

Confession, Catechism and Creeds

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The Three Forms of Unity, the Ecumenical Creeds, and the Doctrines of This House

THIS EXCELLENT CHURCH

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Dear Pilgrim

Welcome! Welcome to This Excellent Church. The real us, our very DNA, that which defines us beyond the church building and the ambience of our weekly gatherings. As you embark on this journey, you'll discover the rich tapestry of our faith—a faith woven together by centuries of devotion, theological reflection, and unwavering commitment.

The purpose of this book is twofold. First, we seek to **illuminate the timeless truths** that have shaped and are shaping our community. These truths are not mere abstractions; by them we pulsate with life, they guide our worship, our relationships, and our mission. Second, we aim to **invite you into our story**—our faithful restatement of the gospel which we believe as it applies to our context in Lagos, Nigeria.

In illuminating these timeless truths, we have dug into the earth of the history of Christ's church and built our identity on timeless creeds, catechism and confessions by which our forebears articulated their biblical faith systematically and without mincing words. These are what make up our **doctrinal foundation**. They include:

The Nicene Creed, forged in the fires of theological debate, proclaims our belief in the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It stands as a bulwark against heresy, a compass guiding us through the complexities of divinity.

The Chalcedonian Creed, with its precise language about Christ's nature, reminds us that our Savior is both truly God and truly human. In this mystery, we find hope and redemption.

The Belgic Confession, penned during tumultuous times, declares our faith with clarity and courage. It unites us with believers across generations, affirming the sufficiency of Scripture and our dependence on grace.

The Canons of Dort, born out of the Reformation, address the doctrines of grace. They remind us that salvation is not our achievement but God's sovereign gift.

The Heidelberg Catechism, designed for instruction, invites us to explore the comforts of faith. Its questions and answers resonate with our hearts, grounding us in truth.

Finally, our **theological vision**, which we have called Doctrines Of This House (DOTH), by which we invite you into our story, is best described as a living theology—a dance between ancient wisdom and contemporary relevance.

We pray that by the content of this book, you will come to know the Lord, not in a merely intellectual way, but in a very vibrant and living way.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Concerning the Notes in This Book

In the pages that follow you will find the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, printed whole and unaltered. We have cut nothing and softened nothing. Where these documents say what we would not have said, they still say it here, in the words their authors used.

At five places, however, you will also find a note set in smaller type behind a rule and headed with the name of this church. You should know at the outset why they are there.

This Excellent Church baptises upon a credible profession of faith. At certain articles the Three Forms of Unity teach that the infants of believers are to be baptised, and we do not so teach. We receive the Three Forms as revised at those articles. This is not a private exception held quietly by a few while the church says otherwise. It is the confession of this church, and every officer of this church subscribes it.

Two other ways of handling such a difference were open to us, and we have refused both. We could have printed the confessions with the clauses removed or reworded, and let no one know. But a church that edits its fathers quietly will edit them again, and a reader who cannot see what he is being spared has no way to judge whether he is being served. Or we could have printed the documents whole and buried our dissent in an appendix at the back. But a man reads Article 34 where Article 34 is, and a disagreement filed where nobody looks is a disagreement hidden. If we are going to differ from Guido de Brès, we ought to do it on his page and under our own name.

So the article stands as he wrote it, and our answer stands beside it.

Notice how few of these notes actually dissent. Of the five, three do not. The note at Belgic 33 receives that article entire and only draws out a principle the article itself lays down. The note at Lord's Day 26 receives those questions without qualification. The note at the First Head of the Canons of Dort receives that article gladly, and commends it to bereaved parents among us. Only two, at Belgic 34 and at Heidelberg Question 74, mark a real difference. Even there

the difference is narrow, and concerns one question: who is to receive the sign, and when. All else these documents teach of baptism we hold with them: its institution, its signification, its once-for-all character, and that the water itself neither contains nor conveys what it signifies.

Set the disagreement, then, in its proportion. On the Trinity, on the person and work of Christ, on the corruption of man, on election and providence, on justification by faith, on the church, her polity and her discipline, and on the two sacraments which Christ instituted, we stand with these confessions without reserve. We print them because we believe them.

Nor do we unchurch those brethren who baptise the infants of believers. We name them brethren, and we receive their labours in the gospel with thanksgiving. We ask of them only the same liberty we grant: to say plainly what we hold, and why.

What we hold positively concerning the children of believers is not left to the notes. It is set down in the Doctrines of This House, at the twelfth article, where you will find why we call them holy wards, what we believe is promised to them, and what we do when their parents present them before the Lord.

Use this book. Catechise your household from it. Let the officer examine himself by it. Bring your doubts to it and see whether the fathers have not answered them already. These are not our words. They are the words of the church, and we submit to them because we judge that they say what Scripture says.

Our Doctrinal Foundation

The Nicene Creed

WE BELIEVE in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him, all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake, he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day, he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

Historical Background

In the first few centuries after Christ, the Christian Church experienced significant growth and spread throughout the Roman Empire. However, this period also saw numerous theological disputes and the rise of various interpretations of Christian doctrine.

The Arian controversy, named after Arius, a priest from Alexandria, was one of the most significant disputes. Arius argued that Jesus Christ was not co-eternal with God the Father and was a created being, thus subordinate to the Father.

To address the Arian controversy and other issues, Roman Emperor Constantine I convened the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, bringing together bishops from

across the Christian world. Constantine sought to achieve unity in the Church, which he saw as essential for the stability of the Empire.

The council's primary theological task was to articulate a clear and orthodox understanding of the relationship between God the Father and Jesus Christ. The resulting **Nicene Creed** was a concise statement of faith that affirmed the Son's consubstantiality (homoousios) with the Father, meaning that the Son is of the same substance as the Father and is truly God.

The Nicene Creed was expanded at the First Council of Constantinople in 381 AD to further clarify the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and address ongoing theological issues. This expanded version, often referred to as the **Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed**, is the version commonly used in Christian liturgy today.

The Nicene Creed has remained a central element of Christian doctrine and liturgy across various denominations, including Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and many Protestant traditions. It serves as a foundational statement of Christian orthodoxy and a symbol of the unity of the Christian faith.

Further reading:
Pamphilus, E. (2017). Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History: Complete and Unabridged (A. McGiffert, Trans.). CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
Kelly, J. N. D. (2014). Early Christian Creeds. Taylor & Francis Group.

The Chalcedonian Creed

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

Historical Background

Following the establishment of the Nicene Creed, debates about the nature of Christ continued. The key issue was how to understand the relationship between Christ's divine and human natures. Various theological positions emerged, including those of **Nestorianism**, which emphasised the separation between Christ's divine and human natures, and **Eutychianism**, which argued that Christ's human nature was absorbed into his divine nature, creating a single nature.

The Council of Ephesus (431 AD) aimed to resolve these disputes, condemning Nestorianism and affirming the title of **Theotokos** (God-bearer) for Mary, emphasising the unity of Christ's person. However, this did not resolve all issues, and further disputes, particularly over the nature and union of Christ's two natures, persisted.

The Council of Chalcedon was convened by Emperor Marcian in 451 AD to address the ongoing Christological controversies, particularly the teachings of Eutyches, which were seen as a threat to the orthodox understanding of Christ's nature. The council brought together over 500 bishops, making it one of the largest and most representative ecumenical councils in early Christianity.

The council produced the Chalcedonian Definition, which articulated the orthodox position on the nature of Christ. It declared that Christ is to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation. The Creed affirmed that the distinction between the natures is in no way annulled by the union, but rather the properties of each nature are preserved, coming together to form one person and **hypostasis**.

The Chalcedonian Creed became a cornerstone of orthodox Christian theology, particularly in the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and many Protestant traditions. It provided a definitive statement that shaped subsequent Christological debates and theological development.

Further reading:
Price, R., & Gaddis, M. (Eds.). (2007). The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon (R. Price & M. Gaddis, Trans.). Liverpool University Press.

The Belgic Confession

Article 1: There Is One Only God

We all believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only simple[1] and spiritual[2] Being, which we call God; and that He is eternal,[3] incomprehensible,[4] invisible,[5] immutable,[6] infinite,[7] wise,[8] just,[9] good,[10] almighty, perfectly and the overflowing fountain of all good.[11]

[1]Eph. 4:6; Deut. 6:4; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 8:6
[2]John 4:24
[3]Isa. 40:28
[4]Rom. 11:33
[5]Rom. 1:20
[6]Mal. 3:6
[7]Isa. 44:6
[8]1 Tim. 1:17
[9]Jer. 12:1
[10]Matt. 19:17
[11]James. 1:17; 1 Chron. 29:10–12

Article 2: By What Means God is Made Known Unto Us

We know Him by two means: first, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe;[1] which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, His eternal power and divinity, as the apostle Paul saith (Rom. 1:20). All which things are sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse.

Secondly, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word;[2] that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation.

[1]Ps. 19:2; Eph. 4:6
[2]Ps. 19:8; 1 Cor. 12:6

Article 3: The Written Word Of God

We confess that this Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as the apostle Peter saith.[1] And that afterwards God, from a special care which He has for us and our salvation, commanded His servants, the prophets[2] and apostles,[3] to commit His revealed Word to writing; and He Himself wrote with His own finger

the two tables of the law.[4] Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.

[1]2 Peter 1:21
[2]Ex. 24:4; Ps. 102:19; Hab. 2:2
[3]2 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 1:11
[4]Ex. 31:18

Article 4: Canonical Books of the Holy Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Scriptures are contained in two books, namely, the Old and New Testaments, which are canonical, against which nothing can be alleged. These are thus named in the Church of God.

