example, we experience effects of salvation

- when God forgives sins,
- when original sin is washed away through baptism,
- when God grants the gift of the Holy Spirit,
- when the body and blood of Christ are given in Holy Communion,
- when the sacraments are dispensed to the departed,
- when acts of blessing (confirmations, ordinations, etc.) are performed,
- when God acts through the human words of the sermon,
- when the blessing of God is laid upon the congregation.

378

How do we experience the visible side of the church of Jesus Christ?

Among other things, we experience the visible side of the church when human beings act in the church. This is perceptible, for example,

- when people profess Jesus Christ,
- when divine services are celebrated,
- when water is consecrated for baptism and the act of baptism is performed,



- when the ministers consecrate bread and wine for Holy Communion and dispense Holy Communion,
- when the Apostles lay their hands upon believers and perform the act of Holy Sealing,
- when the ministers preach,
- when people pray,
- when charity is practised.

379

Is the invisible side of the church of Jesus Christ perfect?

Yes, the invisible side of the church of Jesus Christ is perfect. In this way it corresponds to the divine nature of Jesus Christ. The magnitude, measure, and perfection of the church of Jesus Christ is unimaginable for us human beings and cannot even be completely grasped by the believers.

380

Is the visible side of the church of Jesus Christ perfect?

No, the visible side of the church of Jesus Christ is not perfect. After all, the people at work within it did not always show the love, compassion, truthfulness, and kindness of Jesus.

The church is run by sinful human beings who are prone to error. It is for this reason that the same mistakes, deficiencies, and blunders inherent in mankind are also to be found in the church.

It is here that the visible side of the church fundamentally differs from the human nature of Jesus. In contrast to the visible side of the church, which is deficient, Jesus Christ was also perfect and sinless in His human nature.

381

What are the identifying features of the church of Jesus Christ?

The church of Christ—both in its visible side as well as its invisible side—has these four distinguishing features: oneness, holiness, universality, and apostolicity. These identifying features of the church are called the ‘*notae ecclesiae*’.

382

What do we mean when we talk about the “oneness of the church of Jesus Christ”?

The church is *one* because there is only the one God. The church testifies of the oneness of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who works within it. Jesus specifically referred to the oneness of His followers and the love they bear one another as distinguishing features of those who belong to Him. It is in this way that the nature of God is manifest in the church: “God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4: 16).

→ *Trinity: see Questions 61 et seq.*

383

What do we mean when we talk about the “holiness of the church of Jesus Christ”?

The church is holy because the triune God is holy. He is active in word and sacrament in the church of Christ.

384

What do we mean when we talk about the “universality of the church of Jesus Christ”?

The church of Christ is universal because God is there for all human beings, both living and dead. There are no limits to the proclamation of the gospel.

385

What do we mean when we talk about the “apostolicity of the church of Jesus Christ”?

The church is apostolic because apostolic doctrine is proclaimed within it and because the apostolic ministry is at work within it.

386

Where are the four characteristics of the church of Jesus Christ manifest?

The four characteristics of the church of Jesus Christ—oneness, holiness, universality, and apostolicity—are manifest in different ways and to varying degrees in the various Christian denominations.

These identifying features of the church of Jesus Christ are most clearly manifest where the Apostles are at work: they dispense the three sacraments to the living and the dead and proclaim the word of God with emphasis on the imminent return of Christ. It is here that the Lord’s work of redemption is established.

The term ‘**Lord’s work of redemption**’ is generally understood in reference to Jesus’ saving act, which has already

been completed. When this term is used here, it refers to that part of the church in which Apostles are active in imparting those gifts of salvation that serve to the preparation of the firstlings, the bride of Christ.

387

What tasks are fulfilled in the Lord's work of redemption?

In the Lord's work of redemption, Jesus Christ prepares His bridal congregation for His imminent return through Apostles. Today these tasks are fulfilled by the Apostles who work in the New Apostolic Church..

→ *Preparation of the bridal congregation: see Questions 214, 402, 562 et seq.*

388

At what point did the church of Jesus Christ appear?

The church of Jesus Christ first appeared on Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out. Apostle Peter preached, and some 3,000 people came to believe. They allowed themselves to be baptised and, together with the Apostles, comprised the first Christian church. This took place in Jerusalem.

389

What distinguished the early Christians?

The early Christians "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in

prayers" (Acts 2: 42). This is of decisive significance for the church of Jesus Christ.

390

Where can we learn about the most important developments of the early congregations?

We gain insight into the development of the early congregations from the New Testament, namely in the book of Acts and in the letters of the Apostles.

391

How did the church of Jesus Christ develop?

After Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the believers, the church of Jesus Christ continued to develop: Apostles and other ministers began to work within it. The gospel was preached and the sacraments were dispensed.

Congregations came into being all throughout the Roman Empire. Christianity began to spread among both Jews and Gentiles.

At the time of the early Christians, the **Roman Empire** was the power that ruled the world. It encompassed the entire Mediterranean region as far as the Middle East. The Roman Empire, with its good transportation networks and uniform common language of Greek (and later Latin), was of great advantage for the spread of the gospel.

392

Where did the Apostles spread the gospel?

In fulfilment of the Great Commission given them by Jesus Christ—namely to teach and baptise all nations—the Apostles worked in different regions. Apostles Peter and James primarily proclaimed the gospel among the Jews, while Apostles Paul and Barnabas travelled to the Gentile nations of the Mediterranean region. The gospel spread as far as Asia and Africa. Congregations came into being in Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Libya, Macedonia, Syria, and Cyprus.

→ *The great commission: see Questions 159, 434, 486*

393

How did their missionary activity proceed?

The Apostles took many troubles, hardships, and sufferings upon themselves in the service of Christ. Apostle Paul describes his experiences in 2 Corinthians 11: 25-28: "Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes

upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches."

Many of the believers fled from Jerusalem on account of the persecutions they suffered there (cf. Acts 8: 1; 11: 19). Even in their new surroundings they acquainted people with the Christian faith and proclaimed the word of the Lord, like Philip, for example, in the capital city of Samaria.

The term '**mission**' derives from the Latin and means "task" or "mandate". This term is used in reference to the effort of winning non-Christians over to the Christian faith, the gospel.

394

What is recorded about the end of the early Apostles?

There are only a few vague references to this in Holy Scripture. From extra-biblical texts we learn that many Apostles died a martyr's death. Apostle John was likely the one who lived and was active the longest of all the Apostles. After the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem (in the year AD 70) he stayed in Asia Minor and worked predominantly in the congregation of Ephesus.

The term '**martyr**' is derived from the Greek word *martys*, which means "witness". Individuals who suffer or even endure a violent death for the sake of their faith are described as "martyrs". An example of this is Deacon Stephen, who was stoned to death for professing Jesus Christ. The events surrounding his stoning are related in Acts 7.

395

What happened after the death of the early Apostles?

After the death of the early Apostles, the ministry to which Jesus had entrusted the dispensation of the sacraments, the forgiveness of sins, and the proclamation of the gospel was no longer occupied. As a result, it was no longer possible to dispense the gift of the Holy Spirit. It was also impossible for any other ministerial gifts to come forth out of the Apostle ministry. The gospel continued to spread nevertheless. Believing people continued to bring the gospel and the Christian system of values farther and farther afield.

396

How did the members of the early Christian congregations fare?

The members of the early Christian congregations were persecuted as atheists in the Gentile nations because they did not worship the gods in which the people there believed. The Christians were also blamed for crop failures, earthquakes, and floods—which was in turn an excuse to persecute them. The Roman Emperors tried to eliminate Christianity. The first persecution of the Christians was initiated in the year AD 64 under the Roman Emperor Nero.

397

Did the church of Jesus Christ continue to grow?

Yes, even after the death of the early Apostles and despite the Christian persecutions, the church grew. People who believed in Jesus Christ and professed Him as their Lord received the sacrament of Holy Baptism with water, and so they were incorporated into the body of Christ. In this way the church of Jesus Christ spread throughout the whole world.

→ **Body of Christ:**
see Questions 374 and 375

398

How did the Christian doctrine develop?

The expectation of the imminent return of Christ eventually faded into the background in the sermons. Belief in the life and activity of the Son of God, in His death and resurrection, was nevertheless kept alive.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the early church creeds were enshrined in writing. At church gatherings known as “councils”, the doctrines of the Trinity of God and of the dual nature of Jesus Christ were formulated and proclaimed binding for Christian faith.

→ **Trinity of God:**
see Questions 61 et seq.
→ **Early church creeds:**
see Questions 33 et seq.
→ **Council:**
see explanation of Question 33

399

When did the church of Christ receive Apostles again?

After the Apostles of the early apostolic period had died, there were no more bearers of the Apostle ministry. The Apostle ministry itself continued to exist unchanged, however. In the year 1832, God occupied this ministry once again.

400

How did the renewed occupation of the Apostle ministry come about?

Believers of various confessions in England, Scotland, and Germany prayed and hoped that the Holy Spirit would once again become active in the same great power as at the time of the early Apostles. This was associated with the expectation that God would once again send Apostles.

Finally, in the year 1832, a believing man in London by the name of John Bate Cardale was called to the Apostle ministry by the Holy Spirit, and designated as an Apostle by Henry Drummond. At Christmas 1832 John Bate Cardale performed his first ministerial act, an ordination, as an Apostle.

→ **Confession:**
see explanation of Question 36

401

What did this mean for the church of Christ?

With the renewed calling of Apostles there were once again bearers of the Apostle ministry in the church of Christ. The ministry which has the authority to dispense all sacraments, keeps alive the certainty of the imminent return of Christ, and prepares the bridal congregation for this event, was once again occupied, as it was in the founding phase of the church of Christ: the gift of the Holy Spirit was once again dispensed. Beyond that, forgiveness of sins was once again proclaimed by Apostles. Likewise ordinations were performed again.

402

What are the tasks of the Apostles in the church of Christ?

Jesus Christ rules His church. To this end He makes use of the Apostles. The Apostle ministry is the original ministry of the church. It is the only ministry given by Jesus Himself. The most important tasks of the Apostles include the proclamation of the gospel throughout the world, the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins, the dispensation of the sacraments for the living and the dead, and the ordination of ministers. So it is that the bridal congregation is gathered and prepared for the return of Christ through the activity of the Apostles.

→ **Apostolate:** see Questions 413, 424 et seq., 433 et seq., 453 et seq.

403

Where are the Apostles active at present?

The Apostles are presently active in the New Apostolic Church. Nevertheless, the Apostle ministry has not only been given for the New Apostolic Church, but rather for the whole church of Jesus Christ. The Apostle ministry has the commission to work its way into all parts of the church.

The Apostles have been sent to all nations. They fulfil this commission by establishing congregations around the world and leading believers to Jesus Christ.

404

Who dispenses the sacraments in the church of Jesus Christ?

The dispensation of all the sacraments—Holy Baptism with water, Holy Communion, and Holy Sealing—has been entrusted to the Apostle ministry. The Apostles also dispense the sacraments for the departed.

Holy Sealing is only dispensed by Apostles.

In the New Apostolic Church, Holy Communion and Holy Baptism with water are also dispensed by priestly ministers by commission of the Apostles.

Holy Baptism with water has been entrusted to the church as a whole: wherever baptisms are performed with water in the name of God, the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Spirit, believing human beings are incorporated into the church of Christ.

→ *Sacraments*: see Question 472

→ *Holy Sealing*: see Question 440

405

What happens to the church at the return of Christ?

At the return of Christ, one part of the church—namely the bridal congregation (firstlings)—will be caught up to God. It will experience the “marriage” in heaven with Jesus Christ (cf. Revelation 19: 6-7).

The other part of the church will remain on the earth and will have to prove itself in the tribulations to which the Christians remaining on the earth will be exposed (cf. Revelation 12).

→ *Bridal congregation, marriage*

in heaven: see Questions 214, 251, 402, 562 et seq.

“Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”

Revelation 19: 6, 7

“Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. [...] And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Revelation 12: 13, 17



406

Do all baptised individuals belong to the church of Jesus Christ?

All people who believe in Jesus Christ and profess the Son of God as their Lord are part of the church of Christ. They are baptised in the name of the triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

But by far not all the baptised believe and profess. Accordingly, not all who are baptised belong to the church of Christ.

407

Why are there different Christian denominations?

The multiplicity of Christian communities (denominations) has come about owing to varying interpretations of the gospel, as well as cultural, social, and historical differences.

→ *Denomination*:

see explanation of Question 365

Anything formed by human beings can, in the broadest sense, be described as ‘culture’. People and nations have differing cultural features owing to their way of life, their history, their experiences, their religious and political origins, their customs, their worldviews and convictions, etc.

The word ‘social’ derives from the Latin word *socius* and means “together”, “united”, or “allied”. We use it when we want to express that an individual is interconnected with his neighbour and the community, and cares about others.

408

Where can the church of Jesus Christ be experienced?

The church of Christ can be experienced wherever oneness, holiness, universality, and apostolicity—albeit to varying degrees—are present.

The church of Christ is most clearly revealed where the Apostle ministry, the dispensation of the sacraments to the living and the dead, as well as the

proper proclamation of the word are present. It is there that the Lord's work of redemption is manifest, in which the bride of Christ is being prepared for the marriage in heaven.

→ **Identifying features of the church** (*unity, holiness, universality, apostolicity*): see *Question 381 et seq.*

→ **The Lord's work of redemption**: see *Questions 386 and 387*

409

What can be said of the future of the church of Jesus Christ?

At the return of Christ, one part of the church—the bridal congregation—will be caught up to God. Another part of the church will remain on earth and must prove itself in antichristian tribulations. In the kingdom of peace the church will be revealed when the royal priesthood proclaims the gospel to all human beings who have ever lived. In the new creation, worship and praise will be brought to God forever.

→ **Kingdom of peace**: see *Questions 575 et seq.*

→ **Royal priesthood**: see *Question 574, 577*

→ **New creation**: see *Question 581*

410

What do the individual Christian denominations have in common?

Binding elements in the individual Christian denominations include baptism in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the profession of Jesus Christ, and belief in the triune God.

Through the baptised who live their faith and profess Christ as their Lord, the church can be experienced as a fellowship of faith, hope, and love.



7 MINISTRY

The apostolate
Ordination **Peter**
Activity of the Apostles
Chief Apostle
Ministers
Serving **Ministry of the rock**
Firstlings

411

What do we understand by the term 'ministry'?

In general, the term 'ministry' is understood as a function or official position associated with specific tasks and responsibilities. In a further sense, those who hold ministries have been given the authority to lead a community and make corresponding decisions.

412

What is a spiritual ministry?

A spiritual ministry constitutes the authorisation, blessing, and sanctification issued through ordination for service in the church of Christ. A spiritual ministry is exercised in the power of the Holy Spirit.

→ **Authorisation:**

see explanation of Question 415

→ **Blessing and sanctification:**

see Questions 416 and 417

→ **Ordination:** *see Questions 462 et seq.*

413

What is the source of the spiritual ministry?

The spiritual ministry is founded upon the sending of Jesus Christ by God, the Father. Jesus Christ is thus the One sent by God. As such He is authorised, blessed, and sanctified for the redemption of mankind. The Apostles are those who have been sent by Jesus Christ.

The spiritual ministry is always linked to Jesus Christ and the Apostles sent

by Him. Ministry and the apostolate therefore belong together: wherever the Apostle ministry is active, the spiritual ministry will also be present.

The term '**apostolate**' is used primarily in reference to all bearers of the Apostle ministry as a whole ('apostolate' = the Apostles of Jesus). The priestly ministries and Deacons work by commission of the 'apostolate' and perform duties in pastoral care, preaching, and the dispensation of the sacraments.

414

Were there any references to the spiritual ministry in the Old Testament?

Already in the Old Testament references to the spiritual ministry can be found in the activity of kings, priests, and prophets: the king ruled, the priest mediated the blessing of God, and the prophet proclaimed the will of God. These ministries are references to the spiritual ministry.

Everything that had been established in the ministry of the Old Testament is reflected in Jesus Christ. He is King, Priest, and Prophet all in one.

415

What do we mean by "authorisation" for a spiritual ministry?

A spiritual ministry is conferred by an Apostle by the commission of Jesus Christ. Thereby the recipient of the ministry receives part of the authori-

ty of the Apostle. He is to make use of this authority by commission of the Apostle. The recipient of this ministry thereby acts in the name of the Apostle and represents him in the scope defined for that ministry. After all, the Apostle is the one who sends the ministers, and those who are sent are accountable to, and dependent on, their sender.

Examples of activities performed by authorisation:

When the Apostle proclaims the forgiveness of sins, he is acting on the basis of the authority conferred upon him by Jesus Christ (concerning this see Question 424). It is for this reason that the Apostle proclaims the forgiveness of sins with the words: "I proclaim unto you the glad tidings: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, your sins are forgiven."

When the priestly minister proclaims the forgiveness of sins, he acts in the stead of the Apostle. For this reason the priestly ministry proclaims the forgiveness of sins with the words: "In the commission of my sender, the Apostle, I proclaim unto you the glad tidings: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, your sins are forgiven."

416

What do we mean by "blessing" for a spiritual ministry?

Through the ordination, the gifts present in the recipient of the ministry are awakened, strengthened, multiplied, and dedicated to the service of the Lord. In addition, additional powers are imparted through the blessing.

417

What do we mean by "sanctification" for a spiritual ministry?

In the ordination, the minister receives a share of the holiness of God—the ministry is holy, but the bearer of the ministry remains a sinful human being. The minister can also perform holy acts by the power of the Holy Spirit and serve God and the congregation.

418

What do we mean when we talk about "ministrations" in the church of Jesus Christ?

Every baptised believer is called upon to serve the Lord in active love for his neighbour and by professing his faith (cf. John 12: 26).

When specific mandates and areas of activity that serve for the benefit of the believers and the proclamation of the gospel are assigned to individual believers in the church of Jesus Christ, we understand these as "ministrations". Such ministrations are discharged wherever baptised individuals profess their belief in Jesus Christ as their Lord in word and deed.

419

What distinguishes ministrations in the church of Jesus Christ from the spiritual ministry?