The books of the Old Testament are: the five books of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the two books of Samuel, the two of the Kings, two books of the Chronicles, commonly called Paralipomenon, the first of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, the Psalms of David, the three books of Solomon, namely, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs; the four great prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; and the twelve lesser prophets, namely, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah,

Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Those of the New Testament are: the four Evangelists, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles; the fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul, namely, one to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, one to the Galatians, one to the Ephesians, one to the Philippians, one to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, two to Timothy, one to Titus, one to Philemon, and one to the Hebrews; the seven epistles of the other apostles, namely, one of James, two of Peter, three of John, one of Jude; and the Revelation of the apostle John.

Article 5: From Whence the Holy Scriptures Derive Their Dignity and Authority

We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially

because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling.

Article 6: The Difference Between the Canonical and Apocryphal Books

We distinguish these sacred books from the apocryphal, viz., the third and fourth book of Esdras, the books of Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Jesus Syrach, Baruch, the appendix to the book of Esther, the Song of the Three Children in the Furnace, the History of Susannah, of Bell and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasses, and the two books of the Maccabees. All of which the Church may read and take instruction from, so far as they agree with the canonical books; but they are far from having such power and efficacy as that we may from their testimony confirm any point of faith or of the Christian religion; much less to detract from the authority of the other sacred books.

Article 7: The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to be the Only Rule of Faith

We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein.[1] For since the whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise[2] than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures: *nay, though it were an angel from heaven*, as the apostle Paul saith.[3] For since it is forbidden *to add unto or take away any thing from the Word of God*,[4] it doth thereby evidently appear that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.

Neither do we consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures;[5] nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees, or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God,[6] for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars,[7] and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule[8] which the apostles have taught us, saying,

Try the spirits whether they are of God.[9] Likewise, *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house.*[10]

[1] Rom. 15:4; John 4:25; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; 1 Peter 1:1; Prov. 30:5; Rev. 22:18; John 15:15; Acts 2:27
[2] 1 Peter 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:2–3; 2 Tim. 3:14; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 John 10
[3] Gal. 1:8–9; 1 Cor. 15:2; Acts 26:22; Rom. 15:4; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 Tim. 3:14
[4] Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18; John 4:25
[5] Matt. 15:3; 17:5; Mark 7:7; Isa. 1:12; 1 Cor. 2:4
[6] Isa. 1:12; Rom. 3:4; 2 Tim. 4:3–4
[7] Ps. 62:10
[8] Gal. 6:16; 1 Cor. 3:11; 2 Thess. 2:2
[9] 1 John 4:1
[10] 2 John 10

Article 8: God is One in Essence, Yet Distinguished in Three Persons

According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God, who is one single essence,[1] in which are three persons,[2] really, truly, and eternally distinct, according to their incommunicable properties; namely, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.[3] The Father is the cause, origin, and beginning of all things, visible and invisible;[4] the Son is the word,[5] wisdom,[6] and image of the Father;[7] the Holy Ghost is the eternal power and might,[8] proceeding from the Father and the Son.[9] Nevertheless God is not by this distinction divided into three, since the Holy Scriptures teach us that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost have each His personality, distinguished by their properties; but in such wise that these three persons are but one only God. Hence then, it is evident that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, and likewise the Holy Ghost is neither the Father nor the Son. Nevertheless these persons thus distinguished are not divided nor intermixed; for the Father hath not assumed the flesh, nor hath the Holy Ghost, but the Son only.[10] The Father hath never been without His Son, or without His Holy Ghost. For they are all three coeternal and coessential. There is neither first nor last; for they are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy.

[1] Isa. 43:10
[2] 1 John 5:7; Heb. 1:3
[3] Matt. 28:19
[4] 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16
[5] John 1:1,2; Rev. 19:13; Prov. 8:12
[6] Prov. 8:12, 22
[7] Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3
[8] Matt. 12:28
[9] John 15:26; Gal. 4:6
[10] Phil. 2:6, 7; Gal. 4:4; John 1:14

Article 9: The Proof of the Foregoing Article of the Trinity of Persons in One God

All this we know, as well from the testimonies of Holy Writ as from their operations, and chiefly by those we feel in ourselves. The testimonies of the Holy Scriptures that teach us to believe this Holy Trinity are written in many places of the Old Testament, which are not so necessary to enumerate as to choose them out with discretion and judgment. In Genesis 1:26, 27, God saith: *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*, etc. [1] *So God created man in His own image, male and female created He them*. And Genesis 3:22: *Behold, the man is become as one of us*. [2] From this saying, *Let us make man in our image*, it appears that there are more persons than one in the Godhead; and when He saith God created, He signifies the unity. It is true He doth not say how many persons there are, but that which appears to us somewhat obscure in the Old Testament is very plain in the New.

For when our Lord was baptized in Jordan,[3] the voice of the Father was heard, saying, *This is My beloved Son*: the Son was seen in the water, and the Holy Ghost appeared in the shape of a dove. This form is also instituted by Christ in the baptism of all believers. *Baptize all nations, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. [4] In the Gospel of Luke the angel Gabriel thus addressed Mary, the mother of our Lord: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*.[5] Likewise, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you*.[6] And, *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one*.[7] In all which places we are fully taught that there are three persons in one only divine essence. And although this doctrine far surpasses all human understanding, nevertheless we now believe it by means of the Word of God, but expect hereafter to enjoy the perfect knowledge and benefit thereof in heaven.[8]

Moreover, we must observe the particular offices and operations of these three persons towards us. The Father is called our Creator by His power;[9] the Son is our Savior and Redeemer by His blood;[10] the Holy Ghost is our Sanctifier by His dwelling in our hearts.[11]

This doctrine of the Holy Trinity hath always been defended and maintained by the true Church since the times of the apostles to this very day, against the Jews, Mohammedans, and some false Christians and heretics, as Marcion, Manes, Praxeas, Sabellius, Samosatenus, Arius, and such like, who have been justly condemned by the orthodox fathers.

Therefore, in this point we do willingly receive the three creeds, namely, that of the Apostles, of Nice, and of Athanasius; likewise that which, conformable thereunto, is agreed upon by the ancient fathers.

[1]Gen. 1:26, 27
[2]Gen. 3:22
[3]Matt. 3:16–17
[4]Matt. 28:19
[5]Luke 1:35
[6]2 Cor. 13:13
[7]1 John 5:7
[8]Ps. 45:8; Isa. 61:1
[9]Eccl. 12:3; Mal. 2:10; 1 Peter 1:2
[10]1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 1:7; 4:14
[11]1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Peter 1:2; Gal. 4:6; Titus 3:5; Rom. 8:9; John 14:16

Article 10: Jesus Christ is True and Eternal God

We believe that Jesus Christ, according to His divine nature, is the only begotten Son of God,[1] begotten from eternity,[2] not made nor created (for then He would be a creature), but coessential [3] and coeternal [4] with the Father, the express image of His person, and the brightness of His glory, [5] equal unto Him in all things.[6] He is the Son of God, not only from the time that He assumed our nature, but from all eternity,[7] as these testimonies, when compared together, teach us. Moses saith that God created the world; [8] and John saith that all things were made by that Word, which he calleth God.[9] And the apostle saith that God made the worlds by His Son;[10] likewise, that God created all things by Jesus Christ. [11] Therefore it must needs follow that He—who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ—did exist at that time when all things were created by Him.[12] Therefore the prophet Micah saith: His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.[13] And the apostle: He hath neither beginning of days nor end of life.[14] He therefore is that true, eternal, and almighty God, whom we invoke, worship, and serve.

[1]John 1:18, 49
[2]John 1:14; Col. 1:15
[3]John 10:30; Phil. 2:6
[4]John 1:2; 17:5; Rev. 1:8
[5]Heb. 1:3

[6]Phil. 2:6
[7]John 8:23, 58; 9:35–37; Acts 8:37; Rom. 9:5
[8]Gen. 1:1
[9]John 1:3
[10]Heb. 1:2
[11]Col. 1:16
[12]Col. 1:16
[13]Mic. 5:2
[14]Heb. 7:3

Article 11: The Holy Ghost is True and Eternal God

We believe and confess also that the Holy Ghost from eternity proceeds from the Father[1] and Son,[2] and therefore is neither made, created, nor begotten, but only proceedeth from both; who in order is the third person of the Holy Trinity, of one and the same essence, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son; and therefore is the true and eternal God, as the Holy Scriptures teach us.[3]

[1]Ps. 33:6, 17; John 14:16
[2]Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:9; John 15:26
[3]Gen. 1:2; Isa. 48:16; 61:1; Acts 5:3–4; 28:25; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Ps. 139:7

Article 12: The Creation

We believe that the Father, by the Word, that is, by His Son,[1] created of nothing the heaven, the earth, and all creatures as it seemed good unto Him, giving unto every creature its being, shape, form, and several offices to serve its Creator; that He doth also still uphold and govern them by His eternal providence and infinite power[2] for the service of mankind,[3] to the end that man may serve his God.[4]

He also created the angels good,[5] to be His messengers[6] and to serve His elect;[7] some of whom are fallen from that excellency in which God created them into everlasting perdition[8] and the others have, by the grace of God,[9] remained steadfast and continued in their primitive state. The devils and evil spirits are so depraved that they are enemies of God and every good thing, to the utmost of their power,[10] as murderers watching to ruin the Church and every member thereof, and by their wicked strategems to destroy all;[11] and are therefore, by their own wickedness, adjudged to eternal damnation, daily expecting their horrible torments.[12] Therefore we reject and abhor the error of the Sadducees who deny the existence of spirits and angels,[13] and also that of the Manichees who assert that the devils have their origin of themselves, and that they are wicked of their own nature, without having been corrupted.