Ministrations are distinguished from the spiritual ministry in that they can be discharged without ordination.

420

Are ministrations also exercised without ordination in the New Apostolic Church?

Yes, ministrations are discharged without ordination in the New Apostolic Church. For example, these include church commissions for the religious education of children and young people and musical participation in the divine services.



421

Which ministry was instituted by Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ only gave His church one ministry directly, namely the Apostle ministry. He authorised, blessed, and sanctified the Apostles and equipped them with the Holy Spirit: “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’ And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20: 21-23). He entrusted the dispensation of the sacraments to the Apostles. In this man-

ner His sacrifice becomes accessible to human beings (cf. Matthew 28: 19-20).

The authority of the Apostles to “**dispense the sacraments**” refers to the fact that the Apostles have been commissioned by Jesus Christ to dispense the sacraments. Even if not all sacraments are dispensed by Apostles themselves, the sacraments nevertheless exist in relationship to the Apostle ministry (concerning this see also Question 424).

422

When did the activity of the Apostle ministry begin in the church?

The activity of the Apostle ministry began on Pentecost. The ministry itself had already been given by Jesus Christ to His Apostles beforehand, however.

“Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and cast out demons.”

Mark 3: 14-16

423

What does the word 'Apostle' mean?

The word ‘Apostle’ means “ambassador” and derives from the Greek word *apóstolos*. The Apostles are ambassadors of Jesus. Jesus Christ directly linked His sending with their sending: “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (John 20: 21).

424

What commission did Jesus Christ give to the Apostles?

Apostles have been sent by Jesus Christ in order to grant human beings access to the sacrifice brought by Him and the salvation resulting from it.

After His resurrection Jesus gave the Apostles authority to proclaim forgiveness of sins. By His commission they are also to dispense the sacraments, proclaim the gospel, and prepare the believers for His return.

425

By what authority do the bearers of the Apostle ministry act?

The Apostles are ambassadors of Jesus Christ. They act in His name. He gave the Apostles the authority to fulfil the tasks arising from His ministries, namely King, Priest, and Prophet. They are to exercise the rule of Christ, dispense divine blessing, and proclaim the gospel of Christ.

The authority conferred upon the Apostle ministry comes exclusively from Jesus Christ. The Apostle ministry exists in a relationship of complete dependency on Him.

426

What designations are there in the New Testament for the Apostle ministry?

The Apostle ministry is described as “the ministry of the new covenant”, “the ministry of the Spirit”, “the ministry of



righteousness”, “the ministry of reconciliation”, and “the ministry of the word”.

427

What is meant by the term “the ministry of the new covenant”?

This designation is derived from 2 Corinthians 3: 6 and serves to make a distinction from the old covenant, when the Mosaic Law—which was restricted to the people of Israel—was in effect. The most important thing in the new covenant is the message of God’s grace, the gospel, which is proclaimed by all those who bear the Apostle ministry. Beyond that, the ministry of the new covenant is active among all nations.

428

What is meant by the term “the ministry of the Spirit”?

The “ministry of the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3: 8) is the ministry that gives the Spirit. Through the dispensation of the gift of the Holy Spirit, those baptised with water receive childhood in God and the prerequisite for becoming a firstling.

The image of the ‘firstlings’ is derived from the “firstfruits” of Revelation 14: 4. This term designates those whom Jesus Christ takes unto Himself at His return. They are identical with the “bridal congregation” (see Questions 562 et seq.).

429

What is meant by the term “the ministry of righteousness”?

The Apostle ministry teaches that all human beings are sinners in need of the grace of God. Belief in Jesus Christ and acceptance of His sacrifice lead to the righteousness valid before God. Thus the Apostle ministry is the ministry that leads to righteousness (cf. 2 Corinthians 3: 9).

430

What is meant by the term “the ministry of reconciliation”?

The Apostle ministry has been given the task of proclaiming the “word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5: 18-19), and thus admonishes repentance and allows believers to share in the sacrifice of Christ in the forgiveness of sins and the celebration of Holy Communion. This “reconciliation” has the ultimate aim of restoring the untroubled relationship between mankind and God, and between human beings themselves.

431

What is meant by the term “the ministry of the word”?

John 1: 1-14 describes the Son of God as the “Word” (*Logos*). All things were created by this “Word”.

The Apostle ministry shares in the “word” because the Lord (*Logos*) has also given this ministry the commission to teach. It is also in this sense that

Acts 6: 4 is to be understood: “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

→ *Logos*: see *Question 101*

432

How else are the Apostles described?

The Apostles are also described as

- “*Ambassadors for Christ*”—The statement: “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf [...]” (2 Corinthians 5: 20) expresses that Jesus Christ works through the Apostles in His church.
- “*Stewards of the mysteries of God*”: a “steward” (1 Corinthians 4: 1) is responsible for the “house”, namely the congregation. Here the Apostles see to it that the proclamation of the word occurs in a manner corresponding to the gospel and that the sacraments are dispensed in the mind of Jesus Christ. The Apostles ordain ministers and establish order in the congregation.

433

What is another important characteristic of the Apostle ministry?

Another important characteristic of the Apostle ministry is to prepare the believers for the return of Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 11: 2).

434

Who sent the Apostles?

Jesus Christ Himself sent the Apostles. He chose twelve men from among His disciples and appointed them to be Apostles (cf. Mark 3: 13-19). It was to them that the following words of Jesus applied:

- “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me” (Matthew 10: 40).
- “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28: 19-20).

435

What were the names of the first twelve Apostles?

The names of the first twelve Apostles were: Simon who was called Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot (cf. Matthew 10: 2-4). These Apostles are called the “twelve” even after the betrayal of Judas Iscariot.

436

Were there any other Apostles besides these during the beginnings of the church?

Yes. In addition to the twelve, the New Testament also mentions Matthias (cf. Acts 1: 15-26), Barnabas (cf. Acts 13: 1-4; 14: 4, 14), Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 9: 1-16; 2 Corinthians 11), and James the brother of the Lord (cf. Galatians 1: 19; 2: 9). Silvanus and Timothy are also described as Apostles (1 Thessalonians 1: 1; 2: 7), as are Andronicus and Junia (cf. Romans 16: 7).

It is of note here that only in the case of Matthias was it necessary to have been an eyewitness of Jesus' activity in order to be called as an Apostle (Acts 1: 21-22).

437

Was any of the Apostles given a special position?

Yes, in the presence of the other Apostles, Jesus Christ conferred special authority on Simon Peter: Simon was designated as the "rock" (Peter) and was given the authority of the keys. Beyond that, the Lord entrusted His "lambs and sheep"—in other words, the church—to his care (cf. John 21: 15-17). The Lord also directed the following words to him: "Simon, Simon! Indeed Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that

your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22: 31, 32).

→ *Authority of the keys, ministry of the rock: see explanation and Questions 457 and 458*

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."

Matthew 16: 18

438

How did this special position of Apostle Peter manifest itself after the ascension of the Lord?

After the ascension of the Lord the special position of Apostle Peter showed itself in the fact that

- Judas Iscariot was replaced within the circle of the Apostles at his initiative (cf. Acts 1: 15-26),
- it was he who delivered the sermon on Pentecost (cf. Acts 2: 14),
- the Lord revealed to him that salvation in Christ is also intended for the Gentiles (cf. Acts 10).



439

What New Testament text describes the activity of the Apostles in the greatest detail?

Luke describes the activity of the Apostles in greatest detail in the book of Acts. For example, in Acts 11: 1-18 and 15: 1-29, we read of councils under the leadership of Apostles in which, among other things, it was decided that believing Gentiles would also be permitted to belong to the church of Christ. Together the Apostles thus made decisions that had far-reaching implications for the Christian church.

440

According to the New Testament, who dispensed the gift of the Holy Spirit?

From Acts 8: 15-18 it follows that the dispensation of the gift of the Holy Spirit is bound to the Apostle ministry: Philip preached in Samaria and baptised the believers with water. The Apostles heard about this and thus sent Peter and John there. These two men “prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

This is underlined in Acts 19: 6: “And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them.”

441

What were the other important tasks of the Apostles?

An important task of the Apostles was to proclaim that Jesus Christ had been active among them, had died, and had resurrected from the dead (cf. Acts 13: 26-41; 17: 1-4). They fought against heresies that sought to deny these things (cf. 1 Corinthians 15: 3-8; 1 John 4: 1-6).

442

What expectation comprised the central point of apostolic proclamation already at that time?

The Apostles expected the return of Christ during their lifetimes and prepared the believers for it (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4: 14-18). This shows that it lies in the nature of the Apostle ministry to proclaim the return of Christ and to prepare the congregations for this event.

443

What was the first ministry to come out of the Apostle ministry?

The Apostles began to fulfil their commission and preach the gospel on Pentecost. Soon after, they discovered that they needed helpers, and so seven men were chosen for this task. The Apostles prayed and laid their hands upon these men and so blessed them in preparation for their service. These seven men are described as the first Deacons.



“[These men were] set before the Apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.”
Acts 6: 6

444

What follows from these actions of the Apostles?

From these actions it follows that the laying on of hands and prayer of Apostles is necessary for ordinations.

445

Did other ministries proceed from the Apostle ministry?

Yes. The Apostles and other believers established new congregations, and new ministers were needed to provide

them with pastoral care. For this the Apostles ordained congregational leaders who were designated as “Bishops” or “Elders”. Prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers were also active in the beginnings of the Christian congregations (cf. Ephesians 4: 11).

446

How were the congregations cared for after the death of the early Apostles?

After the death of the early Apostles, various ministrations with differing duties and designations began to develop. Through them the members of the congregations were given pastoral care.

→ **Ministrations:**
see Questions 418 et seq.

447

Did the Apostle ministry cease to exist after the death of the early Apostles?

The Apostle ministry continued to exist despite the fact that the Apostles died. This ministry has been instituted by Jesus Christ for His church. Even during the time when there were no bearers of this ministry on earth, the ministry established by Him was still present.

The Apostles are to be witnesses of Christ until the end of the age (cf. Matthew 28: 19-20). In order to fulfil this comprehensive task in view of His return, Jesus Christ also sends Apostles today.

“End of the world”: The Greek original text of Matthew 28: 20 uses the term *aeon*, which can refer to an era, a long period of time, or also “end of the world”. There is a similar reference to the “end of the earth” in Acts 1: 8, but this is meant in geographical terms.

448

How long did this interruption in the activity of Apostles last?

According to extra-biblical sources, John was the last of the early Christian Apostles to die, and he did so near the end of the first century. The activity of the Apostles was thus interrupted until the renewed occupation of the Apostle ministry in the nineteenth century.

→ **Renewed occupation of the Apostle ministry:** see Questions 400, 603

449

Why was the activity of the Apostles interrupted?

This interruption in the activity of the Apostles has its source in the will of God. For human beings this remains a mystery.

Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit remained active even in the time without Apostles, and assured the preservation and development of the gospel.

450

When was the Apostle ministry occupied again?

The Apostle ministry was once again personally occupied in accordance with God’s will when the time for the final gathering and preparation of the bridal congregation for the return of Christ had come: as of the year 1832 the Apostle ministry was once again occupied.

Apostles are thus active at the start of the church of Christ and in the time before the return of Christ in order to prepare the bridal congregation.

→ **Bridal congregation:**
see Questions 562 et seq.

The term ‘**personal occupation**’ of the Apostle ministry is intended to express that there are bearers of the Apostle ministry. They have been called to this ministry and exercise it in the mind and Spirit of Jesus Christ.

451

Is there any difference in spiritual authority between the Apostle ministry at the beginning and the Apostle ministry at the end of God’s work of redemption??

No. There is no difference in commission or activity because they have been given the same spiritual authority. The Apostle ministry was only established once by Jesus Christ for His church.

→ **God’s / The Lord’s work of redemption:**
see explanation of Question 386

452

What ministerial levels and ministries are there in the New Apostolic Church?

In the New Apostolic Church there are three ministerial levels with differing spiritual powers, namely the Apostle ministry, priestly ministry, and diaconal ministry:

- The Apostle ministry includes the Chief Apostle, the District Apostles, and the Apostles.
- The priestly ministry includes Bishops, District Elders, District Evangelists, Shepherds, Evangelists, and Priests.
- The diaconal ministry includes Deacons and Sub-deacons.

→ **Authorisation / authority:**
see Questions 412, 415 and the explanation of Question 415

453

What are the duties of the apostolate?

Jesus Christ gave the Apostles the commission “to loose and to bind” (Matthew 18: 18), in other words, to pronounce something as permissible or forbidden. Thereby the doctrine is established and order is created in the congregations.

In accordance with the example of Jesus, the Apostles are servants (cf. John 13: 15). They are not lords over the faith of the congregations, but rather fellow workers for their joy (cf. 2 Corinthians 1: 24), and are to be examples to the congregation in following Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 11: 1).

454

From where does the authority of the Apostle ministry derive?

The authority of the Apostle ministry derives from the calling of the Apostles by Jesus Christ and from the powers which the Lord laid into this ministry. The significance of the ministry can be seen in Jesus’ intercessory prayer: “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world, and for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth” (John 17:18-19).

455

What is the objective of the activity of the Apostles?

The activity of the Apostles is aimed at building up the Lord's work of redemption and leading it to its completion. This includes dispensing the sacraments in the manner desired by Jesus Christ. The Apostles see to it that the gospel is preached in unadulterated fashion and that the congregations have a divinely pleasing order.

Beyond that, the Apostles are to prepare the bridal congregation for the return of the Lord by preaching the gospel, proclaiming the forgiveness of sins, baptising with water and the Holy Spirit, and celebrating Holy Communion.

→ **The Lord's work of redemption:**
see explanation of Question 386

456

Has the Apostle ministry been given for the whole church of Christ?

Yes, the Apostle ministry has been given for the whole church of Christ. It has been given the commission to offer salvation in Jesus Christ to all people. Apostle Paul describes his commission as follows: "For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth'" (Acts 13: 47).

Salvation is only possible through the Son of God. The Apostles impart salvation through word and sacrament until the return of Christ.

457

What is the foundation of the Chief Apostle ministry?

The foundation of the Chief Apostle ministry is the commission that Jesus gave when He instituted the office of Peter. Jesus said the following to Simon Peter: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16: 18, 19).

The "office of Peter" is the fundamental office that Jesus Christ assigned to Apostle Peter. The Petrine office incorporates the care of those who belong to the church, just as Jesus asked Peter to do: "Feed My lambs [...] Tend My sheep". The "authority of the keys" is also part of the office of Peter (concerning this, see Questions 458).

458

Why is the Chief Apostle ministry also called the "ministry of the rock"?

Jesus described Apostle Simon as the "rock" upon which He would build His church. Thereby the Son of God created an indissoluble relationship between the ministry of Peter—the ministry of the rock—and the church of Christ. Today the "ministry of the rock" is discharged by the Chief Apostle.

"Peter" is the modern form of the Greek word *petros*, which means "rock". The rock is an image of strength, changelessness, and steadfastness, which the Lord Jesus also used in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 7: 24-25).

459

What are the duties of the Chief Apostle?

The Chief Apostle maintains the unity among the Apostles. He strengthens the Apostles (cf. Luke 22: 32), and "tends" the flock of Christ (cf. John 21: 15-17). He ensures that the gospel is proclaimed in unadulterated fashion. Through the Holy Spirit, he opens up new insights and interconnections in the doctrine

of the Church and is responsible for its uniform spread. Beyond that, he establishes the order within the Church.

All of these duties comprise the "authority of the keys" of the Chief Apostle ministry.

The Chief Apostle ordains the Apostles. Together with them, he leads the Church.

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one."

John 17: 20, 21

"And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Matthew 16: 19



460

What are the duties of the District Apostle?

In addition to the tasks incumbent on each Apostle, the District Apostle ministry is responsible for providing pastoral care and caring for the congregations within a defined working area (“District Apostle district”). It is also his responsibility to equip the ministers spiritually.

To be “**spiritually equipped**” for a ministry means to receive the ministerial capacity and blessing of God in order to exercise the authority contained in the ministry for diaconal or priestly service in the mind and spirit of one’s sender. The task of spiritually equipping the ministers also includes instructing the ministers and strengthening them for their duties.

461

Who is it that calls a minister to a spiritual ministry?

The designation for a spiritual ministry is not based upon human will but upon the divine will. It is the task of the Apostle to recognise God’s will and act in accordance with it.

462

What is meant by the term ‘ordination’?

We understand ‘ordination’ to be the investiture of a spiritual ministry. It is not a sacrament, but an act of blessing.

→ **Sacrament:** see *Question 472 et seq.*

→ **Acts of blessing:**
see *Questions 660 et seq.*

463

How is the ordination performed?

The ordination is performed by the Apostle in the name of the triune God through laying on of hands and prayer. The minister can only discharge his tasks in close unity with the Apostle ministry.

464

What transpires during the ordination?

During the ordination the blessing of God is imparted. The individual who has been called to ministry receives sanctification for this ministry. The corresponding ministerial authority is issued by the Apostle ministry, be it for the work of a diaconal ministry, priestly



ministry, or Apostle. The minister receives the commission to discharge his ministry within a defined scope.

→ **Sanctification:** see *Question 417*

465

What duties are assumed at ordination?

The minister to be ordained gives a vow before the Apostle in which he promises to remain faithful to God and follow Christ in obedience of faith.

466

How should a spiritual ministry be discharged?

Those who bear a spiritual ministry must live up to certain requirements in their conduct and spiritual competency. This includes familiarity with the doctrine, firmness in faith, awareness of his commission, carrying capacity, confidentiality, honesty, willingness to sacrifice, and humbleness. In all things the minister should take direction from the example of Jesus.

The minister must put into practice that which has been entrusted to him in the blessing and sanctification of his ordination in order that the gifts he has received may unfold to the benefit of the congregation.

Those who have been called to a spiritual ministry are aware that they are servants and instruments in the hand of God.

467

When does the ministerial commission end?

As a rule, the commission to discharge a ministry ends upon retirement, however, the ministers’ ministry itself remains intact. In the event of a resignation or dismissal from ministry, he loses his ministry.

468

What is the duty of all ministers?

Every minister has the duty to proclaim the gospel of Christ and to stand up for it. He provides pastoral care for the members assigned to him and promotes their faith. As a minister, he also shares in their personal concerns and helps them through the burdens of daily life.

→ **Pastoral care:**
see *Questions 688 et seq.*

469

What are the duties of the priestly ministers?

The priestly ministers have been given the commission and authority to dispense Holy Baptism with water, proclaim forgiveness of sins, and consecrate and dispense Holy Communion. Their tasks also include conducting divine services and funerals, performing acts of blessing, and providing pastoral care to the members of the congregation.

→ **Holy Baptism with water:**
see *Questions 404, 481 et seq.*

→ **Forgiveness of sins:**
see *Questions 507, 629, 644 et seq.*

→ *Holy Communion:*

see *Question 494 et seq.*

→ *Acts of blessing:*

see *Question 660 et seq.*

→ *Funeral:* see *Question 685 et seq.*

470

What is the task of the Deacons?

Deacons help in many ways in the congregation. It is also the task of the Deacons to support the Priests in the pastoral care of the congregation. Deacons can also help along in proclaiming the word in the divine services.

471

What is an appointment?

An appointment is the assignment of a firmly defined task. The appointment can be limited in terms of duration and location.

In association with a spiritual ministry, the term “appointment” is understood as the assignment to the task of congregational rector, district rector, District Apostle Helper, or Chief Apostle Helper. Such an appointment is not to be equated with an ordination. It is not bound to the duration of one’s ministerial activity, but can end before this activity ends. At the latest, it comes to an end when the minister retires.

In order to fulfil the various tasks within the congregations and districts, special mandates are issued to both brothers and sisters, independent of a spiritual ministry.

8 THE SACRAMENTS

The gift of the Holy Spirit

Holy Communion

The body and blood of Christ

Holy Baptism

Holy Sealing

Child of God

Original sin

472

What are sacraments?

Sacraments are fundamental acts of God's grace. In these holy acts—which are performed by human beings upon human beings—God grants the recipient salvation.

→ *Salvation: see Question 243 et seq.*

473

What is the purpose of the sacraments?

The sacraments allow human beings to attain salvation: through them, human beings are adopted into the fellowship of life with God and preserved in it.

Receiving the three sacraments of Holy Baptism with water, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion gives a human being the opportunity to be united with the Lord at the return of Christ.

→ *Return of Christ:*
see Question 550 et seq.

474

What comprises a sacrament?

A sacrament is comprised of four elements: sign, content, dispenser, and faith.

475

What is the “sign” in a sacrament?

The “sign” is the visible element of a sacrament. In the case of Holy Baptism with water it is the water. In Holy Com-

munion the “sign” is comprised of the bread and wine. In Holy Sealing, the “sign” is the laying on of hands of the Apostle.

476

What is the “content” in a sacrament?

The “content” is the effect that imparts salvation. In Holy Baptism with water, the “content” is the washing away of original sin and the fact that the baptised now enters into the proximity of God. In Holy Communion, it is partaking in the body and blood of Jesus. In Holy Sealing, the content is that the believer receives the gift of the Holy Spirit.

477

Who is the “dispenser” in a sacrament?

The “dispenser” is the person who imparts the sacrament. The Apostles dispense all three sacraments. By commission of the Apostle, the priestly ministers dispense Holy Baptism with water and Holy Communion.

478

What is the significance of “faith” in a sacrament?

Human beings can only receive the sacrament for their salvation if they believe in its effect.

479

Which sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ instituted three sacraments: Holy Baptism with water, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion.

“And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.”
1 John 5: 7, 8

→ *Holy Baptism with water:*
see Questions 481 et seq.

→ *Holy Sealing:*
see Questions 515 et seq.

→ *Holy Communion:*
see Questions 494 et seq.

480

To whom did Jesus entrust the administration of the sacraments?

Jesus Christ entrusted the administration of the sacraments to the Apostles.

481

What occurs in Holy Baptism with water?

Through Holy Baptism with water a fundamental change in the relationship between a human being and God comes into being. Through the washing away of original sin, the baptised is led out of his original state of remoteness from God and enters the proximity of God. He becomes a Christian.

Through his faith and profession of Christ, the baptised now belongs to the church of Christ.

482

What is the meaning of “original sin”?

“Original sin” is the condition of separation from God (remoteness from God) that came into being through the fall into sin. Since the fall into sin, sin has weighed upon all human beings (cf. Genesis 3: 20; Psalm 51: 7; Romans 5: 12, 18-19). Every human being is thus a sinner even before he is capable of acting or thinking.

→ *The fall into sin:*
see Question 88 et seq.

483

What does the water of Holy Baptism signify?

Water is a prerequisite for life and a means of purification. In baptism, water is the outward sign for the inner purification of a human being.

484

Are there any references to Holy Baptism with water in the Old Testament?

Yes, the deliverance of Noah in the ark, which was carried on the water, is a reference to Holy Baptism with water. The sevenfold immersion of Naaman in the water of the Jordan (cf. 2 Kings 5: 1-14) can also be seen as a symbol for the washing away of original sin in baptism.

“...when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few,

that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism.”

1 Peter 3: 20,21

485

Did Jesus also have to be baptised?

It was not necessary for Jesus Christ to be baptised, nevertheless He submitted to the baptism of John the Baptist. In so doing He put Himself on the same level as sinners. He thereby showed the way in which righteousness before God can be attained (cf. Matthew 3: 15).

The baptism of John was only a baptism unto repentance. It is a reference to the sacrament of Holy Baptism with water, which is performed in the name of the triune God.

→ **Righteousness before God:**

see explanation of Question 278

→ **Repentance:** see Questions 136, 651

486

What did Jesus say to His disciples concerning baptism?

After His resurrection, Jesus gave His Apostles the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28: 19). Baptism is thus one of the tasks of the Apostles.

When the New Testament speaks of “baptism”, it is often referring to a two-part baptism, namely with water and with the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 8: 14 et seq.). Holy Baptism with water and the

baptism of the Spirit are thus closely linked.

→ **Great Commission:**

see Questions 159, 434

“He said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptised?’ So they said, ‘Into John’s baptism.’ Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptised with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’ When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.”

Acts 19: 2-6

487

Who can receive Holy Baptism with water?

All human beings can receive Holy Baptism with water. The prerequisite is that they believe in Jesus Christ and His gospel.

488

How is Holy Baptism with water dispensed?

Baptism is performed with water and dispensed in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The water used for baptism is consecrated in the name of the triune God.



The baptising minister then uses the consecrated water to make the sign of the cross three times on the forehead of the person being baptised while speaking the words: “I baptise you in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

If the baptism is thus dispensed with water and in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (“rite”), it is valid and can unfold to its proper effect.

The designation “rite” is from the Latin and means “in the proper form”, or “conforming to the rite”.

489

Why can children be baptised?

The statement of Jesus: “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of

God” (Mark 10: 14) indicates that the blessings of God should also be made accessible to children. This includes the sacraments.

The New Testament attests that entire households were baptised together: “And immediately he and all his family were baptised...” (Acts 16: 33; cf. also 16: 15). Households and families include children. From this the Christian tradition of baptising children has developed.

Moreover, when children are baptised, those entitled to raise them profess belief in Jesus Christ on their behalf and take responsibility for the religious education of their children in the sense of the gospel.

“Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptised.”

Acts 18: 8

490

What are the effects of Holy Baptism with water?

Holy Baptism with water signifies the end of a life in remoteness from God and the beginning of a life in Christ. It imparts strength to wage the battle against sin.

Baptism performed in the name of the Trinity is a binding element among Christians. Those baptised in the New Apostolic Church are entitled to partake regularly in Holy Communion.

→ **Holy Baptism with water:**

see Questions 481 et seq.

→ **New covenant:**

see explanation of Question 175

The term “**Trinitarian**” (Latin *trinitas*) refers to the divine Trinity. To be baptised in the name of the Trinity is to be baptised in the name of the triune God. The baptised is baptised using the so-called “Trinitarian formula”, that is, in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

491

What is the relationship between Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing?

Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing are two distinct sacraments, however they are closely linked to one another: by receiving both sacraments, the individual is reborn out of water

and the Holy Spirit. In the process, Holy Baptism with water precedes Holy Sealing.

→ **Rebirth out of water and the Spirit:**

see Question 528 et seq.

492

Who is entitled to perform Holy Baptism with water?

The Risen Son of God gave His Apostles the mandate to perform baptism (cf. Matthew 28: 18-20). In the New Apostolic Church, the Apostles have also assigned the authority to baptise with water to the priestly ministers.

493

Are baptisms performed in other Christian denominations valid?

Yes, the dispensation of Holy Baptism with water is possible and effective in all parts of the one church of Christ. Baptism with water is the first step on the way to perfect redemption. Wherever believers are baptised with water and in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the baptism is valid. Baptism with water has been entrusted to the church as a whole. The reason for this lies in God’s universal will to save.

→ **The church of Christ:**

see Question 365 et seq.

→ **Redemption:** see Questions 89-90, 108-109, 215-216

494

From what does the term ‘Lord’s Supper’ derive?

The term ‘supper’ refers to the circumstances in which Jesus Christ instituted this sacrament: on the evening before His crucifixion He celebrated the Passover meal with His Apostles.

On the evening before their exodus from Egypt, the Israelites celebrated the first **Passover meal** at the instruction of God. A lamb without blemish was slaughtered and prepared. With it, the Israelites ate unleavened bread. God commanded that the Passover be celebrated annually in order to commemorate the people’s liberation from Egypt.

495

What other designations are used in reference to Holy Communion?

Holy Communion is also known as the “Eucharist” (from a Greek word which means: “to give thanks”), the “Lord’s Supper”, or the “breaking of bread”.

496

Is there a relationship between the Passover meal and Holy Communion?

Yes, there is a relationship: according to the account of first three gospels, Jesus instituted Holy Communion with His Apostles during the Passover meal. Like the Passover, the Lord’s Supper is also a meal of commemoration. The Passover



ver commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from captivity in Egypt. Holy Communion refers to deliverance in a much broader sense, namely to the redemption of mankind from the bondage of sin.

→ **Redemption:** see *Questions 89-90, 108-109, 215-216*

497

Is Holy Communion attested anywhere else in the New Testament?

Yes, there is another reference to Holy Communion in 1 Corinthians 11: 23-26: "...the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me. In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

These words are the basis for the text that is spoken during the consecration of Holy Communion.

'**Consecration**' is the act of lifting the bread and wine out of the domain of the earthly. It is associated with dedication and sanctification (see explanation of "Consecration" following Question 503).

498

What do the elements of bread and wine signify?

The elements of bread and wine are both required for the celebration of Holy Communion. Bread, like wine, represents human sustenance. In Israel, wine is also a symbol of joy and future salvation.

The term '**symbol**' comes from Greek and is often taken to mean "emblem", or even "hallmark" or "characteristic".

499

What does Holy Communion call to mind for the believer?

Holy Communion is a meal of remembrance: it calls to mind the death of Jesus Christ as a unique event that is valid for all times. Jesus Christ commissioned the Apostles to celebrate Holy Communion with the words: "Do this in remembrance of Me..." (Luke 22: 19).

500

What do those who partake in Holy Communion profess?

Those who partake in Holy Communion thereby profess their belief in the death, resurrection, and return of Jesus Christ. Those who regularly partake of Holy Communion in the New Apostolic Church thereby also profess their belief in the Apostles of Jesus active today. In this respect, Holy Communion is also a meal of profession.



501

In what way is Holy Communion a meal of fellowship?

In Holy Communion Jesus Christ first of all has fellowship with His Apostles, and then with the believers. Beyond that, the believers also have fellowship with one another in Holy Communion.

502

Is there a connection between Holy Communion and the future “marriage feast” in heaven?

Yes. Holy Communion also points to the future “marriage feast” in heaven. Thus Holy Communion also has an eschatological character.

When He instituted Holy Communion in the circle of the Apostles, Jesus said: “For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes” (Luke 22: 18).

Until the reunion between the bridal congregation and Jesus Christ, the congregation experiences its most intimate fellowship with the Lord in Holy Communion.

→ *Marriage in heaven:*
see Questions 251, 562 et seq.

503

What happens when the wafers are consecrated?

The body and blood of Jesus Christ become present in the consecration.

Bread and wine are not changed in their substance through the consecration. In other words, the bread and wine

are not transformed. Rather, the substance of the body and blood of Jesus is joined to the bread and wine. This event is described as ‘consubstantiation’.

In Holy Communion, bread and wine are not mere images or symbols for the body and blood of Jesus. Rather, the body and blood of Jesus Christ are truly present after the consecration.

→ *Symbol:*
see explanation of Question 498

The term ‘consecration’ is derived from the Latin word *consacrare*, which means “to dedicate” or “to sanctify”. The term is used in the sense of “dedication” when bread and wine are consecrated for Holy Communion.

The word ‘substance’ derives from the Latin word *substantia*, which means “essence”, “constitution”, or “composition”. It thus describes what something consists of.

504

Is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ present in Holy Communion?

Yes, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is present in Holy Communion. This sacrifice is not repeated, however, as it has been brought “once for all” (Hebrews 10: 10, 14).

505

Why is Holy Communion celebrated in every divine service?

In contrast to the sacraments of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing, Holy Communion is celebrated in every divine service because it sustains hu-

man beings in their fellowship of life with Jesus Christ. We thereby absorb the nature of Jesus.

506

For how long do the body and blood of Christ remain present in the consecrated wafers?

The body and blood of Christ remain present in the consecrated wafers until they have reached the recipients they are intended to reach.

507

What is the relationship between forgiveness of sins and Holy Communion?

Forgiveness of sins is closely related to Holy Communion, since they are both based on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The sacrament of Holy Communion does not at the same time effect the forgiveness of sins, however. The forgiveness of sins is necessary so that the believers can subsequently partake worthily of Holy Communion, that is, in a state in which they have been cleansed of sin.

508

To whom did Jesus Christ entrust the sacrament of Holy Communion?

Jesus Christ instituted Holy Communion in the circle of the Apostles and also entrusted it to them. Wherever the Apostles or priestly ministers authorised by them are active, all aspects of Holy Communion are present.



509

What are the words of the consecration for Holy Communion?

For the consecration of Holy Communion, the minister pronounces a fixed text based on 1 Corinthians 11: 23 et seq. and Matthew 26: 26 et seq. as follows:

“In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I consecrate bread and wine for Holy Communion and lay thereupon the once brought, eternally valid sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For the Lord took bread and wine, gave thanks and said: ‘This is My body which is broken for you. This is My blood of the new covenant given for many for the remission of sins. Eat and drink! Do this in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Amen!”

510

How is Holy Communion celebrated in the divine service?

First, the wafers are consecrated. This happens when the authorised minister spreads his hands over the open communion chalice or paten and speaks the words of the consecration.

Then the ministers and the congregation receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the form of a wafer sprinkled with wine. The dispensation occurs with the words: “The body and blood of Jesus given for you.”

511

What is the prerequisite for worthy partaking in Holy Communion?

In addition to the forgiveness of sins, which is proclaimed beforehand, belief in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice is a necessary prerequisite.

→ *Forgiveness of sins: see Questions 415, 507, 629, 644 et seq.*

512

What are the effects of Holy Communion?

Holy Communion establishes intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ. It imparts the nature and strength of the Son of God. Partaking of Holy Communion also serves to promote the unity of the believers with one another, because they develop together into the nature of Jesus Christ. Thus Holy Communion is an important means of preparation for the return of Christ.

“For we, though many, are one bread and one body, for we all partake of that one bread.”

1 Corinthians 10: 17

513

Who is entitled to partake in Holy Communion?

Those who have been baptised in the New Apostolic Church, those who have been sealed, and those who have been adopted into the congregation are entitled to regularly partake of Holy Communion.

Properly (*rite*) baptised Christians may also have access to Holy Communion as guests.

→ *Holy Baptism with water: see Questions 404, 481 et seq.*

→ *‘Rite’: see explanation of Question 488*

→ *Holy Sealing: see Questions 404, 515 et seq.*

→ *Adoption: see Questions 662, 669*

514

What is the significance of the communion celebrations of other churches?

Important elements of Holy Communion are present in the communion celebrations of other churches. There too, the death and resurrection are commemorated with gratitude and faith. New Apostolic Christians should, however, be aware that by regularly partaking in the communion celebrations of another church, they are basically professing the doctrine of that church.

515

What is Holy Sealing?

Holy Sealing is the sacrament whereby the believer receives the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands and prayer of an Apostle. The believer thereby becomes a child of God with the calling to become a firstling.

→ *Firstling: see Questions 428, 530*

→ *Child of God: see explanation of Question 530*

516

What does the term “sealing” / “sealed” mean in the letters of the New Testament?

In the letters of the New Testament, the term “sealing” / “sealed” refers to the imparting of the gift of the Holy Spirit: “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Corinthians 1: 21-22).



“In Him [Christ] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1: 13).

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4: 30).

517

Was the Holy Spirit already active in the time of the Old Testament?

Yes. As a person of the Trinity of God, the Holy Spirit was, like the Father and the Son, active from eternity. In the old covenant, He filled individual human beings who had been selected by God for specific tasks.

→ *Old covenant and new covenant:*
see *Question 175*

“Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.”
1 Samuel 16: 13

“Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.”
Psalms 51: 11

518

Does the Old Testament contain any references to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament?

Yes, the Old Testament contains several references (for example, Ezekiel 36: 27) indicating that God’s Spirit would be

poured out over many people. An important reference to this can be found in Joel 2: 28-29: “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (see also Acts 2: 15 et seq.).

519

Did Jesus promise the outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

Yes, Jesus promised His Apostles on several occasions that He would send the Holy Spirit, for example: “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me” (John 15: 26).

520

When was the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit fulfilled?

It was on Pentecost in Jerusalem that this promise was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Apostles and the disciples.

“When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon

each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Acts 2: 1-4

521

When did the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit occur?

After the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. John the Baptist attested the following: “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him” (John 1: 32). This event can be described as “anointing”.

“Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

John 6: 27

→ *Baptism of Jesus:*
see *Questions 129 et seq.*

522

What is the significance of Jesus’ baptism and subsequent anointing with the Holy Spirit?

The baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist and the descending of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus are references to the sacraments of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing.

The anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit distinguishes Him as the Messiah. It is a reference to the sacrament of Holy Sealing. It is also to this event that Acts

10: 37-38 refers: “That word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.”

Already in the old covenant, individuals were consecrated for specific duties through **anointing**. Such anointing was given to prophets, kings, and priests. See also “Messiah” (= “the Anointed One”), Questions 111 and 112.

523

From what does it follow that Holy Baptism with water should precede the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit?

When asked by his listeners what they were to do in response to his Pentecost sermon, Apostle Peter answered as follows: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2: 38).

524

What does the book of Acts relate concerning Holy Sealing?

An important reference to Holy Sealing is found in Acts 8: 14 et seq.: “Now when the Apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been

baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.”

According to this testimony from Holy Scripture, Holy Sealing is bound to the Apostle ministry. This is also confirmed in Acts 8: 18. Simon, who had previously practised sorcery but had come to believe and was baptised (cf. Acts 8: 9, 11 et seq.), “saw that through the laying on of the Apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given.”

From this event it follows that the sacraments of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing are clearly distinguished from one another. We find a similar account in Acts 19: 1-6. In Ephesus, there were some disciples who had only received the baptism unto repentance from John. When they came to believe in Jesus, they were first of all baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. After this they received the gift of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles: “And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them.”

→ **Baptism unto repentance:**

see [Question 485](#)



525

How is the sacrament of Holy Sealing dispensed?

The sacrament of Holy Sealing is dispensed by Apostles when they impart the gift of the Holy Spirit in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to a baptised person. In so doing they lay their hands on the forehead of the baptised believer and pray.

526

What are the prerequisites for receiving the sacrament of Holy Sealing?

The prerequisite for receiving the sacrament of Holy Sealing is belief in the triune God and the Apostles sent by Jesus Christ. The believer must also have been baptised with water in proper fashion beforehand. He must profess his faith and vow to follow Christ.

→ **“In the proper manner” (rite):**

see [explanation of Question 488](#)

527

Who can receive the sacrament of Holy Sealing?

Any person who fulfils the necessary prerequisites can receive Holy Sealing. The sacrament is dispensed upon adults and children alike. When children are sealed, the parents or guardians responsible for their religious education must profess their faith on behalf of the children. They must vow to raise their children in the New Apostolic faith.

528

What do we mean by the “rebirth out of water and the Spirit”?

The two sacraments of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing together comprise the “rebirth out of water and the Spirit”. Through these sacraments, God creates a “new creation”—life from God.

“Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.’”

John 3: 5

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

2 Corinthians 5: 17

529

What is the relationship between Holy Sealing and the rebirth out of water and the Spirit?

Holy Sealing is part of the rebirth out of water and the Spirit. In it, God completes that which He began in Holy Baptism with water. The renewal of a human being occurs through God, the Holy Spirit, who thereby reveals Himself as the Maker of the new creation.

→ **Holy Baptism with water:**

see [Questions 404, 481 et seq.](#)

530

What are the effects of Holy Sealing?

In Holy Sealing, the believer is enduringly filled with the Holy Spirit. God thereby allows him to share in His being. God thus grants him His strength, His life, and His love for mankind: “The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5: 5).

The sealed believer is now the property of God. God’s Spirit has taken up His enduring dwelling place within him (cf. Romans 8: 9).

The human being is now a child of God. He has been called to be a firstling; the rebirth thus has a present effect in childhood in God and a future effect in the calling to become a firstling.

As a child of God, the believer is now an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. The “Spirit of adoption” which

is active within the human being as a result of Holy Sealing, now confidently addresses God as “Abba, Father”.

If the sealed believer gives the Holy Spirit room to unfold, divine virtues will come into being. These are described figuratively as “fruit of the Spirit” (cf. Galatians 5: 22).

→ *Firstling*: see Question 428

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”

Galatians 5: 22-23

“For [...] you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.”

Romans 8: 15-17

The term “**child of God**” has various aspects:

- All human beings are children of God because they have been created by God and can therefore address the Almighty as “Father”.
- In the time of the Old Testament, God cared for the people of Israel like a Father. Accordingly He referred to the people of Israel as “My son, My firstborn” (cf. Exodus 4: 22-23). Israel thus enjoyed a kind of relationship of childhood with God. When Jesus spoke to the Jews in the Sermon on the Mount, He described God as their “Father in heaven”.
- As Christians, we have been given the Lord’s Prayer, in which we confidently address God as “Our Father”.
- Beyond that, the term “childhood in God” refers to that condition of a human being before God which is characterised by having received all the sacraments, believing, and aligning one’s life by the return of Christ. Childhood in God is attained through the rebirth out of water and the Spirit. As “children of God”, reborn believers are promised that they will be heirs of the Most High.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Spiritual death

Afterlife

*The resurrection
of the dead*

The departed

Salvation after physical death

The beyond

531

Is there a life after death?

Yes. Man is both a physical being and a spiritual being. He is an entity consisting of body, soul, and spirit.

The human body is mortal and is thus transitory. It is taken from the earth and will return to the earth (cf. Genesis 3: 19). Soul and spirit, by contrast, live on after physical death, and are

thus immortal. The personhood of a human being—that is, his essence, that which comprises him, and that which he has experienced, felt, believed, and thought—thus continues to exist after physical death.

“For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity.”

Wisdom of Solomon 2: 23

532

What is death?

There is a distinction between the physical death and the spiritual death of a human being. Physical death signifies the end of life on earth. When it occurs, soul and spirit leave the body. Spiritual death is the separation of a human being from God. It is the consequence of sin.

When the Bible speaks of the “second death” (cf. Revelation 20: 6; 21: 8), this refers to the separation from God that takes effect after the Last Judgement.

→ **Last Judgement:**

see Questions 579 et seq.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 6: 23

533

How else does the Bible understand “death”?

The Bible also uses the term “death” to describe a power opposed to God, which threatens and seeks to destroy both physical and spiritual life. Thus the Revelation of Jesus Christ figuratively describes death as a person: “So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him” (Revelation 6: 8).

534

Who has power over death?

The triune God is Lord over life and death. Through His resurrection, Jesus Christ has conquered death. Thereby He has given mankind access to eternal life: “[...] our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1: 10).

535

What is the significance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation for the resurrection of the dead. Since He has resurrected, the dead will also resurrect, “some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12: 2).

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

1 Corinthians 15: 51-52



536

Are there any references to life after death in Holy Scripture?

A life after physical death is already suggested in the Old Testament. In the New Testament it is attested on several occasions. For example, we read as follows in 1 Peter 3: 19-20: “By whom [the Holy Spirit] also He [Jesus Christ] went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”

537

Where do human beings find themselves after physical death?

The souls and spirits of human beings who have died enter the realm of the dead. We also describe this as “the beyond”.

538

What do we mean when we talk about “the beyond”?

The term “the beyond” refers in general to all realms, events, and conditions that lie outside of the material world. In a narrower sense, this term denotes the realm of the dead (Hebrew: *Sheol*, Greek: *Hades*).

539

Is there a reincarnation of the dead?

No. Any notion of repeated lives on earth (reincarnation), whether as a human being, animal, or plant, contradicts the statements of the Bible and thus the content of the gospel: “[...] it is appointed for men to die once” (Hebrews 9: 27).

The term ‘**reincarnation**’ refers to different conceptions—none of which are consistent with Christian doctrine—of repeated human existence on earth in various forms.

540

Can we connect with the departed?

By remembering the departed and praying for them, we have a connection with them.

Attempting to contact the departed through necromancy or channelling is forbidden by God and is thus a sin: “There shall not be found among you anyone [...] who [is] a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord” (Deuteronomy 18: 10-12).

541

What is the condition of the souls in the beyond?

The condition of the souls in the beyond is an expression of their proximity to, or remoteness from, God. A person’s soul has not undergone any change as a result of physical death. A person is not only defined by belief or unbelief, reconciliation or irreconcilability, love or hatred on this earth, but also in the beyond.

This condition is also addressed in the parable of Jesus of the rich man and poor Lazarus (cf. Luke 16: 19-31), when He speaks of a place of security and a place of torment. The departed can become aware of their condition. Those who suffer torment can hope for help.

542

Who are the “dead in Christ”?

In 1 Thessalonians 4: 16 we read of the “dead in Christ”. These are departed individuals who have been reborn out of water and the Holy Spirit, and who have allowed themselves to be prepared for the return of Christ. They belong to the congregation of the Lord and find themselves in a condition of righteousness before God, which is attained through grace and faith.

→ *The rebirth out of water and the Spirit: see Questions 528 et seq.*

“But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them. In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die: and their departure is taken for misery. And their going from us to be utter destruction: but they are in peace.”
Wisdom of Solomon 3: 1-3



543

Can the condition of the souls in the beyond be changed?

Yes. Since the sacrifice of Christ, it has been possible to change the condition of the souls in the beyond for the better.

After His death, Jesus Christ went into the realm of the dead and preached there. The preaching of the gospel implies an opportunity to change for those who accept it in faith.

Therefore a human being can also attain salvation after physical death.

→ **Salvation:**

see Questions 243 et seq., 546

544

How is it possible for souls in the beyond to change?

Souls in the beyond who have never heard of the gospel, never had their sins forgiven, and never received any of the sacraments find themselves in a condition of remoteness from God. This condition can only be overcome through belief in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice and by receiving the sacraments.

545

What statements does Holy Scripture make concerning help for the dead?

In 2 Maccabees 12 there is an account of men who had served idols and fallen in battle. Their comrades prayed that they

would receive help for the sinful condition of their souls. They also collected money with which to buy sacrificial animals in order to bring an offering of atonement.

The biblical basis for dispensing sacraments to the departed is found in 1 Corinthians 15: 29: in Corinth, living persons were baptised for the dead. This practice was once again adopted by the Apostles of the modern era. From this developed the divine services for the departed that are celebrated today.

546

Can we help the departed attain salvation?

Yes, we can intercede in prayer for unredeemed souls and ask the Lord to help them. Likewise, we can pray that these souls come to believe in Jesus Christ and that they are open and prepared to accept the salvation God wishes to grant them.

Since both the living and the dead in Christ comprise a single fellowship, they will work both here and in the beyond in the mind of Christ, in other words, they will intercede in prayer for the unredeemed.

Redemption itself can only occur through Jesus Christ, however.

→ **Redemption:**

see Questions 215 et seq.

→ **Salvation:**

see Questions 243, 248 et seq.



547

In what way do the departed receive salvation?

Jesus Christ is Lord over both the dead and the living. It is the will of God that all men be saved (cf. 1 Timothy 2: 4-6). This occurs through the sermon, the sacrament, and the forgiveness of sins. Belief in Jesus Christ is indispensable for this. This applies to both the dead and the living alike.

That the gospel must also be preached to the departed is clear from 1 Peter 4: 6: "For this reason the gospel was preached

also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

John 3: 16

548

How and through whom is salvation imparted to the dead?

The dispensation of Holy Baptism with water, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion for the departed occurs when Apostles perform each of these visible acts on living persons. The effect for salvation here is not for the benefit of the living, however, but for the departed.

Just as Jesus Christ brought His sacrifice on earth, so too salvation is imparted through the Apostles on earth.

→ **Holy Baptism with water:**

see Questions 481 et seq.

→ **Holy Communion:**

see Questions 494 et seq.

→ **Holy Sealing:**

see Questions 515 et seq.

10

THE DOCTRINE
OF
FUTURE THINGS

Kingdom of peace

First resurrection

The goal of faith

Last Judgement

The promise of

Christ's return

The new creation

549

How do we know about the events of the future?

The doctrine of those things that will come to pass in the future (eschatology) has its basis in Holy Scripture. Many references to the future of salvation history are contained in the gospels and in the letters of the Apostles. Some pivotal statements can also be found in the Revelation of John, which speaks of these future events in figurative language.

→ *Eschatology:*

see explanation of Question 40

550

What future event is the goal of faith of New Apostolic Christians?

Jesus Christ is coming again—that is a central statement of the gospel. Since His ascension into heaven the Apostles have proclaimed the return of the Lord. It is the goal of faith of New Apostolic Christians to be accepted by Him on this occasion.

551

Who promised the return of Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ Himself promised His Apostles: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and

receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14: 3).

This promise of Jesus was reinforced by angels at His ascension into heaven: “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1: 11).

552

Who knows the exact point in time when Christ will return?

Neither angels nor men know the day or the hour of Jesus Christ’s return. Only the triune God knows this.

553

What follows from the fact that no man knows the moment in time of Christ’s return?

Since no man knows the moment in time of Christ’s return, the believer is called upon to remain prepared for this event every day. The Son of God summarises this into the admonition: “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24: 42). Jesus also made it clear in parables that believers are to be watchful in faith and expect His return at any hour.

→ *Parables concerning the return of Christ: see Question 157*

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. [...] But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ [...] And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also [...] Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”

Mathew 25: 1-13

cf. also Matthew 24: 43-51; 25: 14-30



554

How did the early Apostles treat the promise of Christ's return?

The promise of Christ's return played a great role in the preaching of the early Apostles. Next to the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus, it was among the most important contents of their faith. They were convinced that Jesus would return in their lifetimes: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1 Corinthians 15: 51).

Apostle Paul addressed the congregation in Corinth with the early Christian call of prayer: "Maranatha", which means "O Lord, come!" (cf. 1 Corinthians 16: 22).

The call to be ready for the return of Christ at all times also comes to expression in the Revelation of Jesus Christ in the words of the Lord: "Behold, I am coming quickly!" (Revelation 3: 11; 22: 7, 12, 20).

555

What does the promise of Christ's return mean for us?

It is one of the fundamental certainties of the gospel that Jesus Christ will return and take His bride unto Himself. He Himself has promised His return (cf. John 14: 3).

→ **Bridal congregation:**
see Questions 562 et seq.

556

Why do we believe that the promise of Christ's return is near?

The fact that the Apostle ministry is once again occupied is a sign that the return of Christ is imminent. The expectation that this promise of the Lord will be fulfilled is as much the focal point of the New Apostolic faith today as it is the hope of each individual to personally experience the return of Christ and the rapture.

→ **Transformation and rapture:**
see Questions 559 et seq.

557

How do we prepare for the return of Christ?

The Apostles prepare the believers for the return of Christ through word and sacrament. The believers conscientiously align their lives by this.

558

How is the return of Christ described in the letters of Apostle Paul?

In 1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17 it says: "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain

shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."

In 1 Corinthians 15: 51-52 we read: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

In Philippians 3: 20-21 we find the statement: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself."

559

What will happen at the return of Christ?

In summary, the following results from the statements of Apostle Paul:

At the return of Christ, the dead who have died in Christ, will be the first to resurrect incorruptible. The living who have allowed themselves to be prepared for the return of Christ will experience the transformation without having to suffer physical death.

Both the dead and the living will receive a glorious body. This body will be like the resurrection body of Christ. Together, they will be caught up to Jesus Christ and will thus enter into eternal fellowship with the triune God.

These events are part of the first resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20: 5-6.

→ **Resurrection:**

see Questions 574 et seq.

→ **Resurrection body:** see Question 189

'Incorruptible' means immortal, unperishable. Unlike our present body, the resurrection body will not be subject to decay.

560

What is the basis of the believers' hope that they will not need to suffer physical death?

The hope of the believers that they will not have to suffer physical death is based on the statement of Apostle Paul: "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven. [...] For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee" (2 Corinthians 5: 2, 4-5).

With the word "habitation" the Apostle is referring to the glorious body which will not only be received by those who resurrect from the dead, but also by those who are to be transformed at the return of Christ: The expression "further clothed" means to receive a new body without having to die beforehand. Here "unclothed" is an expression for dying.

561

Who will be caught up at the return of Christ?

The rapture at the return of Christ is first of all promised to those who have been granted the rebirth out of water and the Spirit, who believe in Jesus Christ, and who follow Him. This group is also called the “bridal congregation” or the “male child” (Revelation 12: 5).

Whether God will also grant the grace of the rapture to others is beyond human judgement and is subject to the decision of God.

→ *Rebirth out of water and the Spirit:*
see Question 528

The ‘rapture’ (or the event of being “caught up to God”) means that human beings will enter into direct fellowship with God at the return of Christ.

562

Who is included in the “bridal congregation”?

Jesus Christ gave His Apostles the commission to prepare the church of Christ to be united with Him at His return. Apostle Paul writes as follows concerning this: “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11: 2). The image of the “chaste virgin” is a reference to the “bride” in

Revelation 19: 7. Those who will be included in this group and be united with Jesus will only be revealed at the return of Christ.

563

Are there any characteristics for those who will belong to the bridal congregation?

Yes—one such outstanding characteristic is that they wait daily for the return of Christ and are steadfast in praying: “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22: 17, 20).

564

Does the Bible relate any other characteristics of the bridal congregation?

Yes. Further characteristics of the bridal congregation are mentioned in Revelation 14: 1-5. Here the image of a group of “one hundred and forty-four thousand” is used as a reference to the bridal congregation. The number “144,000” is not to be understood literally, but is of symbolic nature. It is derived from the twelve tribes of Israel and is described with the following images: “Behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. [...] These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to

God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

565

What is the significance of the images in Revelation 14: 1-5?

The mark (“seal”) with the name of the “Lamb” and of the Father indicates that the hundred and forty-four thousand are the property of God.

Being “without fault”, having “no deceit” in their mouths, and “following the Lamb”, indicate that they have led their lives in accordance with the gospel in word and deed.

The term “firstfruits” describes those whom Christ will take to Himself at His return: these will be the first to receive complete salvation.

The “Lamb” refers to Jesus Christ: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1: 29). Revelation 5: 12 relates that the Lamb who was slain has gained the victory. This means that the abased and crucified Son of God also triumphs and conquers.

→ *Salvation:* see Questions 243 et seq.

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing!”
Revelation 5: 12

566

When will the “marriage of the Lamb” take place?