[1]Gen. 1:1; Isa. 40:26; Heb. 3:4; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 8:6; John 1:3; Col. 1:16

[2]Heb. 1:3; Ps. 104:10; Acts 17:25
[3]1 Tim. 4:3–4; Gen. 1:29–30; 9:2–3; Ps. 104:14–15
[4]1 Cor. 3:22; 6:20; Matt. 4:10
[5]Col. 1:16
[6]Ps. 103:20; 34:8; 148:2
[7]Heb. 1:14; Ps. 34:8
[8]John 8:44; 2 Peter 2:4; Luke 8:31; Jude 6
[9]Matt. 25:31
[10]1 Peter 5:8; Job 1:7
[11]Gen. 3:1; Matt. 13:25; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:3, 14
[12]Matt. 25:41; Luke 8:30, 31
[13]Acts 23:8

Article 13: Divine Providence

We believe that the same God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them, nor give them up to fortune or chance, but that He rules and governs them according to His holy will,[1] so that His appointment;[2] nothing happens in this world without nevertheless, God neither is the author of, nor can be charged with, the sins which are committed. For His power and goodness are so great and incomprehensible, that He orders and executes His work in the most excellent and just manner, even then when devils and wicked men act unjustly.[3] And as to what He doth surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire into it further than our capacity will admit of; but with the greatest humility and reverence adore the righteous judgments of God which are hid from us,[4] contenting ourselves that we are disciples of Christ to learn only those things which He has revealed to us in His Word without transgressing these limits.

This doctrine affords us unspeakable consolation, since we are taught thereby that nothing can befall us by chance, but by the direction of our most gracious and heavenly Father, who watches over us with a paternal care, keeping all creatures so under His power[5] that not a hair of our head (for they are all numbered), nor a sparrow, can fall to the ground without the will of our Father,[6] in whom we do entirely trust; being persuaded that He so restrains the devil and all our enemies that, without His will and permission, they cannot hurt us. And therefore we reject that damnable error of the Epicureans, who say that God regards nothing, but leaves all things to chance.

[1]John 5:17; Heb. 1:3; Prov. 16:4; Ps. 104:9, etc.; Ps. 139:2, etc.
[2] James 4:15; Job 1:21; 1 Kings 22:20; Acts 4:28; 1 Sam. 2:25; Ps. 115:3; 45:7; Amos 3:6; Deut. 19:5; Prov. 21:1; Ps. 105:25; Isa. 10:5–7; 2 Thess. 2:11; Ezek. 14:9; Rom. 1:28; Gen. 45:8; 1:20; 2 Sam. 16:10; Gen. 27:20; Ps. 75:7–8; Isa. 45:7; Prov. 16:4; Lam. 3:37–38; 1 Kings 22:34, 38; Ex. 21:13

[3]Matt. 8:31, 32; John 3:8
[4]Rom. 11:33–34
[5]Matt. 8:31; Job 1:12; 2:6
[6]Matt. 10:29–30

Article 14: The Creation and Fall of Man and His Incapacity to Perform What is Truly Good

We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after His own image and likeness,[1] good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God.[2] But being in honor he understood it not, neither knew excellency,[3] his but willfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil.[4] For the commandment of life which he had received,[5] he transgressed; and by sin separated himself from God[6] who was his true life, having corrupted his whole nature,[7] whereby he made himself liable to corporal and spiritual death.[8] And being thus become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways, he hath lost all his excellent gifts which he had received from God[9] and only retained a few remains thereof,[10] which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse;[11] for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness,[12] as the Scriptures teach us, saying: *The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth*[13] *it not*; where St. John calleth men darkness.

Therefore, we reject all that is taught repugnant to this concerning the free will of man, since man is but a slave to sin[14] and has nothing of himself unless it is given him from heaven.[15] For who may presume to boast that he of himself can do any good, since Christ saith, *No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him?*[16] *Who will glory in his own will, who understands that to be carnally minded is enmity against God?* [17] Who can speak of his knowledge, since *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God?* [18] In short, who dare suggest any thought, since he knows that *we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God?* [19]And therefore what the apostle saith ought justly to be held sure and firm, that *God worketh in us both to will and to do of His* [20] For there is no will nor understanding *good pleasure*. conformable to the divine will and understanding but what Christ hath wrought in man, which He teaches us when He saith, *Without Me ye can do nothing*. [21]

[1]Gen. 1:26; Eccl. 7:29; Eph. 4:24
[2]Gen. 1:31; Eph. 4:24
[3]Ps. 49:21; Isa. 59:2
[4]Gen. 3:6, 17
[5]Gen. 1:3, 7
[6]Isa. 59:2
[7]Eph. 4:18
[8]Rom.. 5:12; Gen. 2:17; 3:19
[9]Rom. 3:10
[10]Acts 14:16–17; 17:27
[11]Rom. 1:20, 21; Acts 17:27
[12]Eph. 5:8; Matt. 6:23
[13]John 1:5
[14]Isa. 26:12; Ps. 94:11; John 8:34; Rom. 6:17; 7:5, 17
[15]John 3:27; Isa. 26:12
[16]John 3:27; 6:44, 65
[17]Rom. 8:7
[18]1 Cor. 2:14; Ps. 94:11
[19]2 Cor. 3:5
[20]Phil. 2:13
[21]John 15:5

Article 15: Original Sin

We believe that through the disobedience of Adam original sin is extended to all mankind,[1] which is a corruption of the whole nature and an hereditary disease, wherewith infants themselves are infected even in their mother's womb,[2] and which produceth in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof;[3] and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind.[4] Nor is it by any means abolished or done away by baptism; since sin always issues forth from this woeful source as water from a fountain; notwithstanding it is not imputed to the children of God unto condemnation, but by His grace and mercy is forgiven them. Not that they should rest securely in sin, but that a sense of this corruption should make believers often to sigh, desiring to be delivered from this body of death.[5] Wherefore we reject the error of the Pelagians, who assert that sin proceeds only from imitation.

[1]Rom. 5:12, 13; Ps. 51:7; Rom. 3:10; Gen. 6:3; John 3:6; Job 14:4
[2]Isa. 48:8; Rom. 5:14
[3]Gal. 5:19; Rom. 7:8, 10, 13, 17–18, 20, 23
[4]Eph. 2:3, 5
[5]Rom. 7:18, 24

Article 16: Eternal Election

We believe that all the posterity of Adam, being thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest Himself such as He is; that is to say, merciful and just: [1] merciful, since He delivers and preserves from this perdition all

whom He, in His eternal and unchangeable counsel, of mere goodness hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works;[2] just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves.[3]

[1]Rom. 9:18,22–23; 3:12
[2] Rom. 9:15–16; 11:32; Eph. 2:8–10; Ps. 100:3; 1 John 4:10; Deut. 32:8; 1 Sam. 12:22; Ps. 115:5; Mal. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 8:29; 9:11, 21; 11:5–6; Eph. 1:4; Titus 3:4–5; Acts 2:47; 13:48; 2 Tim. 2:19–20; 1 Peter 1:2; John 6:27; 15:16; 17:9
[3]Rom. 9:17, 18; 2 Tim. 2:20

Article 17: The Recovery Of Fallen Man

We believe that our most gracious God, in His admirable wisdom and goodness, seeing that man had thus thrown himself into temporal and spiritual death, and made himself wholly miserable, was pleased to seek and comfort him when he trembling[1] fled from His presence, promising him that He would give His Son, who should *be made of a woman, to bruise the head of the serpent*, and would make him happy.[2]

[1]Gen. 3:8–9, 19; Isa. 65:1–2
[2]Heb. 2:14; Gen. 22:18; Isa. 7:14; John 7:42; 2 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 7:14; Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4

Article 18: Of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ

We confess, therefore, that God did fulfull the promise which He made to the fathers by the mouth of His holy prophets[1] when He sent into the world, at the time appointed by Him, His own only-begotten and eternal Son, *who took upon Him the form of a servant, and became like unto man*,[2] really assuming the true human nature, with all its infirmities, sin excepted,[3] being conceived in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, by the power of the Holy Ghost, without the means of man;[4] and did not only assume human nature as to the body, but also a true human soul,[5] that He might be a real man. For since the soul was lost as well as the body, it was necessary that He should take both upon him, to save both. Therefore we confess (in opposition to the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of His mother) that Christ is become *a partaker of the flesh and blood of the children*;[6] that He is a *fruit of the loins of David* after the flesh;[7] *made of the seed of David according to the flesh*;[8] *a fruit of the womb* of the Virgin Mary;[9] *made of a woman*;[10] *a branch* of David;[11] *a shoot of the root of Jesse;*[12] *sprung from the tribe of Judah;*[13] *descended from the Jews according to the flesh:* [14]*of the seed of Abraham, since He took on*

Him the seed of Abraham,[15] *and became like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted;*[16] *so that in truth He is our Immanuel,* that is to say, *God with us.*[17]

[1]Isa. 11:1; Luke 1:55; Gen. 26:4; 2 Sam. 7:12; Ps. 132:11; Acts 13:23
[2]1 Tim. 2:5; 3:16; Phil. 2:7
[3]Heb. 2:14–15; 4:15
[4]Luke 1:31, 34–35
[5]Matt. 26:38; John 12:27
[6]Heb. 2:14
[7]Acts 2:30
[8]Ps. 132:11; Rom. 1:3
[9]Luke 1:42
[10]Gal. 4:4
[11]Jer. 33:15
[12]Isa. 11:1
[13]Heb. 7:14
[14]Rom. 9:5
[15]Gen. 22:18; 2 Sam. 7:12; Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16
[16]Heb. 2:15–17
[17]Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23

Article 19: The Union and Distinction of the Two Natures in the Person of Christ

We believe that by this conception the person of the Son is inseparably united and connected with the human nature, so that there are not two Sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person; yet that each nature retains its own distinct properties. As then the divine nature hath always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life,[1] filling heaven and earth, so also hath the human nature not lost its properties, but remained a creature, having beginning of days, being a finite nature, and retaining all the properties of a real body.[2] And though He hath by His resurrection given immortality to the same, nevertheless He hath not changed the reality of His human nature, forasmuch as our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of His body.