The “marriage of the Lamb”—in other words, the union of the bridal congregation with the bridegroom, Jesus Christ—will take place after He returns and after His bridal congregation has been transformed and caught up to God.

567

What will transpire at the “marriage of the Lamb”?

The bridal congregation will be permitted to share in Christ’s glory and will be in direct and indissoluble fellowship with God.

→ *Bridal congregation:*
see Questions 562 et seq.

“Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb”.’”
Revelation 19: 6-9

568

What happens on earth after the return of Christ?

After the return of Christ, a time will begin in which both man and the creation will suffer because they are exposed to the power of Satan. This period of time is called the “great tribulation”.

→ **The great tribulation:**
see Questions 405, 409

569

Will there be any protection in the time of the “great tribulation”?

Yes. In the time of the “great tribulation”, there will be a place of spiritual protection for those who belong to the church of Jesus Christ and who have not been caught up to Jesus Christ. They will continue to experience divine help and spiritual care so that their faith may be preserved.

In the book of Revelation, they are represented by the image of the woman clothed with the sun, who has given birth to a male child. They continue to receive divine support and spiritual care such that their faith may be preserved (cf. Revelation 12: 6).

In the time of the “great tribulation” there will be people who are killed for professing Christ. These steadfast witnesses will thus become martyrs.

570

What happens to the martyrs from the time of the “great tribulation”?

Those Christians who are killed for their witness of Christ in the time of the “great tribulation” will share in the first resurrection, like the bridal congregation before them.

→ **First resurrection:**
see Questions 574 et seq.

571

What occurs after the “marriage of the Lamb” and the “great tribulation”?

After the “marriage of the Lamb” Jesus Christ will return to the earth with the bridal congregation and put an end to the time of the “great tribulation”.

572

What will happen to Satan after the time of the “great tribulation”?

According to Revelation 20: 1-3, Satan and his followers—the powers opposed to God—will be “chained” and cast into the “bottomless pit”. All power is thus taken from them, and no one will be tempted by Satan for a long time.

573

What happens when Satan is bound and relieved of his power?

When Satan is bound and when the powers opposed to God are deprived of all their power, the resurrection of the

martyrs from the “great tribulation” will take place. Thus the martyrs will also share in the first resurrection.

574

What events comprise the first resurrection?

During the first resurrection, the “dead in Christ” will resurrect and, together with the living who belong to the bridal congregation, will be caught up to God.

After the “marriage in heaven”, the martyrs from the “great tribulation” will resurrect and be numbered among the royal priesthood.

These two events are described as the “first resurrection”: “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20: 6).

→ **Rapture / transformation:**
see Question 559 et seq.
→ **“Great tribulation”:**
see Questions 569 et seq.

575

What follows the conclusion of the first resurrection?

After the conclusion of the first resurrection, Jesus Christ will establish His kingdom of peace and exercise His royal reign for “a thousand years”. These thousand years symbolise a long, but limited, period of time.

576

Will human beings still sin during this time?

Yes. Even though Satan has been deprived of his power and can no longer tempt anyone to sin, human beings will remain sinners and continue to be mortal, since the inclination to sin has not been lifted. The exceptions to this are those who took part in the first resurrection.

→ **Inclination to sin:**
see Question 227 and explanation
→ **First resurrection:** see Question 574

577

What transpires during the period of the kingdom of peace on earth?

During the time of Christ’s kingdom of peace, Jesus Christ and the royal priesthood will preach the gospel unhindered. The gospel will be brought to all human beings living on earth as well as all souls in the realms of the departed. By the end of the kingdom of peace, all human beings of all time periods will have become acquainted with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

→ **The royal priesthood:**
see Questions 259, 409, and 574

578

What happens at the end of the kingdom of peace?

At the end of the kingdom of peace, Satan is released. He will thus have one last opportunity to tempt human beings. After Christ's victory over him, he will be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" (cf. Revelation 20: 7-10). From then on, evil will be rendered powerless forever.

579

What will happen once evil has been deprived of its power forever?

After evil is deprived of its power forever, the resurrection of the dead for judgement will take place. Then Jesus Christ will judge all human beings who have ever lived. The only ones exempted from this Last Judgement are those who took part in the first resurrection.

The "**Last Judgement**" is the final judgement over all human beings who did not take part in the first resurrection. This judgement is described in Revelation 20: 11-15.

"And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."

Revelation 20: 12

580

What happens to those who find grace in the Last Judgement?

Those who find grace in the Last Judgement will—together with those who partook in the first resurrection—become citizens of God's new creation. They will then all have eternal fellowship with God. The others will remain in the misery of remoteness from God.

581

What does the Bible have to say about God's new creation?

After the Last Judgement, God will replace the old creation with a new creation: "He [God] will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21: 3). Thereby the expectation expressed in 2 Peter 3: 13 will be fulfilled: "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." This kingdom of God will be eternal, and then God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15: 28).



11

FROM
THE HISTORY
OF CHRISTIANITY

*The gospel is for both
Jews and Gentiles*

Congregations

Reformation

Catholic Apostolic Church

New Apostolic Church

*Renewed occupation of
the Apostle ministry*

582

How did the first Christian congregations come into being?

The first Christian congregation came into being on Pentecost (cf. Acts 2: 37 et seq.). This congregation consisted only of Jews. Owing to the persecutions that followed, many of the believers fled from Jerusalem (cf. Acts 8: 1; 11: 19). In their new surroundings they continued to preach the gospel, which also met with faith there. So it was that Christian congregations began to form in other places.

583

How did the gospel come to the Gentiles?

The Apostles at first worked under the assumption that the gospel was only to be preached to the Jews. In a vision, however, God made it clear to Apostle Peter that the gospel is also intended for the Gentiles (cf. Acts 10 and 11).

At the Apostles' council in Jerusalem, questions concerning the mission to the Gentiles and the significance of the Mosaic Law for baptised Gentiles were clarified (cf. Acts 15: 1-29). These decisions were contributing factors in helping the Christian congregations to eventually shed many traditions of the Jewish faith.

→ **Gentiles:**
see explanation of Question 256

→ **Mosaic Law:**
see Questions 272 et seq.

In special cases, God uses a "vision" to reveal His will to human beings whom He chooses for this purpose.

584

Which Apostle primarily proclaimed the gospel to the Gentiles?

Apostle Paul primarily proclaimed the gospel to the Gentiles. To this end he travelled, at times together with Apostle Barnabas, to present-day Turkey, as well as Greece, Cyprus, and finally even to Italy.

585

Where did the designation "Christian" come into being?

The followers of Jesus were first referred to as Christians in Antioch (cf. Acts 11: 26).

586

How long were the Apostles active?

The Apostles were likely active until the end of the first century AD. John is thought to be the last Apostle of the early church. After this began the period in which the Apostle ministry was no longer personally occupied, even though it did not cease to exist. It was not until the nineteenth century that the Apostle ministry came to be personally occupied again.

→ **Personal occupation of the Apostle ministry:** see Question 450 and explanation

→ **Continuation of the Apostle ministry:** see Questions 447 et seq.

587

How did the activity of the Holy Spirit reveal itself after the death of the early Apostles?

The Holy Spirit ensured that the binding collection of writings from the Old and New Testaments (canon) could come into being.

Through the activity of the Holy Spirit, important fundamentals of Christian doctrine were formulated in large church assemblies (ecumenical councils). These include, for example, the doctrine that God is triune, that Jesus Christ is both true Man and true God, and the recognition of the decisive significance that the sacrifice of Jesus and His resurrection hold for the salvation and redemption of mankind.

It can also be attributed to the activity of the Holy Spirit over the centuries that the Christian faith was able to spread around the world.

→ **Bible, canon:** see Questions 12 et seq.

→ **Council:** see explanation of Question 33

→ **Triune God:** see Questions 61 et seq.

→ **Dual nature of Jesus Christ:** see Questions 103 et seq.

588

How was salvation imparted throughout this period?

Salvation was primarily imparted in that the gospel was proclaimed and Holy Baptism with water was dispensed.

→ **Salvation:** see Questions 243 et seq.

589

How did Christendom develop after the second century AD?

What had begun with the stoning of Deacon Stephen grew into waves of persecutions: many Christians were killed for their faith and thereby became martyrs.

Despite these persecutions and many obstacles, the Christian faith spread throughout the entire Roman Empire.

→ **Martyrs:** see explanation of Question 394

590

Who handed the teachings of the early Apostles down to posterity?

The original teaching of the Apostles was handed down and further developed by the "Apostolic Fathers". These were church teachers of great influence. Their ranks included the likes of Clement of Rome (died around AD 100), Ignatius of Antioch (died around AD 115), Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna (born around AD 69, died around AD 155), and Papias of Hierapolis (born around AD 70, died around AD 130/140). It was their endeavour to defend the Christian faith against both Gentiles and Jews, and to protect the fundamentals of the Christian doctrine.

One of the defining personages for the church was Athanasius the Great (around AD 295 to AD 373), under whose influence the Nicene Creed was formulated in the year AD 325.



Ambrose of Milan



Hieronymus



Augustine of Hippo

591

Who were the “Church Fathers”?

“Church Fathers” were scholars who formulated the fundamental truths of Christianity after the time of the “Apostolic Fathers”. Their ranks include such men as Ambrose of Milan (339 to 397), Hieronymus (347 to 420), and Augustine of Hippo (354 to 430).

592

When did Christianity become the state religion in the Roman Empire?

After some difficult times of persecution, the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great proclaimed religious freedom for the Christians in the year 313.

In the year 381, Emperor Theodosius elevated Christianity in the Roman Empire to the status of state religion. He forbade the worship of pagan gods.

“Religious freedom” refers to a condition in which people are free to profess and practise the religion and world-view of their choice.

593

How did Christianity develop in the time before the Middle Ages?

During the great Migration Period (in the fourth and fifth centuries) Christianity gained in strength in both Europe and Asia.

Monasticism, which first came into being in Egypt in the third century, played a special role in the spread of Christianity. One of the principle duties of the monks was to live a life of poverty in accordance with the example of Christ, and to spread the Christian faith. In the Middle Ages, monks and nuns accomplished outstanding achievements in science, and were also involved in agriculture and social issues.

Increasingly, Christianity came to define the lives of the people, as well as the culture, politics, and society of Europe.

In the year 1054, tensions led to a split between the Western Church (Roman Catholic) and the Eastern Church (Orthodox).

Monasticism is a lifestyle in which people endeavour to dedicate their entire lives to their religion in isolation from all things secular. Both men and women (nuns) engaged in this “monastic” lifestyle.

594

What else did the Christians have to contend with starting in the seventh century?

Starting in the seventh century, Christians in parts of Asia, Africa, and even Europe had to contend with a new religion, namely Islam. Many areas were lost to the Christian faith, for example the Middle East and Northern Africa.

This led to battles, for example, the Crusades. These took place between 1095 and 1270 in the Middle East with the stated objective of conquering Jerusalem and the Holy Land for Christendom.

Islam is the youngest of the major world religions. It was established by Mohammed in the seventh century AD. Islam teaches belief in one God, but not in a triune God. In Islamic teaching, Jesus is considered a prophet. The holy book of Islam is the Koran.

Crusades: Palestine, and with it Jerusalem, were under Islamic rule. Between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, successive popes called upon the rulers of Europe to bring this region back under Christian control. These military campaigns were called “Crusades” and its soldiers were known as “Crusaders” because they went to battle in the name of Christ and for His glory.

595

What developments led to the efforts to reform the church?

Over the course of the Middle Ages, the church became more and more secular—faith and doctrine lost more and more of their value. This can be attributed to a lack of orientation from the gospel.

It was for this reason that an increasing number of efforts were made to reform the church. On the one hand, there were endeavours to reform the church within monasticism, and on the other hand, others like the Frenchman Peter Waldo (1140, died before 1218), the English theologian John Wycliffe (1320-1384), and the rector of the University of Prague, John Hus (1369-1384), began to make efforts of their own. All of them were consistent critics of the secularised church. The movements initiated and supported by them affected large parts of Europe, and eventually led to the Reformation.

596

What is the Reformation?

The Reformation (from the Latin *ref-ormatio*, meaning “restoration” or “renewal”) was a religious renewal movement in Europe, which was based on the desire to return to the gospel.

It is closely associated with the German monk Martin Luther (1483-1546). According to his conviction, the sole basis of the doctrine was to be the biblical testimony of Jesus Christ. Luther translated the Bible from the Hebrew



Martin Luther



Ulrich Zwingli



John Calvin

and Greek languages into German, and thus made it accessible to the people.

The Anglican state church came into being independently in the year 1534.

597

Who are the most significant of the Reformers?

In addition to Martin Luther from Wittenberg, this group included the Reformer Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), who was active in Zurich, and John Calvin (1509-1564), who ushered in an independent Reformation movement in Geneva.

598

How did the Roman Catholic Church react to the Reformation?

As a response to the Reformation, the Council of Trent (which began in 1545) ushered in a renewal of the Church

and prepared the ground for the Counter-Reformation, which in turn reinforced the power of the papacy.

The term 'Counter-Reformation' denotes the response of the Roman Catholic Church to the Reformation.

599

What were the consequences of the conflict between Protestantism and Catholicism?

In the course of the conflicts between Protestants and Catholics the Thirty Years' War broke out (1618-1648), which ultimately served to strengthen the influence of the state on the church. Thereafter, the sovereign determined the religious affiliation of his subjects.

The followers of the Reformation were known as "Protestants".

600

What was the condition of Christendom in the Europe of the eighteenth century?

In the eighteenth century, the Christian faith often came to be associated with a school of thought that regarded human reason as the sole measure of all things ("The Enlightenment"). As a reaction to this, Pietism, a movement within the Reformed Church, began to grow in power and influence. Identifying features of the Pietists included intensive Bible study, social commitment, and missionary activity.

→ "Mission": see explanation of Question 393

601

What was the condition of Christendom in the nineteenth century?

In the nineteenth century, increasing efforts were made in order to win back those who had, through poverty and ignorance, grown alienated from the faith, for the gospel ("Inner or Home Mission"). Beyond that, "missionary societies" were established in order to see to the spread of Christianity in countries outside of Europe, particularly in Africa.

602

What important developments occurred in the Christendom of the nineteenth century?

The so-called "revivalist movements"—which became especially popular among Protestants in England and the USA—were also of great significance: believing Christians appealed for people to turn away from "cultural Christianity" and return to a living Christian faith. This call for reflection on the gospel was often associated with the hope in the return of Christ.

This is the historical context in which God prepared for the renewed activity of Apostles.

603

How did the renewed occupation of the Apostle ministry in the nineteenth century come about?

Between 1826 and 1829, believing men gathered for conferences in Albury (Southern England), in order to study the Revelation of Jesus Christ together. These conferences took place at the invitation of the banker Henry Drummond (1786-1860) in close collaboration with Edward Irving (1792-1834), who was a clergyman of the Scottish National Church. The participants of these conferences wanted to gain clarity on the biblical statements concerning the activity of the Holy Spirit and the return of Christ.

Believers of various denominations in Scotland were also waiting for an increased activity of the Holy Spirit. In



The Albury Conference

1830, manifestations of healing, glossolalia (speaking in unknown tongues), and prophecy occurred in their circle, and were widely noticed.

In the autumn of 1832, John Bate Cardale (1802-1877) was called by the Holy Spirit to be an Apostle and was designated as an Apostle by Henry Drummond.

Starting in September 1833, another eleven Apostles were called by prophecy—especially through the Prophet Oliver Taplin (1800-1862).

604

How did the Catholic Apostolic Church come into being?

In 1835, the Apostles withdrew to Albury for a year of intensive deliberations together. They developed the “Great Testimony” (1837), a confessional text that was made available to all spiritual and secular leaders of Christendom.

In this document the Apostles called upon Christians to gather under their leadership and thereby prepare themselves for the return of Christ. They were thus not interested in establishing

a new church, but rather in bringing the various existing churches together under the leadership of Apostles.

The majority of Christians did not accept the call of the Apostles, however. The few Christians that did believe the Apostles banded together in a new church, namely the Catholic Apostolic Church.

605

When did the first sealings take place?

The first sealings—at the time, this act was known as the “apostolic laying on of hands”—took place in 1847 in England, Canada, and Germany.

606

What happened when some of the Apostles died?

In the year 1855, three of the Apostles died. Through the prophets Edward Oliver Taplin and Heinrich Geyer (1818-1896), successors in the Apostle ministry were called. These callings were not accepted by the remaining Apostles,

however. No further Apostles were ordained.

Ultimately, the result of this point of view was that there were no more Apostles in the Catholic Apostolic Church after the death of the last living Apostle Francis V. Woodhouse in the year 1901. No further ministers were ordained either.

607

How did the New Apostolic Church come into being?

On 10 October 1862, Priest Rudolf Rososchacky (1815-1894), the rector of the Catholic Apostolic congregation in Königsberg, was called to be an Apostle by Prophet Geyer. The Apostles of the Catholic Apostolic Church did not acknowledge this calling.

Prophet Geyer and the leader of the Catholic Apostolic congregation in Hamburg, Friedrich Wilhelm Schwartz (1815-1895) were, however, convinced that this calling had been the work of the Holy Spirit.

The congregation in Hamburg thus acknowledged the calling of this Apostle on 4 January 1863, and was excom-

municated from the Catholic Apostolic Church as a result.

Thus the beginning of the New Apostolic Church dates back to January 1863.

Even after Apostle Rososchacky resigned from his ministry a short time later, Geyer, Schwarz, and the Hamburg congregation remained firmly convinced that his calling had been a divine one.

608

What happened in the time following?

Priest Carl Wilhelm Louis Preuß (1827-1878), and a little later on, Friedrich Wilhelm Schwartz were called as Apostles. Apostle Preuß worked in Northern Germany while Apostle Schwartz took on the Netherlands as his working area.

Other Apostles were called soon after. The newly established community called itself the *Allgemeine Christliche apostolische Mission* (“General Christian Apostolic Mission”).