But these two natures are so closely united in one person that they were not separated even by His death. Therefore that which He, when dying, commended into the hands of His Father, was a real human spirit, departing from His body.[3] But in the meantime the divine nature always remained united with the human, even when He lay in the grave; and the Godhead did not cease to be in Him, any more than it did when He was an infant, though it did not so clearly manifest itself for a while. Wherefore we confess that He is very God and very man: very God by His power to conquer death, and very man that He might die for us according to the infirmity of His flesh.

[1]Heb. 7:3
[2]1 Cor. 15:13, 21; Phil. 3:21; Matt. 26:11; Acts 1:2, 11; 3:21; Luke 24:39; John 20:25, 27
[3]Luke 23:46; Matt. 27:50

Article 20: God Hath Manifested His Justice and Mercy in Christ

We believe that God, who is perfectly merciful and just, sent His Son to assume that nature in which the disobedience was committed, to make satisfaction in the same and to bear the punishment of sin by His most bitter passion and death.[1] God therefore manifested His justice against His Son when He laid our iniquities[2] upon Him and poured forth His mercy and goodness on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation, out of mere and perfect love, giving His Son unto death for us and raising Him for our justification,[3] that through Him we might obtain immortality and life eternal.

[1]Heb. 2:14; Rom. 8:3, 32–33
[2]Isa. 53:6; John 1:29; 1 John 4:9
[3]Rom. 4:25

Article 21: The Satisfaction of Christ, Our Only High Priest, For Us

We believe that Jesus Christ is ordained with an oath to be an everlasting High Priest after the order of Melchizedek,[1] and that He hath presented Himself in our behalf before the Father to appease His wrath by His full satisfaction,[2] by offering Himself on the tree of the cross, and pouring out His precious blood to purge away our sins, as the prophets had foretold. For it is written, He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and numbered with the transgressors; [3]and condemned by Pontius Pilate as a malefactor, though he had first declared Him innocent.[4] Therefore, He restored that which He took not away,[5] and suffered the just for the unjust,[6] as well in His body as in His soul, feeling the terrible punishment which our sins had merited; insomuch that His sweat became like unto drops of blood falling on the ground.[7] He called out, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? [8] and hath suffered all this for the remission of our sins.

Wherefore we justly say with the apostle Paul, that we know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified;[9] we count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ [10] in whose wounds

we find all manner of Jesus our Lord, consolation. Neither is it necessary to seek or invent any other means of being reconciled to God than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which believers are made perfect forever.[11] This is also the reason why He was called by the angel of God, Jesus, that is to say, Savior, because He should save His people from their sins.[12]

[1]Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:10
[2] Col. 1:14; Rom. 5:8–9; Col. 2:14; Heb. 2:17; 9:14; Rom. 3:24; 8:2; John 15:3; Acts 2:24; 13:28; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:6
[3]Isa. 53:5, 7, 12
[4]Luke 23:22, 24; Acts 13:28; Ps. 22:16; John 18:38; Ps. 69:5; 1 Peter 3:18
[5]Ps. 69:5
[6]1 Peter 3:18
[7]Luke 22:44
[8]Ps. 22:2; Matt. 27:46
[9]1 Cor. 2:2
[10]Phil. 3:8
[11]Heb. 9:25–26; 10:14
[12]Matt. 1:21; Acts 4:12

Article 22: Our Justification Through Faith in Jesus Christ

We believe that to attain the true knowledge of this great mystery the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, appropriates Him,[1] and seeks nothing more besides Him.[2] For it must needs follow, either that all things which are requisite to our salvation are not in Jesus Christ, or if all things are in Him, that then those who possess Jesus Christ through faith have complete salvation in Him.[3] Therefore, for any to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides Him, would be too gross a blasphemy; for hence it would follow that Christ was but half a Savior.

Therefore we justly say with Paul, that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith without works.[4] However, to speak more clearly, we do not mean that faith itself justifies us, for it is only an instrument with which we embrace Christ our Righteousness. But Jesus Christ, imputing to us all His merits and so many holy works which He hath done for us and in our stead, is our Righteousness.[5] And faith is an instrument that keeps us in communion with Him in all His benefits, which, when they become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins.

[1]Eph. 3:16–17; Ps. 51:13; Eph. 1:17–18; 1 Cor. 2:12
[2]1 Cor. 2:2; Acts 4:12; Gal. 2:21; Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; Jer. 31:10
[3]Matt. 1:21; Rom. 3:27; 8:1, 33

[4]Rom. 3:27; Gal. 2:6; 1 Peter 1:4–5; Rom. 10:4
[5] Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Tim. 1:2; Luke 1:77; Rom. 3:24–25; 4:5; Ps. 32:1–2; Phil. 3:9; Titus 3:5; 2 Tim. 1:9

Article 23: Wherein Our Justification Before God Consists

We believe that our salvation consists in the remission of our sins for Jesus Christ's sake, and that therein our righteousness before God is implied; as David and Paul teach us, declaring this to be the happiness of man, that God imputes righteousness to him without works.[1] And the same apostle saith, that we are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.[2]

And therefore we always hold fast this foundation, ascribing all the glory to God,[3] humbling ourselves before Him, and acknowledging ourselves to be such as we really are, without presuming to trust in any thing in ourselves or in any merit of ours,[4] relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone,[5] which becomes ours when we believe in Him.[6] This is sufficient to cover all our iniquities and to give us confidence in approaching to God;[7] freeing the conscience of fear, terror, and dread, without following the example of our first father, Adam, who, trembling, attempted to cover himself with fig leaves.[8] And verily, if we should appear before God relying on ourselves or on any other creature, though ever so little, we should, alas! be consumed.[9] And therefore every one must pray with David: O Lord, enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.[10]

[1]Luke 1:77; Col. 1:14; Ps. 32:1–2; Rom. 4:6–7
[2]Rom. 3:23–24; Acts 4:12
[3]Ps. 115:1; 1 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 4:2
[4]1 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:29, 31
[5]Rom. 5:19
[6]Heb. 11:6–7; Eph. 2:8; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Tim. 2:6
[7]Rom. 5:1; Eph. 3:12; 1 John 2:1
[8]Gen. 3:7
[9]Isa. 33:14; Deut. 27:26; James 2:10
[10]Ps. 130:3; Matt. 18:23–26; Ps. 143:2; Luke 16:15

Article 24: Man's Sanctification and Good Works

We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Ghost,[1] doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life[2] and freeing him from the bondage of sin.[3] Therefore it is so far from being true that this justifying faith makes men remiss in a pious and holy life,[4] that on the contrary without it they would never do

anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation. Therefore it is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man; for we do not speak of a vain faith,[5] but of such a faith as is called in Scripture a faith that worketh by love,[6] which excites man to the practice of those works which God has commanded in His Word. Which works, as they proceed from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, forasmuch as they are all sanctified by His grace; howbeit they are of no account towards our justification.[7] For it is by faith in Christ that we are justified, even before we do good works;[8] otherwise they could not be good works, any more than the fruit of a tree can be good before the tree itself is good.[9]

Therefore we do good works, but not to merit by them (for what can we merit?)—nay, we are beholden to God for the good works we do and not He to us,[10] since it is He that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.[11] Let us therefore attend to what is written: When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.[12]

In the meantime we do not deny that God rewards our good works, but it is through His grace that He crowns His gifts.[13] Moreover, though we do good works, we do not found our salvation upon them;[14] for we can do no work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable;[15] and although we could perform such works, still the remembrance of one sin is sufficient to make God reject them. Thus, then, we would always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences would be continually vexed if they relied not on the merits of the suffering and death of our Savior.[16]

[1] 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 10:17; John 5:24
[2] 1 Thess. 1:5; Rom. 8:15; John 6:29; Col. 2:12; Phil. 1:1, 29; Eph. 2:8
[3] Acts 15:9; Rom. 6:4, 22; Titus 2:12; John 8:36
[4] Titus 2:12
[5] Titus 3:8; John 15:5; Heb. 11:6; 1 Tim. 1:5
[6] 1 Tim. 1:5; Gal. 5:6; Titus 3:8
[7] 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 9:32; Titus 3:5
[8] Rom. 4:4; Gen. 4:4
[9] Heb. 11:6; Rom. 14:23; Gen. 4:4; Matt. 7:17
[10] 1 Cor. 4:7; Isa. 26:12; Gal. 3:5; 1 Thess. 2:13
[11] Phil. 2:13
[12] Luke 17:10
[13] Matt. 10:42; 25:34–35; Rev. 3:12, 21; Rom. 2:6; Rev. 2:11; 2 John 8; Rom. 11:6
[14] Eph. 2:9–10
[15] Isa. 64:6

[16]Isa. 28:16; Rom. 10:11; Hab. 2:4

Article 25: The Abolishing of the Ceremonial Law

We believe that the ceremonies and figures of the law ceased at the coming of Christ[1] and that all the shadows are accomplished, so that the use of them must be abolished among Christians;[2] yet the truth and substance of them remain with us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have their completion. In the meantime we still use the testimonies taken out of the law and the prophets, to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel,[3] and to regulate our life in all honesty to the glory of God, according to His will.

[1]Rom. 10:4
[2]Gal. 5:2–4; 3:1; 4:10–11; Col. 2:16–17
[3]2 Peter 1:19

Article 26: Christ's Intercession

We believe that we have no access unto God but alone through the only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous,[1] who therefore became man, having united in one person the divine and human natures, that we men might have access to the divine Majesty, which access would otherwise be barred against us. But this Mediator, whom the Father hath appointed between Him and us, ought in no wise affright us by His majesty, or cause us to seek another according to our fancy.[2] For there is no creature, either in heaven or on earth, who loveth us more than Jesus Christ;[3] who, though He was in the form of God, yet made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a man and of a servant for us,[4] and was made like unto His brethren in all things. If, then, we should seek for another mediator who would be well affected towards us, whom could we find who loved us more than He who laid down His life for us, even when we were His enemies?[5] And if we seek for one who hath power and majesty, who is there that hath so much of both as He who sits at the right hand of His Father, and who hath all power in heaven and on earth? [6]And who will sooner be heard than the own well-beloved Son of God?

Therefore it was only through distrust that this practice of dishonoring instead of honoring the saints was introduced, doing that which they never have done nor required, but have, on the contrary, steadfastly rejected, according to their bounden duty, as appears by their writings.[7] Neither must we plead here our

unworthiness; for the meaning is not that we should offer our prayers to God on account of our own worthiness, but only on account of the excellency and worthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ,[8] whose righteousness is become ours by faith.

Therefore the apostle, to remove this foolish fear or rather distrust, from us, justly saith that Jesus Christ was made like unto His brethren in all things, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.[9] And further to encourage us, he adds: Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.[10] The same apostle saith: Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, etc.[11] Likewise, Christ hath an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. [12]

What more can be required? since Christ Himself saith: I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.[13] To what purpose should we then seek another advocate,[14] since it hath pleased God to give us His own Son as our Advocate?[15] Let us not forsake Him to take another, or rather to seek after another, without ever being able to find Him; for God well knew, when He gave Him to us, that we were sinners.

Therefore, according to the command of Christ, we call upon the heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our only Mediator, as we are taught in the Lord's Prayer;[16] being assured that whatever we ask of the Father in His Name will be granted us.[17]

[1]1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Rom. 8:33
[2]Hosea. 13:9; Jer. 2:13, 33
[3]John 10:11; 1 John 4:10; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 3:19; John 15:13
[4]Phil. 2:7
[5]Rom. 5:8
[6]Mark 16:19; Col. 3:1; Rom. 8:33; Matt. 11:27; 28:18
[7]Acts 10:26; 14:15
[8]Dan. 9:17–18; John 16:23; Eph. 3:12; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 1:31; Eph. 2:18
[9]Heb. 2:17,18

[10]Heb. 4:14–16
[11]Heb. 10:19, 22
[12] Heb. 7:24, 25
[13]John 14:6
[14]Ps. 44:21
[15]1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Rom. 8:33
[16]Luke 11:2
[17]John 4:17; 16:23; 14:13

Article 27: The Catholic Christian Church

We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church,[1] which is a holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in Jesus Christ, being washed by His blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost.

This Church hath been from the beginning of the world and will be to the end thereof,[2] which is evident from this, that Christ is an eternal king, which, without subjects, He cannot be.[3] And this holy Church is preserved or supported by God against the rage of the whole world;[4] though she sometimes (for a while) appears very small, and in the eyes of men, to be reduced to nothing,[5] as during the perilous reign of Ahab when nevertheless the Lord reserved unto Him seven thousand men, who had not bowed their knees to Baal.[6]

Furthermore, this holy Church is not confined, bound, or limited to a certain place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed over the whole world; and yet is joined and united with heart and will,[7] by the power of faith, in one and the same spirit.[8]

[1]Isa. 2:2; Ps. 46:5; 102:14; Jer. 31:36
[2]Matt. 28:20; 2 Sam. 7:16
[3]Luke 1:32–33; Ps. 89:37–38; 110:2–4
[4]Matt. 16:18; John 16:33; Gen. 22:17; 2 Tim. 2:19
[5]Luke 12:32; Isa. 1:9; Rev. 12:6, 14; Luke 17:21; Matt. 16:18
[6]Rom. 12:4; 11:2, 4; 1 Kings 19:18; Isa. 1:9; Rom. 9:29
[7]Acts 4:32
[8]Eph. 4:3–4

Article 28: Every One is Bound to Join Himself to the True Church

We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved and out of it there is no salvation,[1] that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be ought to withdraw himself to live in a separate state from it;[2] but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it, maintaining the unity of the Church;[3] submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof; bowing their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ;[4] and as

mutual members of the same body,[5] serving to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them.

And that this may be the more effectually observed, it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate themselves from those who do not belong to the Church,[6] and to join themselves to this congregation wheresoever God hath established it,[7] even though the magistrates and edicts of princes be against it; yea, though they should suffer death or any other punishment.[8] corporal Therefore all those who separate themselves from the same or do not join themselves to it, act contrary to the ordinance of God.

[1]1 Peter 3:20; Joel 2:32
[2]Acts 2:40; Isa. 52:11
[3]Ps. 22:23; Eph. 4:3, 12; Heb. 2:12
[4]Ps. 2:10–12; Matt. 11:29
[5]Eph. 4:12, 16; 1 Cor. 12:12, etc.
[6]Acts 2:40; Isa. 52:11; 2 Cor. 6:17; Rev. 18:4
[7]Matt. 12:30; 24:28; Isa. 49:22; Rev. 17:14
[8]Dan. 3:17–18; 6:8–10; Rev. 14:14; Acts 4:17, 19; 17:7; 18:13

Article 29: The Marks of the True Church, and Wherein She Differs From the False Church

We believe that we ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true Church, since all sects which are in the world assume to themselves the name of the Church. But we speak here not of hypocrites, who are mixed in the Church with the good, yet are not of the Church, though externally in it;[1] but we say that the body and communion of the true Church must be distinguished from all sects who call themselves the Church.

The marks by which the true Church is known are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein;[2] if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ;[3] if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin;[4] in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected,[5] and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church.[6] Hereby the true Church may certainly be known, from which no man has a right to separate himself.

With respect to those who are members of the Church, they may be known by the marks of Christians, namely, by faith;[7] and when they have received Jesus Christ the only Savior,[8] they avoid sin, follow after righteousness,[9] love the true God and their neighbor, neither

turn aside to the right or left, and crucify the flesh with the works thereof.[10] But this is not to be understood as if there did not remain in them great infirmities; but they fight against them through the Spirit all the days of their life,[11] continually taking their refuge in the blood, death, passion, and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom they have remission of sins through faith in Him. [12]

As for the false Church, she ascribes more power and authority to herself and her ordinances than to the Word of God,[13] and will not submit herself to the yoke of Christ.[14] Neither does she administer the sacraments as appointed by Christ in His Word, but adds to and takes from them as she thinks proper; she relieth more upon men than upon Christ; and persecutes those who live holily according to the Word of God,[15] and rebuke her for her errors, covetousness, and idolatry.[16] These two Churches are easily known and distinguished from each other.

[1]Matt. 13:22; 2 Tim. 2:18–20; Rom. 9:6
[2]John 10:27; Eph. 2:20; Acts 17:11–12; Col. 1:23; John 8:47
[3]Matt. 28:19; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23
[4]Matt. 18:15–18; 2 Thess. 3:14–15
[5]Matt. 28:2; Gal. 1:6–8
[6]Eph. 1:22–23; John 10:4–5, 14
[7]Eph. 1:13; John 17:20
[8]1 John 4:2
[9]1 John 3:8–10
[10]Rom. 6:2; Gal. 5:24
[11]Rom. 7:6, 17; Gal. 5:17
[12]Col. 1:14
[13]Col. 2:18–19
[14]Ps. 2:3
[15]Rev. 12:4; John 16:2
[16]Rev. 17:3, 4, 6

Article 30: The Government of and Offices in the Church

We believe that this true Church must be governed by the spiritual policy which our Lord hath taught us in His Word— namely, that there must be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God, and to administer the sacraments;[1] also elders and deacons, who, together with the pastors, form the council of the Church;[2] that by these means the true religion may be preserved, and the true doctrine everywhere propagated, likewise transgressors punished and restrained by spiritual means;[3] also that the poor and distressed may be relieved and comforted, according to their necessities. By these means everything will be carried on in the Church with good order and decency, when faithful men are chosen according to the rule prescribed by St. Paul in his epistle to Tim.. [4]

[1]Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 4:1–2; 2 Cor. 5:20; John 20:23; Acts 26:17–18; Luke 10:16
[2]Acts 6:3; 14:23
[3]Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4–5
[4]1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:5

Article 31: The Ministers, Elders, and Deacons

We believe that the ministers of God's Word,[1] and the elders and deacons,[2] ought to be chosen to their respective offices by a lawful election of the Church, with calling upon the name of the Lord, and in that order which the Word of God teacheth. Therefore every one must take heed not to intrude himself by indecent means, but is bound to wait till it shall please God to call him,[3] that he may have testimony of his calling, and be certain and assured that it is of the Lord.

As for the ministers of God's Word, they have equally the same power and authority wheresoever they are, as they are all ministers of Christ,[4] the only universal Bishop and the only Head of the Church.[5]

Moreover, that this holy ordinance of God may not be violated or slighted, we say that every one ought to esteem the ministers of God's Word and the elders of the Church very highly for their work's sake, and be at peace with them without murmuring, strife, or contention,[6] as much as possible.