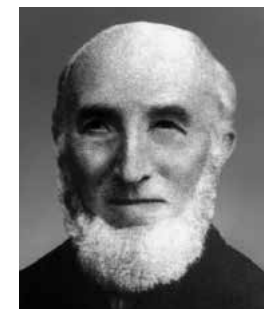
In the year 1872, Friedrich Wilhelm Menkhoff (1826-1895) was called as an Apostle for Westphalia and the Rhineland.



Carl Wilhelm Louis Preuß



Friedrich Wilhelm Schwartz



Friedrich Wilhelm Menkhoff

In 1884, Apostle Menkhoff established the Church magazine *Der Herold* (“The Herald”) in Germany. Under his influence, Apostle Schwartz—beginning in his working area—did away with the liturgical vestments and many other elements of liturgy that had been assumed from the Catholic Apostolic Church. In the year 1885, these changes were then implemented in all other congregations as well.

The term ‘**liturgy**’ is used to describe the way in which the sequence of the divine service is defined.

609

How did the name “New Apostolic Church” come into being?

In order to distinguish itself from the Catholic Apostolic congregations, the congregations that came into being after 1863 soon began calling themselves “New Apostolic congregations” in written correspondence. In 1907, the group officially adopted the name “New Apostolic Congregation”, and as of approximately 1930, began calling itself the “New Apostolic Church”.

610

How long was the prophet ministry active?

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Apostle ministry, with its extensive authority, began to emerge as the central ministry in the Church. At the same time, the significance of the

prophet ministry began to decline. As of the end of the 1920s there were no more prophets active in the congregations.

611

Who was the first Chief Apostle?

In 1881, Friedrich Krebs (1832-1905) from Braunschweig, Germany was called as an Apostle. After the death of Apostles Schwartz and Menkhoff, he assumed the leading function in the Church. The unity among the Apostles was a great concern to him. As of 1897, the Chief Apostle ministry began to emerge. Friedrich Krebs was the first Chief Apostle in the present-day sense.

612

What other individuals have occupied the Chief Apostle ministry?

- Hermann Niehaus (1848-1932, Chief Apostle from 1905-1930),
- Johann Gottfried Bischoff (1871-1960, Chief Apostle from 1930-1960),
- Walter Schmidt (1891-1981, Chief Apostle from 1960-1975),
- Ernst Streckeisen (1905-1978, Chief Apostle from 1975-1978),
- Hans Urwyler (1925-1994, Chief Apostle from 1978-1988),
- Richard Fehr (1939-2013, Chief Apostle from 1988-2005),
- Wilhelm Leber (born 1947, Chief Apostle from 2005-2013),
- Jean-Luc Schneider (born 1959, Chief Apostle as of 2013).



Friedrich Krebs



Hermann Niehaus



Johann Gottfried Bischoff



Walter Schmidt



Ernst Streckeisen



Hans Urwyler



Richard Fehr



Wilhelm Leber



Jean-Luc Schneider

DIVINE SERVICE, ACTS OF BLESSING, AND PASTORAL CARE

Forgiveness of sins

Fellowship
Sermon

Church instruction

Confirmation

Support for the bereaved

The Lord's Prayer

613

What is a divine service?

Divine service is the activity of God upon human beings. At the same time, it is a work of human beings for God.

In the divine service, people come together to worship God, praise Him, and thank Him. They also gather in order to hear the word of God and receive the sacraments.

Thus divine service is an encounter between God and man. In the divine service, the congregation perceives the presence of the triune God and experiences that God serves them in love.

614

What was divine service like in the Old Testament?

In Old Testament times, the divine service consisted primarily of the sacrificial service, in which the priests would bring gifts to God. They also had the commission to impart the blessing of God to the people (cf. Numbers 6: 22-27).

From the time of King David it is related that singers and musicians also played a role in divine services and praised God with psalms (cf. 1 Chronicles 25: 6).

In the time of the Babylonian captivity—from 597 BC to 539 BC—believing Jews gathered in specially built houses (synagogues) in order to pray and read and interpret Holy Scripture together. This is one of the sources of the later Christian form of divine service.

615

What elements did the divine service incorporate in the early Christian congregations?

There is no record of any specific sequence of divine service in the early Christian congregations. It consisted of the proclamation of the gospel, the professions of the congregation, collective prayers, hymns, and the celebration of Holy Communion.

616

How did Christian divine service develop further?

The Christian divine service had a liturgical character for centuries. This means that the divine service was predominantly defined by rituals, namely firmly established words and hymns.

This changed in many religious denominations after the Reformation. For them, the sermon became the focal point of the divine service. New Apostolic divine service adheres to this tradition with a sermon that is delivered without notes.

→ **Sermon, proclamation of the word:**
see Questions 623 et seq.

→ **Reformation:**
see Questions 595 et seq.

617

Is God present in the divine service?

Yes. At the beginning of the divine service, God is invoked with the words: “In the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”. This invocation of God is called the “Trinitarian opening formula”. This makes it clear to those attending the divine service that God is present, just as the Son of God promised (cf. Matthew 18: 20).

618

What are the basic elements of the divine service?

Concerning the early Christians in Jerusalem we read as follows: “And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2: 42). From this we derive the basic elements of the divine service: the Apostles’ doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer.

619

What is meant by the “Apostles’ doctrine”?

The “Apostles’ doctrine” means that the Apostles proclaim the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in other words, the gospel of the death, resurrection, and return of the Son of God. This doctrine is also proclaimed in the divine services by the ministers acting in the commission of the Apostles.

620

What do we mean when we talk about “breaking of bread”?

“Breaking of bread” is the celebration of Holy Communion. It is the central event in the divine service, which is celebrated in gratitude for the sacrifice of Jesus.

→ **Holy Communion:**
see Questions 494 et seq.





621

What does “communion” signify in the divine service?

“Communion” in divine service is understood as the fulfilment of the words of Jesus Christ: “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18: 20).

This “fellowship” in the divine service also refers to the fact that the believers worship, praise, and give thanks to God together. Thus they also have fellowship with one another.

622

What is the role of “prayer” in the divine service?

Prayer is an indispensable component of the divine service.

In the divine service, the congregation unites in the prayers spoken by

the officiant. These express adoration, thanksgiving, intercessions, and pleas.

Before the forgiveness of sins, the congregation prays the Lord’s Prayer. After receiving Holy Communion, each believer brings thanks to God in a silent prayer.

623

What do we mean by the “proclamation of the word” (sermon)?

God’s word is proclaimed in the divine services. Ministers express thoughts inspired within them by the Holy Spirit. This is called the “proclamation of the word” or the “sermon”.

In New Apostolic divine services, the sermon is not read from a previously prepared text. It is based on a passage from the Bible, on which the officiating minister elaborates in free discourse without notes.

624

What is the sermon capable of doing?

Since the sermon is inspired by God, listeners experience that the spoken word is “alive”, and therefore that

- questions of life and faith are answered,
- faith is strengthened,
- comfort is given,
- confidence is imparted,
- admonitions and help in decision-making are provided.

The word from the altar provides orientation in order to live in accordance with the will of God.

The sermon is “food” for the soul, in accordance with Jesus’ words: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4: 4).

625

Who is called to proclaim the word of God in the divine services?

The Apostles and the ministers commissioned by them to this end are called to proclaim the word of God in the divine service.

626

What is the main content and objective of the sermon?

The main content of the sermon is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the glad tidings that Jesus has brought the sacrifice, has resurrected, and will return.

The Holy Spirit speaks through the ministers. It is in this manner that faith is inspired and reinforced. The proclamation of the word always has the objective of preparing the congregation for the return of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Corinthians 11: 2).

627

Does this rule out any mistakes in the proclamation and hearing of the sermon?

Any human being who proclaims the word of God is a sinner who has weaknesses and makes mistakes. However, the ministry which he bears has been given by God and is therefore holy. If this imperfect human being then proclaims the word of God, it can indeed contain mistakes. Nevertheless, God lays His power into the words spoken by human beings.

The listeners are likewise sinners. They too have weaknesses and likewise make mistakes. For this reason one cannot rule out the possibility of error in understanding that which is heard. If they, nevertheless, accept the word of God in faith, they will be able to absorb into their souls all the divine powers contained in the sermon, despite any human imperfections and mistakes.

628

What is the duty of the listeners in the sermon?

Before the sermon, listeners should pray that the Lord may grant them strength and peace in His word. They are to ac-

cept the word in faith and put it into practice in daily life in thought, word, and deed. They are thus called upon to lead a life of following Christ.

629

How are listeners prepared for the forgiveness of sins and the celebration of Holy Communion?

Listeners are prepared for the forgiveness of sins and the celebration of Holy Communion by appropriate words from the officiant. Together, they sing a hymn of repentance in preparation for the forgiveness of sins. In it, the members of the congregation profess their sinfulness and bring to expression their need for help.

630

What is the only prayer that is spoken in accordance with a fixed wording in the divine service?

The prayer which Jesus taught is the Lord's Prayer. It is the only prayer that



the believers pray together in accordance with a fixed wording.

One version of it is recorded with five pleas (cf. Luke 11: 2-4), and another, more detailed version is recorded with seven pleas (cf. Matthew 6: 9-13).

631

What is the wording of the Lord's Prayer in divine service?

In divine service, the Lord's Prayer is prayed in accordance with the words recorded in the gospel of Matthew:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen."

632

What does the address "Our Father" mean?

The address "*Our* Father" indicates that this prayer is a communal prayer. When people address God as "Father", they bring to expression that He has created them, that He is their Lord, and that He provides for them. They can address God as "Father" without fear, in love, and in confidence.

→ *Child of God:*

see explanation of Question 530



633

What do the words "in heaven" signify?

The words "in heaven" emphasise that God is greater and higher than all things earthly. And nevertheless, He is close to human beings in His omnipotence.

634

What does it mean to say: "Hallowed be Your name"?

This is the first plea in the Lord's Prayer. God is holy. The believers hallow His name by giving all glory to Him and by endeavouring to live in accordance with His will. This plea is also reminiscent of the Second Commandment.

635

What do the words "Your kingdom come" mean?

The kingdom of God has come to mankind in Christ. With the plea "Your kingdom come" believers pray that the nature of Christ may become more and more perceptible in the congregation. Beyond that, however, this plea is also a prayer that the future kingdom of God may soon be revealed: this will begin with the return of Christ to take home His bridal congregation.

636

What does it mean when we say: “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”?

In heaven, the realm in which God rules on His throne, His will reigns without restriction. This plea expresses the desire that all things may also occur in accordance with God’s will on earth. With these words, believers also pray that they may succeed in doing the will of God themselves.

637

What does it mean when we pray: “Give us this day our daily bread”?

With these words, believers pray for all the things a person needs in order to live. This plea also incorporates the request that God will sustain the creation. In the figurative sense, the plea also requests that God may provide His word as “food” for the immortal soul.

638

What does it mean to pray: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors”?

All human beings incur guilt on account of their sins. With these words, the believers acknowledge that they are sinners before God, and ask Him for forgiveness. Because God is gracious and forgives us, He expects us to likewise forgive those who have wronged us. Therefore, we will only be granted

forgiveness if we ourselves are reconcilable and willing to forgive.

“Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’”

Matthew 18: 21-22

639

What do we mean when we pray: “And do not lead us into temptation”?

The believers ask God to help them resist sin with all their might. These words also express the plea that God may protect them from severe trials of faith.

640

What is meant by the words “Deliver us from the evil one”?

This plea expresses the desire that God may deliver the believers from the power of the evil one. Ultimately it is a plea for God to grant ultimate redemption by delivering us from the evil one forever. In the Son of God “we have redemption, [...] the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1: 14).

→ *Evil: see Questions 217 et seq.*

641

What do we mean when we say: “For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever”?

These words are an expression of praise to God (doxology). They serve to glorify the Almighty God, and He thereby receives the glory He is due. Our view is hereby also directed to the completion of His plan of salvation, when the redeemed will be permitted to experience the glory of God in His presence forever.

→ *Plan of salvation:*

see Questions 243 et seq.

642

What does the word “Amen” mean?

This word derives from the Hebrew and translates to mean: “So be it!” This word concludes the Lord’s Prayer and once again reinforces everything that has been expressed in this prayer.

643

When do the believers receive the forgiveness of sins in the divine service?

The proclamation of the forgiveness of sins occurs directly after the collective prayer of the Lord’s Prayer.

644

With what words is the forgiveness of sins proclaimed?

The Apostles proclaim the forgiveness of sins with a direct reference to Jesus Christ: “I proclaim unto you the glad tidings: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, your sins are forgiven. The peace of the Risen One be with you! Amen.”

The priestly ministers proclaim the forgiveness of sins with reference to the Apostle ministry: “In the commission of my sender, the Apostle, I proclaim unto you the glad tidings: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, your sins are forgiven. The peace of the Risen One abide with you. Amen.”

→ *Priestly ministers:*

see Questions 415, 508, 661

645

Is the forgiveness of sins a sacrament?

No, the forgiveness of sins (absolution) is not a sacrament. It is, however, a prerequisite for receiving the sacraments worthily.

646

How is it that sins can be forgiven?

Sins can be forgiven because God—as the God of love—sent His Son to the earth. With His death on the cross, the latter brought the eternally valid sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. Through

the voluntary surrender of His life, Jesus broke the power of Satan and conquered him and his works, namely sin and death. Since then, it has been possible for human beings to be liberated from sin (cf. Matthew 26: 28).

Jesus sacrificed His life for us so that our sins could be forgiven and so that we would not need to remain under the rule of sin.

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

John 1: 29

For [...] when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son...”

Romans 5: 10

647

Who forgives sins?

It is the triune God who forgives sins. On their own, human beings are incapable of forgiving sins or being liberated from sin. “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin” (Romans 4: 8).

648

Is it necessary to proclaim the forgiveness of sins?

Yes, the forgiveness of sins must be proclaimed. The Apostles proclaim forgiveness of sins by the commission of Jesus in accordance with His words: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them” (John 20: 23). They thereby make

the sacrifice of Jesus accessible to the believers. The priestly ministers are authorised by the Apostles to do the same.

649

What must a person do in order to have his sins forgiven?

In order to obtain forgiveness for one’s sins, the following are required:

- the person must believe in Jesus Christ as his Redeemer (cf. John 8: 24).
- in addition, one must believe that the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed by the Apostles.
- it is also necessary to acknowledge that one has sinned, thereby incurring guilt, and that one is thus in need of grace.
- the person must have the desire in his heart to be reconciled with God.
- the sinner must regret his sins and acknowledge this before God in the Lord’s Prayer: “And forgive us our debts...”
- one must make the earnest resolution to overcome one’s weaknesses and mistakes.
- the sinner must have the desire to be reconciled with those who have wronged him and thereby incurred guilt with him.

“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”

John 8: 24

650

What else is part of this recognition of having sinned?

The recognition that one has sinned includes an awareness of one’s own weaknesses and mistakes. This requires self-examination.

This recognition will lead to repentance and remorse.

651

What is meant by repentance and remorse?

Repentance signifies the recognition that one has acted wrongly, and incorporates remorse, as well as the earnest resolution to overcome mistakes and weaknesses.

Remorse is the feeling of suffering caused by wrongs committed in deed or omission. Sincere remorse also shows itself in the willingness to reconcile with one’s neighbour and make amends, as far as possible, for any damage that has been done.

652

What are the effects of the forgiveness of sins?

Forgiveness of sins cleanses us of sin and cancels out the guilt that exists with respect to God.

The believers whose sins have been forgiven are assured of the peace of Jesus Christ with the words: “The peace of the Risen One abide with you!” If this peace is absorbed believingly in the heart, all fear of the consequences of sin will retreat.

Irrespective of the forgiveness of sins, a person remains accountable for the consequences and responsibilities that have come about through his sinful conduct, whether they are of a material or legal nature.

653

Are there sins that cannot be forgiven?

Yes. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a sin for which there is no forgiveness. Concerning this, the Son of God said: “He who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation” (Mark 3: 29).

654

Who commits the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?

Those who consciously and intentionally portray the Holy Spirit as a devilish or misleading power for hostile and base motives are guilty of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

655

Who dispenses the sacraments in the divine service?

The sacraments of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Communion are dispensed by Apostles or priestly ministers in the commission of the Apostles. The sacrament of Holy Sealing is only dispensed by Apostles.

656

How often are the sacraments dispensed?

Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing are only dispensed to a person once. Holy Communion is dispensed to a person repeatedly.

657

Is Holy Communion celebrated in every divine service?

As a rule, Holy Communion is celebrated in every divine service.

For certain occasions (such as weddings or funerals) verbal divine services—that is, divine services without the celebration of Holy Communion—are conducted.

658

Do children also receive the sacraments?

Yes, children can also receive all three sacraments. If possible, the children take part in the celebration of Holy Communion with the congregation.

Children receive the sacraments of Holy Baptism with water, Holy Sealing, and Holy Communion in accordance with the words of Jesus: “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10: 14).

→ **Baptism of children:**
see Question 489

659

Are the sacraments also dispensed to the departed?

Yes. In the Sunday divine service and on church holy days, the Chief Apostle and the District Apostles or Apostles commissioned by them also celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion for the departed after the congregation celebrates Holy Communion. In the process, two ministers serve as proxies to receive the body and blood of Christ on behalf of the departed.

Three times each year—namely on the first Sundays in March, July, and November—special divine services are celebrated in which the Chief Apostle and the District Apostles or Apostles commissioned by them dispense all three sacraments to the departed. These acts are likewise performed on two ministers who serve as proxies.

That the **sacraments can be dispensed for the dead** is clear from 1 Corinthians 15: 29: “Otherwise what will they do who are baptised for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptised for the dead?”

→ **Help for the departed:**
see Question 545

660

What are “acts of blessing”?

God shares His blessing with human beings in various situations of their lives. When we talk about “acts of blessing” we are referring to all church acts that

are performed on special occasions. Acts of blessing are not sacraments.

→ **Sacraments:**
see Questions 472 et seq.

661

What happens in an act of blessing?

In an act of blessing, God turns to a human being who sincerely longs for blessing. Through Apostles and priestly ministers, God blesses those who request this blessing and offers them His help, grace, and compassion.

The dedication of a church building or place of worship for a congregation also represents an act of blessing in an extended sense.

662

Which acts of blessing take place within the divine service?