[1]1 Tim. 5:22
[2]Acts 6:3
[3]Jer. 23:21; Heb. 5:4; Acts 1:23; 13:2
[4]1 Cor. 4:1; 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:20; Acts 26:16–17
[5]1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; Isa. 61:1; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18
[6]1 Thess. 5:12, 13; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17

Article 32: The Order and Discipline of the Church

In the meantime we believe, though it is useful and beneficial, that those who are rulers of the Church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the Church; yet they ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted.[1] And therefore, we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever.[2]

Therefore we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God. For this

purpose excommunication or church discipline is requisite, with the several circumstances belonging to it, according to the Word of God.[3]

[1]Col. 2:6–7
[2]1 Cor. 7:23; Matt. 15:9; Isa. 29:13; Gal. 5:1; Rom. 16:17–18
[3]Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20

Article 33: The Sacraments

We believe that our gracious God, on account of our weakness and infirmities, hath ordained the sacraments for us, thereby to seal unto us His promises,[1] and to be pledges of the good will and grace of God toward us, and also to nourish and strengthen our faith, which He hath joined to the Word of the gospel, the better to present to our senses both that which He signifies to us by His Word, and that which He works inwardly in our hearts, thereby assuring and confirming in us the salvation which He imparts to us. For they are visible signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing, by means whereof God worketh in us by the power of the Holy Ghost. Therefore the signs are not in vain or insignificant, so as to deceive us. For Jesus Christ is the true object presented by them, without whom they would be of no moment.[2]

Moreover, we are satisfied with the number of sacraments which Christ our Lord hath instituted, which are two only, namely, the sacrament of baptism and the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ.[3]

[1]Rom. 4:11; Gen. 9:13; 17:11
[2]Col. 2:11, 17; 1 Cor. 5:7
[3]Matt. 26:36; 28:19

TEC Note on Article 33

This church receives Article 33 entire and without qualification. We confess with it that the sacraments are signs and seals which God has joined to the Word of the gospel, that He ordained them for our weakness and infirmity, and that Christ has instituted two only.

We draw attention here to the principle the article itself lays down, because it governs what we must say at Article 34. A sacrament is a seal set upon a promise, and a seal is set upon the thing it seals. Since God has joined the sign both to His Word and to that which He works inwardly in the heart, we hold that the sign is rightly administered where the thing signified is credibly present. To set the seal elsewhere does not enlarge the grace; it loosens the sign from what it signifies.

Article 34: Holy Baptism

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law,[1] hath made an end, by the shedding of His blood, of all other sheddings of blood which men could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sin; and that He, having abolished circumcision, which was done with blood, hath instituted the sacrament of baptism[2] instead thereof, by which we are received into the Church of God, and separated from all other people and strange religions, that we may wholly belong to Him whose ensign and banner we bear, and which serves as a testimony unto us that He will forever be our gracious God and Father.

Therefore He has commanded all those who are His to be baptized with pure water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,[3] thereby signifying to us, that as water washeth away the filth of the body, when poured upon it, and is seen on the body of the baptized, when sprinkled upon him, so doth the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Ghost, internally sprinkle the soul, cleanse it from its sins, and regenerate us from children of wrath unto children of God.[4] Not that this is effected by the external water, but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God,[5] who is our Red Sea, through which we must pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the devil, and to enter into the spiritual land of Canaan.

Therefore the ministers on their part administer the sacrament and that which is visible,[6] but our Lord giveth that which is signified by the sacrament, namely, the gifts and invisible grace; washing, cleansing, and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness;[7] renewing our hearts and filling them with all comfort; giving unto us a true assurance of His fatherly goodness;

putting on us the new man, and putting off the old man with all his deeds.[8]

Therefore we believe that every man who is earnestly studious of obtaining life eternal ought to be but once baptized with this only baptism, without ever repeating the same,[9] since we cannot be born twice. Neither doth this baptism only avail us at the time when the water is poured upon us and received by us, but also through the whole course of our life.[10]

Therefore we detest the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with the one only baptism they have once received, and moreover condemn the baptism of the infants of believers, whom we believe ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant,[11] as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised[12] upon the same promises which are made unto our children. And indeed, Christ shed His blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful than for adult persons;[13] and therefore, they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of that which Christ hath done for them; as the Lord commanded in the law, that they should be made partakers of the sacrament of Christ's suffering and death shortly after they were born, by offering for them a lamb, which was a sacrament of Jesus Christ.[14] Moreover, what circumcision was to the Jews, that baptism is to our children. And for this reason Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ.[15]

[1]Rom. 10:4
[2]Col. 2:11; 1 Peter 3:21; 1 Cor. 10:2
[3]Matt. 28:19
[4]1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5; Heb. 9:14; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:6
[5]John 19:34
[6]Matt. 3:11; 1 Cor. 3:5, 7; Rom. 6:3
[7]Eph. 5:26; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21
[8]Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:22–24
[9]Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19; Eph. 4:5; Heb. 6:2
[10]Acts 2:38; 8:16
[11]Matt. 19:14; 1 Cor. 7:14
[12]Gen. 17:11–12
[13]Col. 2:11–12
[14]John 1:29; Lev. 12:6
[15]Col. 2:11

TEC Addendum to Article 34: On the Subjects of Baptism

Article 34 is printed above unaltered, as our fathers wrote it. We receive what it confesses concerning the institution of baptism, its signification, its administration in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, its once-for-all character, and the truth that the minister gives what is visible while the Lord gives what is signified. Upon the question of who is to be baptised we are constrained by Scripture to differ, and we set our difference here rather than leave it to be discovered.

Concerning circumcision. We confess with the article that Christ has made an end of the shedding of blood and has abolished circumcision, and that baptism is the sign of the covenant under the gospel. We hold with the Reformed churches that there is one covenant of grace, one Mediator, and one way of salvation from the fall to the last day. We differ from the article not upon the covenant but upon the subjects of its sign, and we set down here why.

The covenant of grace is contained in every covenant God has made with men, but not in every covenant alike. Each succeeding covenant came with greater light and stood nearer to the thing itself, until in the new covenant the shadow gives place to the substance. What was administered under Abraham and under Moses in figure is administered under Christ in fulfilment. This is not two covenant theologies but one, traced along its own line.

The sign has narrowed as the light has increased. Under Abraham circumcision was given to the whole household, to Ishmael as to Isaac, and to servants bought with money who were no part of his seed (Gen. 17:12-13, 23). Then the covenant was established with Isaac and not with Ishmael, and with Jacob and not with Esau (Gen. 17:19-21; 21:12; 25:23), and the sign followed the line of promise into one nation. Within that nation it was given alike to those circumcised in heart and to those who were not, and the prophets were sent to tell them so (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4). The new covenant is promised as not according to that covenant, and as one in which they shall all know the Lord, from the least to the greatest (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13). The sign therefore comes at last to rest where the thing signified is, upon those circumcised in heart.

That the sign never ran upon natural descent alone was taught in Israel before ever the apostles taught it. John the Baptist forbade them to say they had Abraham to their father while they would not repent (Matt. 3:9; Luke 3:8). Our Lord told men who claimed that descent that they were of their father the devil (John 8:39-44). And the apostle says plainly that he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, and that circumcision is of the heart (Rom. 2:28-29); that they are not all Israel which are of Israel, and that the children of the promise are counted for the seed (Rom. 9:6-8); and that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7-9).

Therefore circumcision and baptism signify one thing, and in that sense do one work. But they are not administered upon the same ground and they do not mark out the same people. Circumcision enrolled a son into a nation which God had taken to Himself, and carried with it, alongside what it signified spiritually, a standing in that people reckoned by birth and by household. That office is not carried over, for the church of the new covenant is not gathered by generation. When the apostle calls baptism the circumcision of Christ he joins the two in what they signify, and in the same breath names the faith through which the thing signified is received: buried with Him in baptism, raised with Him through faith in the working of God (Col. 2:11-12).

Nor is this a narrowing of the covenant itself. The covenant goes out in these last days to every nation under heaven, and the blessing of Abraham is come upon the Gentiles (Gal. 3:14, 29). It goes out so widely precisely because it is no longer carried by one people and no longer runs

in a bloodline. The subjects of the sign are narrowed to those of faith; the reach of the covenant is enlarged to the ends of the earth. These are not two movements but one.

We add one consideration which belongs to the manner of our reasoning rather than to the covenant. This church holds the regulative principle, that in the worship of God nothing is to be done but what He has appointed. Baptism is an element of worship instituted by Christ, and warrant for administering it must be found in His precept or in the practice of His apostles, and not in inference drawn from the former administration. Faithful men have pressed this, that infant baptism rests upon good and necessary consequence where a positive institution requires positive warrant, and that the argument from silence will not bear the weight laid upon it. We judge the objection sound. Where God has appointed a sign, we may not enlarge the company to whom it is given beyond those He has named.

Concerning the children of the faithful. We confess with the article that Christ shed His blood no less for the children of believers than for grown persons, and we deny nothing of their place in the household of faith. They are not strangers to the church. They are holy wards: born within the household of faith, committed to the guardianship of their parents and of the congregation, numbered among the catechumens, and to be instructed, prayed for, and brought up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. The promise of the covenant is truly held out to them. But the inheritance promised to them is an inheritance of faith, and it is received as every inheritance in Christ is received, through faith and not by birth.

That they hold a true standing without bearing the sign is no strange thing. The sojourner in Israel shared the whole life of the commonwealth and was shut out only from the sign and the covenant meal (Ex. 12:48; Num. 15:14-16). What we hold positively concerning our children is set down in the Doctrines of This House, at the twelfth article.

Therefore this church administers baptism upon a credible profession of faith, and to the children of believers when, and not before, they come to such a profession. In withholding the sign until then we do not withhold the promise, nor count covenant children as strangers, nor deny them their place among us. We confess that the sign belongs to the thing signified, and we wait to set the seal where God has given the substance.

We do not unchurch those whose conscience leads them to baptise the infants of believers, nor deny them the name of brethren, nor refuse their ministry of the Word. But we do not hold our own position as a private exception to a settled rule. It is the confession of this church, and the officers of this church subscribe it.

Article 35: The Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ

We believe and confess that our Savior Jesus Christ did ordain and institute the sacrament of the Holy Supper[1] to nourish and support those whom He hath already regenerated and incorporated into His family, which is His Church.

Now those who are regenerated have in them a twofold life:[2] the one corporal and temporal, which they have from the first birth and is common to all men; the other spiritual and heavenly, which is given them in their second birth,[3] which is effected by the word of the gospel[4] in the communion of the body of Christ; and this life is not common, but is peculiar to God's elect.[5] In like manner God hath given us, for the support of the bodily and earthly life, earthly and common bread which is subservient thereto and is common to all men, even as life itself. But for the support of the spiritual and heavenly life which believers have, He hath sent a living bread which descended from heaven, namely, Jesus Christ,[6] who nourishes and strengthens the spiritual life of believers when they eat Him, that is to say, when they apply and receive Him by faith in the Spirit.[7]

Christ, that He might represent unto us this spiritual and heavenly bread, hath instituted an earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of His body, and wine as a sacrament of His blood,[8] to testify by them unto us that as certainly as we receive and hold this sacrament in our hands, and eat and drink the same with our mouths, by which our life is afterwards nourished, we also do as certainly receive by faith (which is the hand and mouth of our soul) the true body and blood of Christ our only Savior in our souls, for the support of our spiritual life.[9]

Now as it is certain and beyond all doubt that Jesus Christ hath not enjoined to us the use of His sacraments in vain, so He works in us all that He represents to us by these holy signs, though the manner surpasses our understanding and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations of the Holy Ghost are hidden and incomprehensible. In the meantime we err not when we say that what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body and the proper blood of Christ.[10] But the manner of our partaking of the same is not by the mouth, but by the Spirit through faith. Thus, then, though Christ always sits at the right hand of His Father in the heavens,[11] yet doth He not therefore cease to make us partakers of Himself by faith. This

feast is a spiritual table at which Christ communicates Himself with all His benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both Himself and the merits of His sufferings and death,[12] nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of His flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of His blood.[13]

Further, though the sacraments are connected with the thing signified, nevertheless both are not received by all men; the ungodly indeed receives the sacrament to his condemnation,[14] but he doth not receive the truth of the sacrament. As Judas and Simon the sorcerer, both indeed received the sacrament, but not Christ who was signified by it, of whom believers only are made partakers.

Lastly, we receive this holy sacrament in the assembly of the people of God with humility and reverence,[15] keeping up among us a holy remembrance of the death of Christ our Savior with thanksgiving, making there confession of our faith and of the Christian religion. Therefore no one ought to come to this table without having previously rightly examined himself; lest by eating of this bread and drinking of this cup he eat and drink judgment to [16] In a word, we are excited by the use of this holy himself. sacrament to a fervent love towards God and our neighbor.

Therefore we reject all mixtures and damnable inventions which men have added unto and blended with the sacraments as profanations of them, and affirm that we ought to rest satisfied with the ordinance which Christ and His apostles have taught us, and that we must speak of them in the same manner as they have spoken.

[1]Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23–25
[2]John 3:6
[3]John 3:5
[4]John 5:23, 25
[5]1 John 5:12; John 10:28
[6]John 6:32–33, 51
[7]John 6:63
[8]Mark 6:26
[9]1 Cor.. 10:16–17; Eph. 3:17; John 6:35
[10]John 6:55–56; 1 Cor. 10:16
[11]Acts 3:21; Mark 16:19; Matt. 26:11
[12]Matt. 26:26, etc.; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Cor. 10:2–4
[13]Isa. 55:2; Rom. 8:22–23
[14]1 Cor. 11:29; 2 Cor. 6:14–15; 1 Cor. 2:14
[15]Acts 2:42; 20:7
[16]1 Cor. 11:27–28

Article 36: The Magistrates

We believe that our gracious God, because of the depravity of mankind, hath appointed kings, princes, and magistrates,[1] willing that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies; to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained, and all things carried on among them with good order and decency. For this purpose He hath invested the magistracy with the sword, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. And their office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also that they protect the sacred ministry, and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship;[2] that the kingdom of antichrist may be thus destroyed and the kingdom of Christ promoted. They must, therefore, countenance the preaching of the word of the gospel everywhere, that God may be honored and worshipped by every one, as He commands in His Word.

Moreover, it is the bounden duty of every one, of what state, quality, or condition soever he may be, to subject himself to the magistrates;[3] to pay tribute,[4] to show due honor and respect to them, and to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the Word of God;[5] to supplicate for them in their prayers, that God may rule and guide them in all their ways, and that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.[6]

Wherefore we detest the error of the Anabaptists and other seditious people, and in general all those who reject the higher powers and magistrates, and would subvert justice,[7] introduce a community of goods, and confound that decency and good order which God hath established among men.[8]

[1] Ex. 18:20, etc.; Rom. 13:1; Prov. 8:15; Jer. 21:12; 22:2–3; Ps. 82:1, 6; 101:2; Deut. 1:15–16; 16:18; 17:15; Dan. 2:21, 37; 5:18
[2] Isa. 49:23, 25; 1 Kings 15:12; 2 Kings 23:2–4
[3] Titus 3:1; Rom. 13:1
[4] Mark 12:17; Matt. 17:24
[5] Acts 4:17–19; 5:29; Hosea 5:11
[6] Jer. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:1–2
[7] 2 Peter 2:10
[8] Jude 8, 10

Article 37: The Last Judgement

Finally, we believe according to the Word of God, when the time appointed by the Lord (which is unknown to all creatures)[1] is come,

and the number of the elect complete, that our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as He ascended,[2] with great glory and majesty to declare Himself Judge of the quick and the dead,[3] burning this old world with fire and flame to cleanse it.[4] And then all men will personally appear before this great Judge, both men and women, and children, that have been from the beginning of the world to the end thereof,[5] being summoned by the voice of the archangel and by the sound of the trumpet of God.[6] For all the dead shall be raised out of the earth, and their souls joined and united with their proper bodies in which they formerly lived.[7] As for those who shall then be living, they shall not die as the others, but be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and from corruptible become incorruptible.[8]

Then the books (that is to say, the consciences) shall be opened, and the dead judged according to what they shall have done in this world, whether it be good or evil.[9] Nay, all men shall give an account of every idle word they have spoken, which the world only counts amusement and jest;[10] and then the secrets and hypocrisy of men shall be disclosed and laid open before all.[11]

And, therefore, the consideration of this judgment is justly terrible and dreadful to the wicked and ungodly,[12] but most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and the elect; because then their full deliverance shall be perfected, and there they shall receive the fruits of their labor and trouble which they have borne.[13] Their innocence shall be known to all, and they shall see the terrible vengeance which God shall execute on the wicked,[14] who most cruelly persecuted, oppressed, and tormented them in this world;[15] and who shall be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences,[16] and, being immortal, shall be tormented in that everlasting fire[17] which is prepared for the devil and his angels.[18]

But on the contrary, the faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honor;[19] and the Son of God will confess their names before God His Father and His elect angels;[20] all tears shall be wiped from their eyes;[21] and their cause, which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates as heretical and impious, will then be known to be the cause of the Son of God.[22] And for a gracious reward, the Lord will cause them to possess such a glory as never entered into the heart of man to conceive.[23]

Therefore we expect that great day with a most ardent desire, to the end that we may fully enjoy the promises of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.[24] Amen.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20).

[1]Matt. 24:36; 25:13; 1 Thess. 5:1–2; Rev. 6:11; Acts 1:7; 2 Peter 3:10
[2]Acts 1:11 [3]2 Thess. 1:7–8; Acts 17:31; Matt. 24:30; 25:31; Jude 15; 1 Peter 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:1 [4]2 Peter 3:7, 10; 2 Thess. 1:8

[5]Rev. 20:12–13; Acts 17:31; Heb. 6:2; 9:27; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10
[6]1 Cor. 15:42; Rev. 20:12–13; 1 Thess. 4:16
[7]John 5:28–29; 6:54; Dan. 12:2; Job 19:26–27

[8]1 Cor. 15:51–53
[9] Rev. 20:12–13; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rom. 14:11–12; Job 34:11; John 5:24; Dan. 12:2; Ps. 62:13; Matt. 11:22; 23:33; John 5:29; Rom. 2:5–6; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 6:2; 9:27

[10]Rom. 2:5; Jude 15; Matt. 12:36
[11]1 Cor. 4:5; Rom. 2:1–2, 16; Matt. 7:1–2

[12]Rev. 6:15–16; Heb. 10:27
[13]Luke 21:28; 1 John 3:2; 4:17; Rev. 14:7; 2 Thess. 1:5–7; Luke 14:14

[14]Dan. 7:26
[15]Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:6–8; Mal. 4:3
[16]Rom. 2:15
[17]Rev. 21:8; 2 Peter 2:9
[18]Mal. 4:1; Matt. 25:41
[19]Matt. 25:34; 13:43
[20]Matt. 10:32
[21]Isa. 25:8; Rev. 21:4
[22]Isa. 66:5
[23]Isa. 64:4; 1 Cor. 2:9
[24]Heb. 10:36–38

Historical Background

The Belgic Confession, the oldest doctrinal standard of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, was written in 1561 by Guido de Brès, a Reformed pastor, during a time of severe persecution under Philip II of Spain. Also known as the Walloon Confession and the Netherlands Confession, it aimed to demonstrate that Reformed believers were law-abiding citizens who professed only biblical doctrines.

Modeled after the 1559 Gallic Confession and influenced by Calvin's design, the Belgic Confession follows traditional Reformed theology, covering six loci: theology proper, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. Despite its structured doctrinal order, the Confession maintains a personal and experiential tone.