The following acts of blessing take place within the divine service: confirmation, adoption into the New Apostolic Church, dispensation of engagement blessings, wedding blessings, and blessings on wedding anniversary blessings. Ordinations and other acts concerning the spiritual ministry are also performed during the divine service.

663

What is confirmation?

Confirmation (Latin *confirmatio*, meaning “reinforcement”, “affirmation”) is that act of blessing in which young New Apostolic Christians take upon them-

selves the obligations which their parents or guardians undertook on their behalf at their baptism and sealing.

Confirmands vow to be faithful to God and publicly, that is, before the congregation, profess the New Apostolic faith.

Once confirmed, these Christians, who have now reached the age of spiritual majority, bear full responsibility before God for their life of faith.

→ **Parents / guardians, responsibility at baptism:** see Question 489
→ **Parents / guardians, responsibility at sealing:** see Question 527

664

What is necessary in order to be confirmed?

The first prerequisite for being confirmed is to have received the sacraments of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing. Other prerequisites include regular attendance of the divine services and confirmation instruction.

Confirmands are to know the main principles of the New Apostolic faith and the Articles of Faith, and be prepared to lead their lives in accordance with the gospel.

665

How is the act of confirmation performed?

Confirmation takes place in the context of a divine service. To begin with, the confirmands assemble in front of the altar and answer the question of whether they desire to pursue their future path

of life as New Apostolic Christians in loyalty to God with their “yes”. After this profession before God and the congregation, they give their confirmation vow. In it they publicly vow to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord, and promise to live accordingly.

Following this, and after a prayer by the officiant, the confirmands receive their blessing. It is dispensed through laying on of hands.

666

What is the effect of the confirmation blessing?

The blessing strengthens the confirmands in their endeavour to keep their confirmation vow and profess Jesus Christ in word and deed.

667

What is the text of the confirmation vow?

The text of the confirmation vow is as follows: “I renounce Satan and all his work and ways, and surrender myself to You, O triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in belief, obedience, and the earnest resolution to remain faithful to You until my end. Amen.”

This brings to expression that the confirmands have the firm resolve to avoid all evil and ungodly things, and diligently follow the path of the gospel. They profess belief in the triune God and announce their intent to conduct their lives in faith and obedience toward God.



668

What do we mean when we talk about the act of “adoption”?

“Adoption” is an act of blessing in the divine service in which Christians from other denominations are welcomed into the New Apostolic Church.

→ *Denomination: see Question 365*

669

What transpires in the adoption?

When Christians are adopted, they publicly profess the creed of the New Apostolic faith. After a prayer they are adopted into the New Apostolic Church in the name of the triune God. The adopted members are now entitled to partake regularly in the celebration of Holy Communion. All other acts of blessing in the Church are now open to them.

670

What is the engagement blessing?

The engagement blessing is the blessing that is dispensed when a couple gets engaged. Engagement is a serious promise of marriage. In this act of blessing, the engaged couple publicly declares before God and the congregation their intent to prepare themselves for marriage in a manner pleasing to God. Upon this they receive the blessing.

671

What is a wedding blessing?

The wedding blessing is a blessing that is dispensed after a civil marriage ceremony.

The partners are asked whether they intend to stand by each other in faithfulness under all circumstances and pursue their path of life together in love. Both of them vow this before God and the congregation by saying yes. Thereupon they receive the blessing of the triune God. The blessing is intended to

help them keep this vow, to lead their life together in harmony, and master difficult situations with God’s help.

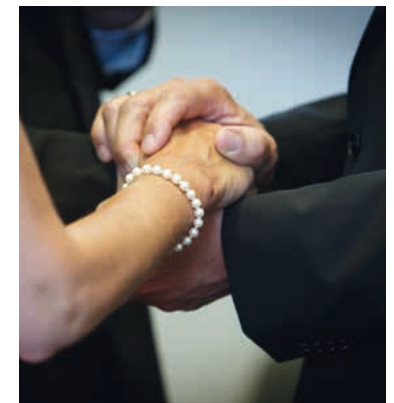
672

For which wedding anniversaries is a blessing dispensed?

At the request of the couple, a blessing is dispensed on the following wedding anniversaries:

- silver wedding anniversary (25 years)
- ruby wedding anniversary (40 years)
- golden wedding anniversary (50 years)
- diamond wedding anniversary (60 years)
- iron wedding anniversary (65 years)
- platinum wedding anniversary (70 years)
- diamond wedding anniversary (75 years)

Here God’s blessing is once again placed upon the matrimonial bond and the couple is commended to God’s continuing care and guidance.



673

What happens at the dedication of a church building?

A church building is dedicated on the occasion of the first divine service conducted there. In the dedication prayer, the house of God is dedicated as the place where the Holy Spirit reveals Himself—that is, the place where God’s word is proclaimed and the sacraments are dispensed—in the name of the triune God.

The dedicated church is a place for the worship of God and a sanctuary for those who seek salvation. It is here that divine grace and comfort, strength of faith, and peace of the soul are offered in the divine services.

674

What happens when a church building is deconsecrated?

If a dedicated church is no longer being used for divine services, it is deconsecrated: in the last divine service conducted there, the purpose of the church building as a holy place of divine activity, as imparted in the dedication, is lifted. After its deconsecration, the former church is once again a regular building, which can be used for another purpose.

675

When are sacraments dispensed and acts of blessing performed?

The sacraments are dispensed in the divine service, after the forgiveness of sins and the prayer following.

The acts of blessing generally take place after the celebration of Holy Communion. Since confirmation has a direct relationship with the sacraments of Holy Baptism with water and Holy Sealing, it is performed before the celebration of Holy Communion. Since it entitles one to partake regularly in Holy Communion, the act of adoption likewise takes place before the celebration of Holy Communion.

676

When are ordinations, appointments, reinstatements, and retirements performed in the divine service?

Ordinations—in which a spiritual ministry is imparted—as well as appointments of congregational rectors or district rectors, reinstatements of ministers to a ministry, and retirements of ministers take place after the sacraments have been dispensed. They thus take place after the celebration of Holy Communion.

→ *Ordination: see Questions 462 et seq.*

677

How is the ordination performed?

Ordinations are performed exclusively by Apostles. After an address by the Apostle, those to be ordained are asked whether they are prepared to accept the ministry. They are also asked whether it is their intent to serve God faithfully, stand up for the gospel of Jesus Christ, and exercise the ministry in accordance with the New Apostolic Creed. They are further asked if they are prepared to exercise the ministry in the mind of Jesus Christ, in love for the believers, and in obedience of faith.

They vow this before God, who calls them into His service, and before the congregation, by saying “yes”. While kneeling, they then receive the ministry through the laying on of hands and prayer of the Apostle.

678

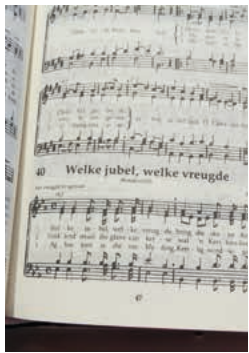
What is the function of music in the divine service?

The purpose of music in the divine service is to bring praise and glory to God (cf. Psalm 150). It therefore has a serving function.

It can deeply move the soul, prepare the congregation for the proclamation of the word, and underscore the word of God. Singing—be it by the congregation or the choir—and instrumental music expresses and imparts courage, strength, and confidence. In times of sadness and hardship, music can provide comfort.

Music and silent worship before the divine service help those attending the divine service gather their thoughts, and prepare the way for the proclamation of the word. In the singing of the





congregation, all present are actively involved in the divine service experience.

Before the celebration of Holy Communion, the congregation can attest to their feelings of repentance in a hymn. In the hymn sung during the celebration of Holy Communion, they express their love and gratitude toward God.

679

How is the divine service concluded?

At the end of the divine service, all those who are present receive the blessing of the triune God. Together with the Trinitarian opening formula, the concluding benediction forms the framework that embraces the divine service event. This makes it clear that everything which occurs in the divine service emanates from the triune God.

→ *Trinitarian: see explanation of Question 490*

680

What is the text of the closing benediction?

The closing benediction is imparted to the congregation with the words from 2 Corinthians 13: 14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!"

681

What is it that causes the believers to attend the divine services regularly?

Believers desire to worship God in fellowship with one another. They know that their faith and hope in the imminent return of Christ will be strengthened through the sermon in the divine service. They allow themselves to be prepared for this event in every divine service. Furthermore, they have a longing to have their sins forgiven and receive Holy Communion. Beyond that, they are blessed in the divine service.

682

What are the consequences of not attending the divine services?

Those who thoughtlessly neglect the divine services lose out on the blessing, grace, and powers contained in the word of God and in Holy Communion.

Those who frequently abstain from attending the divine services without compelling reasons run the risk that their faith will diminish and their longing for the word of God will fade.

It is a sin to consciously reject or despise the divine service and the grace of God.

683

Are there acts of blessing that do not occur in the context of a divine service?

Yes. The dispensation of the prenatal blessing is always performed outside of the divine service. As a rule, it takes place in the family circle.

684

What is the prenatal blessing?

The prenatal blessing is the first visible act of God upon an as yet unborn human being. This blessing serves to benefit the unborn soul, and is performed upon the mother-to-be. Through the prenatal blessing, God strengthens the mother in her endeavour to promote and cultivate the faith life of her child during its prenatal development.

The prenatal blessing is associated with God's help during the time of pregnancy and for the birth of the child. This does not imply the promise of a problem-free pregnancy or the birth of a healthy child, however.

685

What is a church funeral?

The church funeral is a divine service that provides comfort and strength to the bereaved. This comfort consists primarily of hope in the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead in Christ as-

sociated with it, and the future reunion with them (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18).

The word proclaimed in the funeral service also applies to the immortal soul of the departed, which is commended to the grace of God.

The mourners assembled for the funeral service surround the bereaved in order to demonstrate their sympathy and impart a feeling of security. Beyond that, they thereby pay their last respects to the deceased.

reassurance that He may preserve them until the resurrection to eternal life. The soulless body of the deceased is surrendered to the earth.

“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 3: 19

686

What happens at a church funeral?

In the funeral service, the life of the deceased is honoured in appropriate fashion. The soul and spirit of the departed are commended to the love of the Redeemer Jesus Christ with the blessed

687

Does the funeral have any impact on the resurrection of the dead?

The question of whether, or in what manner, a body is interred is of no consequence for the resurrection of the dead.



688

What is pastoral care?

The significance of pastoral care can be recognised in the conduct of Jesus: without regard for the person, He turned to sinners and allowed them to feel His love. He listened, helped, comforted, counselled, admonished, strengthened, prayed, and taught.



690

What is the function of the pastoral care visit?

The main focus of the pastoral care visit is the endeavour to deepen love for God and His work, to promote faith life, and enhance understanding for God's activity of salvation. This is primarily achieved by way of discussions about matters of faith. Praying together is also an important part of the pastoral care visit.

In cases of sickness, New Apostolic Christians receive special attention through visits either at home or in hospital. The responsible minister strengthens them in faith, comforts them, prays with them, and, if possible, celebrates Holy Communion with them.

The model for this personal pastoral care is the activity of Jesus Christ, who repeatedly made such visits, for example, to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, or to the tax collector Zacchaeus: “And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house” (Luke 19: 9).

689

How do the ministers of the Church fulfil their pastoral care duties?

The pastoral care provided by the ministers has the objective of supporting the believers and preparing them for the return of Christ. The ministers accompany the members in the various situations of their lives. This also includes praying for them.

Every New Apostolic Christian is offered personal pastoral care. This primarily takes the form of visits from priestly ministers, but pastoral care visits can also be made by Deacons.



691

Do we have confession in pastoral care?

Yes, we have confession. By this we mean a person's admission of sins and acknowledgement of guilt before a church minister.

Although no confession is needed for the forgiveness of sins, there is still an opportunity for confession in the event a person still feels burdened by guilt and is unable to come to peace despite the forgiveness of sins. Confession can be made before an Apostle. In urgent cases, when no Apostle can be reached, any priestly minister can, as an exception, take confession and proclaim absolution in the commission of the Apostle and in the name of Jesus Christ.

692

Is the task of providing pastoral care only reserved for the ministers?

In an expanded sense, pastoral care is also a task for the entire congregation. It also relates to practical help in life.

Here the words of Jesus apply: "...for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. [...] inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25: 35-36, 40).

693

How is pastoral care provided for children?

The pastoral care of children is primarily the task of parents. They are to impart the fundamental values of the gospel to their children. This includes teaching them to love God and their neighbour, and being an example to them in prayer life and faithfulness in offering.

The ministers and brothers and sisters commissioned as church teachers are there to support parents in this responsibility so that the children may develop into convinced and self-responsible New Apostolic Christians.

694

What is the objective of church instruction?

Church instruction familiarises children and adolescents with the content of our faith and teaches them to conduct their lives in personal responsibility toward God. This objective is derived from the gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition, church instruction cultivates a sense of community and a feeling of belonging among the growing children.



The offer of instruction is tailored to the age and development stage of the respective children.

695

What is the objective of Pre-Sunday School?

The objective of Pre-Sunday School is to instruct children about God and His activity at a level appropriate to them. In this manner, children who do not yet attend school can already develop a trusting relationship with God. Imparting knowledge is not the primary objective of Pre-Sunday School. Rather, it is intended to impart a feeling of security, and instil joy of faith in the hearts of the children.

696

What is the function of Sunday School?

Children attend Sunday School when they begin school or reach school age. The objectives of Sunday School are:

- to awaken and strengthen joy in fellowship with God's children and in the divine service,
- to impart understanding of God's activity to the children in an age-appropriate manner through Bible stories,
- to reinforce belief in divine promises,
- to explain to the children the sequence of the divine service, the meaning of the sacraments, acts of blessing, and church holy days.

697

What is the content and objective of divine services for children?

In addition to Sunday School, there are also divine services for children from time to time, in both smaller and larger circles. The word of God is imparted by priestly ministers in a manner corresponding to the understanding of the children. The ministers thereby help the children understand God and His work. That which the children can comprehend on the basis of their own experiences will become a foundation of faith to them on their path of life.



The children's service goes into the needs of the children. They are to feel understood, secure, and loved. It is a special experience for them to participate in a divine service in their own circle and celebrate Holy Communion together in the process.

698

What is the function of Religious Instruction in church?

In Religious Instruction the children learn from the accounts of human experiences with God: the history of salvation is discussed in reference to the faith life of the children. Contents of faith are deepened, knowledge is promoted, and the interconnections within God's plan of salvation are explained. In this manner, enduring values are imparted to the children.

Moreover, Religious Instruction

should enable students to freely profess their faith.

→ *Plan of salvation, salvation history:*
see Questions 243 et seq.

699

What is the function of Confirmation Instruction?

In Confirmation Instruction, adolescents are prepared for their confirmation day, when they will give their vow to God in the presence of the congregation and take responsibility for their own faith life as Christians who have come of age. The content of Confirmation Instruction focuses primarily upon the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments.

700

How is pastoral care provided for young people?

Young people receive age appropriate care and support. Youth leaders are available to assist our young members as personal contacts for confidential conversations in various situations of life as well as for questions of faith.

701

What is the function of pastoral care for youth?

Pastoral care for young people serves to help them develop into personalities with strength of faith and a sense of per-

sonal responsibility. The young people are to be firmly anchored in the values of the Christian faith and are to be inspired by them. In this way they receive a good foundation for making decisions in their lives. They are encouraged to practise, profess, and stand up for their faith in their surroundings. Beyond that, their willingness to involve themselves in the congregation is cultivated.

Another important objective of youth care is to cultivate fellowship among the young people themselves.

There are special divine services for young people. These generally take place on a district level or a multiregional level in the case of youth weekends.



702

How is pastoral care provided to the terminally ill and dying?

The terminally ill and dying require special care.

Even believing people are afraid of dying and death. This fear must never be interpreted as a sign of lacking faith. The minister should accept the dying person in all his fears and needs as he embarks on his difficult path.

It is important to keep alive the hope in a life with God and the comfort associated with this hope.

This support for the dying also entails that the minister proclaims the forgiveness of sins and the peace of the Risen One, and celebrates Holy Communion with them. Partaking in the body and blood of the Lord imparts fellowship of life with the Son of God. In this manner

the dying are comforted and strengthened, making it easier for them to proceed along the last steps of their path of life.

The assurance of a reunion with those who have already gone ahead into the beyond also helps carry the dying through the phase of bidding farewell.

→ *Holy Communion:*

see Questions 494 et seq.

→ *Life after death:* *see Question 531*

703

How is pastoral care provided to the relatives of a dying person?

It is also important to provide pastoral care to the relatives of a dying person. In this phase when they begin to realise that they will have to lose a loved one, they are to experience the secure feeling that they have not been abandoned.

Praying together is especially strengthening to them in this situation.

The certainty of a reunion helps to bear the heavy burden of bidding farewell. It is also helpful to family members when they are made aware of what they can do for the dying.

704

What does support for the bereaved entail?

Grieving must be allowed. The important thing is to seek contact with the bereaved, express sympathy, and pray with them. It is important to impart a feeling of genuine sympathy to the bereaved. Despite any fears of saying the wrong words, it is important to reach out to them. “Fail not to be with them that weep, and mourn with them that mourn” (Ecclesiasticus 7: 34).

In coping with grief it can be especially helpful to point out that Jesus Christ also suffered and died. The resurrection of the dead is also founded on His resurrection. They share in the victory of Christ over death (cf. Romans 14: 7-9).

705

What is the purpose of support for the bereaved?

Support for the bereaved serves to encourage the bereaved to talk about their loss and give expression to their feelings. It should be possible for the bereaved to speak with their minister openly about sadness, fear, anger, feelings of resentment toward God, and feelings of guilt.

In coping with grief it is often helpful to remind the bereaved of the posi-

tive and cheerful experiences they have made with the departed.

Providing comfort to the bereaved through pastoral care may require weeks and months, and perhaps even years, after the death of a loved one.

706

What holy days are celebrated in the New Apostolic Church?

The following holy days are celebrated in the New Apostolic Church: Christmas, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, and Thanksgiving Day.

707

What is the significance of Christmas?

At Christmas we remember the birth of Jesus Christ. This celebration refers to one of the central events of salvation history. Our commemoration of the first coming of the Son of God also reinforces our belief in His imminent return.

→ *Salvation history:*

see Questions 243 et seq.

708

What is the significance of Palm Sunday?

Palm Sunday commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem during the celebration of the Jewish feast of the Passover.

→ *Passover:* *see explanation of Question 496*



709

What is the significance of Good Friday?

On Good Friday, believers look back on the crucifixion and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Through His sacrificial death, the Son of God broke the power of Satan and of sin.

“...He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.”
John 19: 30

710

What is the significance of Easter?

The basis of this feast is the fact that Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ took place on the first day of the week, namely on Sunday. Later, a specific Sunday in the course of the year was set aside for the celebration of Easter. With His resurrection, Jesus Christ demonstrated that He has also broken the power of death. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is also the basis of our belief in the resurrection of the dead, and the foundation of our hope in eternal life.

→ **Resurrection of Christ:**

see Questions 184, 535

→ **Resurrection of the dead:**

see Questions 92, 186, 535, 579

711

What is the significance of Ascension Day?

On Ascension Day we are reminded that Jesus Christ ascended into heaven out of the circle of the Apostles on the fortieth day after Easter. “He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.” Through two angels the Apostles received the promise: “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1: 3-11).

712

What is the significance of Pentecost?

On Pentecost—fifty days after Jesus’ resurrection—we commemorate the day on which the Holy Spirit was poured out. We also speak of Pentecost as the “birthday of the church of Christ”. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Apostle Peter delivered a powerful sermon which centred on the crucified and resurrected Christ, who had ascended into heaven.

Moreover, Pentecost is a celebration of joy over the fact that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the church.

→ **Pentecost:**

see Questions 209, 422, 520, 582

713

What is the significance of Thanksgiving Day?

Thanksgiving Day is the celebration when we give thanks to God as the Creator.

On one Sunday of the year—Thanksgiving Sunday—a divine service is held which focuses on expressing gratitude to God for all the good gifts He grants to us human beings.

Out of thankfulness to Him, believers bring a special offering to Him: “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright, I will show the salvation of God” (Psalm 50: 23).

714

What is the format of divine services on church holy days?

The divine services on church holy days are generally celebrated like any other divine service with Holy Communion.

The respective historical event is highlighted with Bible readings and its significance for the salvation of mankind is illuminated.

→ **Salvation:** see Questions 243 et seq.

NEW APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANS AND THEIR LIFE OF FAITH

Intercession
Praying

Respect and tolerance

Giving thanks

Offering and willingness to sacrifice

Worship and adoration

State and society

715

What do we mean when we talk about prayer?

Prayer is an opportunity given by God for human beings to enter into contact with Him. In prayer the believer experiences: God is present, God hears, and God answers. Thus the believing human being bows before God's majesty and love in humbleness. The Holy Spirit provides inspiration for proper prayer.

716

Is praying necessary?

Praying is at times described as the "breathing of the soul". This image serves to illustrate the necessity of prayer for the believer.

Faith without prayer is not a living faith. A prayer without faith is not a real prayer.

717

What references are there to prayer in the Old Testament?

There are many references to the worship of God in the Old Testament. The hymn of Moses serves as a good example: "For I proclaim the name of the Lord: ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He" (Deuteronomy 32: 3-4).

The most important endeavour of the Psalms is to give thanks to God in prayer, and to bring Him praise and glory. The Old Testament also contains many references to prayers that implore the help and support of God.

718

What instructions did Jesus give concerning prayer?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave important instructions concerning prayer (cf. Matthew 6: 5-8). We are not to make an outward show of prayer nor are we to use a lot of words. We may address God as "Father". Prayers should come from the heart.

In view of His return Jesus admonished: "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21: 36).

719

What does the Bible relate about the prayer life of Jesus?

The gospels attest that Jesus often withdrew to pray. The gospel of Luke relates that Jesus made a special point of praying before decisive events, namely:

- before the Holy Spirit descended upon Him (cf. Luke 3: 21, 22),
- before He chose the twelve Apostles (cf. Luke 6: 12),
- before the Father transfigured Him in the presence of witnesses from here and the beyond (cf. Luke 9: 28-36),
- before His sufferings began (cf. Luke 22: 41-46),
- before He died on the cross (cf. Luke 23: 46).

It is of note that Jesus already gave thanks before His prayer had been granted (cf. John 11: 41-42).

720

What is the "intercessory prayer"?

The "intercessory prayer" is recorded in John 17. This is the great prayer that Jesus prayed prior to His passion. Here He prayed for the Apostles and for the future congregation, and thus also for us: "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one..." (John 17: 20, 21).



721**What do we know about the prayers of the early Christians?**

The early Christians practised communal prayer: “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (Acts 1: 14).

Accounts of intensive prayers are also recorded in association with significant events, for example the choosing of Matthias as an Apostle or the ordination of the first seven Deacons.

The Apostles were also accompanied by the prayers of the congregation in situations of danger (cf. Acts 12: 1-12).

→ *Deacons: see Question 470*

“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

Acts 6: 4

722**How are we to pray?**

Prayer is not bound to any outward form, nevertheless, the intensity of the prayer can be promoted by closing one’s eyes, folding one’s hands, or kneeling. The supplicant thereby withdraws from the busy activity of daily life to pause and bow before God in humbleness.

New Apostolic Christians begin and end their day with a prayer. They also pray before meals. They may also turn to God repeatedly in the course of the day in order to feel His nearness and seek His help.

In the family circle, parents pray with their children and thereby teach them to develop their own prayer life.

723**What is the content of a prayer?**

The content of a prayer is defined by adoration and worship, thanks, petitions, and intercessions.

724**What is the source of adoration and worship?**

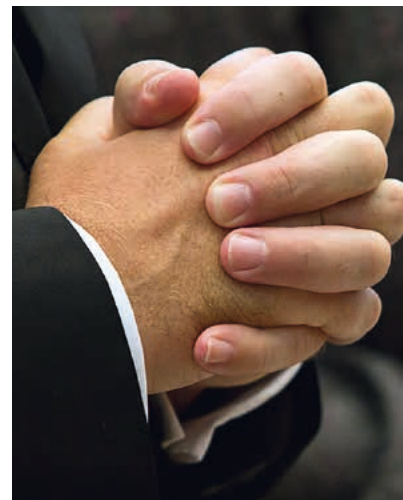
The knowledge of the majesty of God prompts human beings to worship and adore Him: “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (Psalm 95: 6).

725**For what things do we express our thanks when we pray?**

When praying, we give thanks for everything that has been given to us by the goodness of God: word, grace, and sacrament, as well the earthly gifts of sustenance, clothing, and accommodation.

726**What petitions do we bring before God?**

We bring all our concerns to God in our petitions. These have to do with preservation in faith, angel protection, or help in daily life. The most significant



petition is with regard to the imminent return of Christ and our longing to be accepted in grace at that moment.

727**Why do we intercede for others?**

Intercessions are an expression of love for our neighbour. They are not limited to our own family or congregation, but can rather include all those who need God’s help, be it on earth or in the beyond.

728**What are the effects of prayer?**

Prayer strengthens faith and trust in God, and provides the assurance of security in God. After praying, the supplicant is sure that all his concerns now lie in the hand of God: “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37: 5).

729**What do we mean when we talk about the “willingness to offer and sacrifice”?**

In general, the term “willingness to offer and sacrifice” refers to a person’s inner desire to use his gifts and talents for the benefit of others and even put his own interests aside for this purpose.

730**What do people generally mean when they talk about “offerings and sacrifices”?**

In common language, “sacrifices” are gifts that are offered to God. They can also be understood as human deeds performed in service to others. Monetary gifts that are donated for religious purposes are likewise “sacrifices” in the religious sense.

731**How do we understand our sacrifices?**

We understand our “sacrifices” to be the gifts and talents, time, and energy that are put to work in the service of God and His work.

Even the endeavour to refrain from doing something for the benefit of God’s work is a sacrifice.

Believers also feel the need to express their gratitude and love for God in concrete gifts (sacrifices), be it in the form of money or natural goods. According to Malachi 3: 10, we are to bring the

“tithe” of our increase into the house of the Lord. The “tithe” can serve as a guide to the members in their offerings.

732

What was the significance of sacrifice in the old covenant?

Sacrifice was of great significance in the old covenant. Through their sacrifices, the people sought to express gratitude, turn away the punishment of God, or bring about reconciliation.

Sacrifices were brought in many different forms. The Mosaic Law specifically prescribed all the details of the sacrificial service (cf. Leviticus 1-7).

→ **Old covenant:**

see explanation of Question 175

→ **Mosaic Law:**

see Questions 272 et seq.

733

What is the significance of sacrifice in the new covenant?

The sacrificial service of the Old Testament, which was to reconcile human beings with God, lost its significance through the sacrifice of Christ (cf. Hebrews 8-10). In the sense of the New Testament, sacrifice implies leading a life in accordance with the gospel. So it is that Apostle Paul called upon the Christians to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God” (Romans 12: 1).

→ **New covenant:**

see explanation of Question 175

“Now where there is remission of these [sins], there is no longer an offering for sin.”

Hebrews 10: 18

734

Who is the greatest example of willingness to sacrifice?

Jesus Christ is the greatest example of willingness to sacrifice. Out of love for mankind, He gave His life as an offering and a sacrifice.

Even though no other sacrifice can be compared to the sacrifice of the Lord, His willingness to sacrifice is nevertheless an example that calls upon us to follow Him.

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice...”

Ephesians 5: 1-2

735

What is the basis for our willingness to sacrifice?

A sacrifice in the Christian sense should not be considered an enforced obligation. Neither should it be made in expectation of a reward. Rather, the willingness to sacrifice should spring forth from faith, gratitude, and love for God.



736

How is willingness to sacrifice demonstrated in congregational life?

Willingness to sacrifice is shown directly in congregational life: many members dedicate a considerable portion of their leisure time, energy, and talent to the service of the congregation without remuneration. Many of them are active in the musical programming and instruction of the Church. With few exceptions, the ministers also work in a voluntary capacity.

737

What is a spiritual sacrifice?

It is a “spiritual sacrifice” when one subordinates one’s own will to the will of God and allows oneself to be led by that which God desires.

738

What is the relationship between sacrifice and blessing?

Basically, human beings can only bring sacrifices because God has already blessed them beforehand. These sacrifices are therefore an expression of gratitude for that which they have received.

In the case of any sacrifice, the attitude of heart is the deciding factor. If the sacrifice is made willingly out of thankfulness and love, blessing will be associated with it. This can be experienced in earthly life, for example in the form of natural wellbeing. However, blessing is primarily of a spiritual nature, which includes the imparting of divine salvation out of the merit of Christ (cf. Ephesians 1: 3-7).

“He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.”

2 Corinthians 9: 6-8

739

What is marriage?

Marriage is the lifelong union between a man and woman, as desired by God, and upon which His blessing rests. It also forms the foundation for the family.

It is based on a public promise of fidelity that is freely given by both partners. Mutual love and fidelity are indispensable factors in the success of a marriage.

Polygamy (marriage with multiple spouses) is not consistent with Christian doctrine and tradition.

740

What can we derive from the account of creation concerning marriage?

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it’” (Genesis 1: 27-28). – Both man and woman are thus created in the image of God. Different yet equal before him, they both stand under the blessing of God.

Human beings are created to have companionship. In their spouses, both man and woman have a counterpart whom they can support and help. “And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’” (Genesis 2: 18).

By entering into marriage, man and woman are amalgamated into a single entity intended to last for their lifetime: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2: 24).

741

What is the significance of the wedding blessing?

The wedding blessing can have many different effects: it provides strength for enduring love and fidelity, promotes the willingness to serve, help, and understand one another, and it helps partners to forgive each other and reconcile differences. However, the blessing received can only take effect if the couple conducts themselves accordingly.

→ *Acts of blessing, wedding blessing: see Questions 660 et seq., 671*

742

What significance does the Christian faith have for the success of the marriage?

It is desirable for spouses to have a common agreement in matters of faith, however, the fact that both partners are Christians is no guarantee for a harmonious matrimony.

All questions pertaining to their life together should be discussed and clarified before marriage, particularly in the case where either one of the partners is of a different culture, religion, or confession.

743

What is the significance of sex in marriage?

If mutual consent and true love stand in the foreground, sex can be an important bond within a marriage and contribute

to the wellbeing of both spouses. Sex in marriage should be defined by mutual respect, sensitivity, and understanding.

744

What is the New Apostolic Church’s position on family planning?

Family planning is at the discretion of both partners. Nevertheless, the Church opposes all contraceptive methods and means that function primarily to terminate an already fertilised egg cell. The Church generally accepts artificial insemination, however, it opposes all measures by which life may be destroyed through human choice.

745

What is the New Apostolic Church’s position on fulfilling one’s obligations in one’s profession and society?

The Ten Commandments provide direction for fulfilling one’s duties in one’s profession and in society.

It is the obligation of the Christian to contribute to the benefit of society. Each individual shares in this responsibility.

“Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs...”

Romans 13: 7

746

How does the New Apostolic Church perceive its responsibility to society?

Within the scope of its capacity and commission, the New Apostolic Church helps to promote the common good. The New Apostolic Church advocates peace in the world, appeals for reconciliation, and admonishes forgiveness. It opposes all forms of violence.

747

Do New Apostolic Christians participate in public life?

Yes, New Apostolic Christians are active in public life. The Church does not influence its members concerning their political opinions or activities.

The New Apostolic Church calls upon its members to treat all people—irrespective of social standing, age, language, or any other differences—with respect and tolerance.

748

What is the position of the New Apostolic Church toward the state?

The New Apostolic Church attaches importance to open and constructive relations with governments and public authorities. It is politically neutral. Its activities conform to the laws of each respective country, in accordance with Romans 13: 1: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and

the authorities that exist are appointed by God.” This presupposes that even the power of the state is in harmony with the divine commandments.

The Church fulfils its legal obligations under the laws and regulations of the respective countries in which it works. In turn, it also expects its position to be respected and acknowledged.

→ **Position toward the authorities:**
see *Tenth Article of Faith*

749

How is the relationship of the New Apostolic Church with other churches, denominations, and religions?

The New Apostolic Church and its members respect the religious practices of other people and refrain from making derogatory remarks concerning those of different faiths, different religions, and different denominations. They endeavour to have a good and peaceable relationship on the basis of mutual respect. The Church rejects all forms of religious fanaticism.

In dialogue with other Christian churches—irrespective of differing doctrinal positions—the commonalities of the Christian faith are emphasised.

750
What is the social commitment of the New Apostolic Church?

The New Apostolic Church is committed to the gospel. Thus it understands its duty to engage in charitable activity that benefits all people irrespective of personal differences. This work is supported by the voluntary commitment of many helpers in the congregations, but also by material assistance.

Within the scope of its abilities, the Church plans, promotes, and supports nonprofit and charitable projects, institutions, and aid campaigns around the world. It also works in collaboration with relief organisations.



The New Apostolic Creed

The First Article of Faith:

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

The Second Article of Faith:

I believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, entered the realm of the dead, rose again from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. He is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, from where He will return.

The Third Article of Faith:

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the one, holy, universal, and apostolic church, the community of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and life everlasting.

The Fourth Article of Faith:

I believe that the Lord Jesus rules His church and thereto sent His Apostles, and until His return still sends them with the commission to teach, to forgive sins in His name, and to baptise with water and Holy Spirit.

The Fifth Article of Faith:

I believe that those designated by God for a ministry are ordained only by Apostles, and that authority, blessing, and sanctification for their ministrations come forth out of the Apostle ministry.

The Sixth Article of Faith:

I believe that the Holy Baptism with water is the first step to a renewal of a human being in the Holy Spirit, and that the person baptised is adopted into the fellowship of those who believe in Jesus Christ and profess Him as their Lord.

The Seventh Article of Faith:

I believe that Holy Communion was instituted by the Lord Himself in memory of the once brought, fully valid sacrifice, and bitter suffering and death of Christ. The worthy partaking of Holy Communion establishes our fellowship with Jesus Christ, our Lord. It is celebrated with unleavened bread and wine; both must be consecrated and dispensed by a minister authorised by an Apostle.

The Eighth Article of Faith:

I believe that those baptised with water must, through an Apostle, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to attain the childhood in God and thereby the prerequisite for becoming a firstling.

The Ninth Article of Faith:

I believe that the Lord Jesus will return as surely as He ascended into heaven and that He will take to Himself the firstfruits of the dead and living who have hoped for and were prepared for His coming; that after the marriage in heaven He will return to earth with them to establish His kingdom of peace, and that they will reign with Him as a royal priesthood. After the conclusion of the kingdom of peace, He will hold the Last Judgement. Then God will create a new heaven and a new earth and dwell with His people.

The Tenth Article of Faith:

I believe that I am obliged to obey the worldly authorities provided no godly laws are thereby transgressed.

The Ten Commandments

(cf. Exodus 20: 2-17; Deuteronomy 5: 6-21)

The First Commandment

I am the Lord, your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.

The Second Commandment

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

The Third Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

The Fourth Commandment

Honour your father and your mother that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder.

The Sixth Commandment

You shall not commit adultery.

The Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal.

The Eighth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

You shall not covet your neighbour's house.

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's.

The Lord's Prayer

(According to Matthew 6: 9-13)

“Our Father in heaven,
 Hallowed be Your name.
 Your kingdom come.
 Your will be done
 On earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts,
 As we forgive our debtors.
 And do not lead us into temptation,
 But deliver us from the evil one.
 For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
 Amen.”

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Notes on the text

Repeated statements reflecting both masculine and feminine pronouns were generally avoided. Neutral forms of expression were employed wherever possible, but otherwise the masculine pronoun was used. This linguistic inequality is not intended to discriminate but was chosen in the interests of smoother reading.

To allow for greater reader friendliness, certain philological and/or scientific citation methods were avoided. Omissions in citations were generally designated using ellipsis points (...), while insertions and explanations within citations were identified by way of square brackets ([...]).

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