In 1562, a copy was sent to King Philip II, declaring the petitioners' willingness to endure persecution rather than deny their faith. Although this did not result in toleration for Protestants, de Brès was martyred but his work endured, becoming a significant Reformed doctrinal standard.

The Belgic Confession was quickly adopted by Reformed churches in the Netherlands, translated into Dutch in 1562, and revised by the Synod of Antwerp in 1566. The Synod of Dort (1618–1619) further revised it and required all Reformed church office-bearers to subscribe to it, solidifying its place in Reformed theology.

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.(n.d.). The Confession of Faith. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Belgic-Confession-of-Faith-with-Intro.pdf

The Heidelberg Catechism

LORD'S DAY 1

Question 1: What is thy only comfort in life and death?

That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ; who, with His precious blood, hath fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto Him.

Question 2: How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou, enjoying this comfort, mayest live and die happily?

Three; the first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.

THE FIRST PART — OF THE MISERY OF MAN

LORD'S DAY 2

Question 3: Whence knowest thou thy misery?

Out of the law of God.

Question 4: What doth the law of God require of us?

Christ teaches us that briefly, Matthew 22:37–40, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and the great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Question 5: Canst thou keep all these things perfectly?

Answer: In no wise; for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor.

LORD'S DAY 3

Question 6. Did God then create man so wicked and perverse?

By no means; but God created man good, and after His own image, in true righteousness and holiness, that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him and live with Him in eternal happiness to glorify and praise Him.

Question 7: Whence then proceeds this depravity of human nature?

From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise; hence our nature is become so corrupt that we are all conceived and born in sin.

Question 8: Are we then so corrupt that we are wholly incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all wickedness?

Indeed we are, except we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.

LORD'S DAY 4

Question 9: Doth not God then do injustice to man, by requiring from him in His law that which he cannot perform?

Not at all; for God made man capable of performing it; but man, by the instigation of the devil, and his own wilful disobedience, deprived himself and all his posterity of those divine gifts.

Question 10: Will God suffer such disobedience and rebellion to go unpunished?

By no means; but is terribly displeased with our original as well as actual sins; and will punish them in His just judgment temporally and eternally, as He hath declared, "Cursed is every one that

continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them."

Question 11: Is not God then also merciful?

God is indeed merciful, but also just; therefore His justice requires that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul.

THE SECOND PART — OF MAN'S DELIVERANCE

LORD'S DAY 5

Question 12: Since then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal and eternal punishment, is there no way by which we may escape that punishment, and be again received into favor?

God will have His justice satisfied, and therefore we must make this full satisfaction, either by ourselves or by another.

Question 13: Can we ourselves then make this satisfaction?

By no means; but on the contrary we daily increase our debt.

Question 14: Can there be found anywhere one, who is a mere creature, able to satisfy for us?

None; for, first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man hath committed; and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, so as to deliver others from it.

Question 15: What sort of a mediator and deliverer then must we seek for?

For one who is very man, and perfectly righteous; and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is also very God.

LORD'S DAY 6

Question 16: Why must he be very man, and also perfectly righteous?

Because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which hath sinned, should likewise make satisfaction for sin; and one, who is himself a sinner, cannot satisfy for others.

Question 17: Why must He in one person be also very God?

That He might by the power of His Godhead sustain in His human nature the burden of God's wrath; and might obtain for, and restore to us, righteousness and life.

Question 18: Who then is that Mediator, who is in one person both very God, and a real righteous man?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Question 19: Whence knowest thou this?

From the holy gospel, which God Himself first revealed in Paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly, has fulfilled it by His only begotten Son.

LORD'S DAY 7

Question 20: Are all men then, as they perished in Adam, saved by Christ?

No; only those who are ingrafted into Him, and receive all His benefits, by a true faith.

Question 21: What is true faith?

True faith is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word, but also an assured confidence, which the Holy Ghost works by the gospel in my heart, that not only to others, but to me also, remission of sin, everlasting righteousness and salvation are freely given by God, merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.

Question 22: What is then necessary for a Christian to believe?

All things promised us in the gospel, which the articles of our catholic undoubted Christian faith briefly teach us.

Question 23: What are these articles?

I. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; II. And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord; III. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary;

IV. Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; V. The third day He arose again from the dead; VI. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; VII. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead; VIII. I believe in the Holy Ghost; IX. I believe an holy catholic church; the communion of saints; X. The forgiveness of sins; XI. The resurrection of the body; XII. And the life everlasting. Amen.

LORD'S DAY 8

Question 24: How are these articles divided?

Into three parts; the first is of God the Father and our creation; the second, of God the Son and our redemption; the third, of God the Holy Ghost and our sanctification.

Question 25: Since there is but one only divine essence,4 why speakest thou of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

Because God hath so revealed Himself in His Word, that these three distinct persons are the one only true and eternal God.

LORD'S DAY 9

Question 26: What believest thou when thou sayest, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth?"

That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that is in them; who likewise upholds and governs the same by His eternal counsel and providence) is for the sake of Christ His Son, my God and my Father; on whom I rely so entirely, that I have no doubt but He will provide me with all things necessary for soul and body; and further, that He will make whatever evils He sends upon me, in this valley of tears, turn out to my advantage; for He is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing, being a faithful Father.

LORD'S DAY 10

Question 27: What dost thou mean by the providence of God?

The almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by His hand, He upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.

Question 28: What advantage is it to us to know that God has created, and by His providence doth still uphold all things?

That we may be patient in adversity; thankful in prosperity; and that in all things, which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, that nothing shall separate us from His love; since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move.

LORD'S DAY 11

Question 29: Why is the Son of God called Jesus, that is, a Savior?

Because He saveth us, and delivereth us from our sins; and likewise, because we ought not to seek, neither can find salvation in any other.

Question 30: Do such then believe in Jesus the only Savior, who seek their salvation and welfare of saints, of themselves, or anywhere else?

They do not; for though they boast of Him in words, yet in deeds they deny Jesus the only deliverer and Savior; for one of these two things must be true, that either Jesus is not a complete Savior or that they, who by a true faith receive this Savior, must find all things in Him necessary to their salvation.

LORD'S DAY 12

Question 31: Why is He called Christ, that is, anointed?

Because He is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Ghost, to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption; and to be our only High Priest, who by the one sacrifice of His body, has redeemed us, and makes continual intercession with the Father for us; and also to be our eternal King, who governs us by His word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves us in the enjoyment of that salvation He has purchased for us.

Question 32: But why art thou called a Christian?

Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of His anointing; that so I may confess His name, and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him; and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life, and afterwards reign with Him eternally, over all creatures.

LORD'S DAY 13

Question 33: Why is Christ called the only begotten Son of God, since we are also the children of God?

Because Christ alone is the eternal and natural Son of God; but we are children adopted of God, by grace, for His sake.

Question 34: Wherefore callest thou Him our Lord?

Because He hath redeemed us, both soul and body, from all our sins, not with gold or silver, but with His precious blood, and hath delivered us from all the power of the devil; and thus hath made us His own property.

LORD'S DAY 14

Question 35: What is the meaning of these words —"He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary"?

That God's eternal Son, who is, and continueth true and eternal God, took upon Him the very nature of man, of the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Ghost;4 that He might also be the true seed of David, like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted.

Question 36: What profit dost thou receive by Christ's holy conception and nativity?

That He is our Mediator, and with His innocence and perfect holiness, covers in the sight of God, my sins, wherein I was conceived and brought forth.

LORD'S DAY 15

Question 37: What dost thou understand by the words, "He suffered"?

That He, all the time that He lived on earth, but especially at the end of His life, sustained in body and soul the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind; that so by His passion, as the only propitiatory sacrifice, He might redeem our body and soul from everlasting

damnation, and obtain for us the favor of God, righteousness and eternal life.

Question 38: Why did He suffer under Pontius Pilate as judge?

That He, being innocent, and yet condemned by a temporal judge, might thereby free us from the severe judgment of God to which we were exposed.

Question 39: Is there anything more in His being crucified than if He had died some other death?

Yes, there is; for thereby I am assured, that He took on Him the curse which lay upon me; for the death of the cross was accursed of God.

LORD'S DAY 16

Question 40: Why was it necessary for Christ to humble Himself even unto death?

Because with respect to the justice and truth of God, satisfaction for our sins could be made no otherwise than by the death of the Son of God.

Question 41: Why was He also "buried"?

Thereby to prove that He was really dead.

Question 42: Since then Christ died for us, why must we also die?

Our death is not a satisfaction for our sins, but only an abolishing of sin, and a passage into eternal life.

Question 43: What further benefit do we receive from the sacrifice and death of Christ on the cross?

That by virtue thereof our old man is crucified, dead and buried with Him; that so the corrupt inclinations of the flesh may no more reign in us, but that we may offer ourselves unto Him a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Question 44: Why is there added, "He descended into hell"?

That in my greatest temptations, I may be assured, and wholly comfort myself in this, that my Lord Jesus Christ, by His inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies, in which He was plunged during all His sufferings, but especially on the cross, hath delivered me from the anguish and torments of hell.

LORD'S DAY 17

Question 45: What doth the resurrection of Christ profit us?

First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, that He might make us partakers of that righteousness which He had purchased for us by His death; secondly, we are also by His power raised up to a new life; and lastly, the resurrection of Christ is a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.

LORD'S DAY 18

Question 46: How dost thou understand these words, "He ascended into heaven"?

That Christ, in sight of His disciples, was taken up from earth into heaven; and that He continues there for our interest until He comes again to judge the quick and the dead.

Question 47: Is not Christ then with us even to the end of the world, as He hath promised?

Christ is very man and very God; with respect to His human nature, He is no more on earth; but with respect to His Godhead, majesty, grace and Spirit, He is at no time absent from us.

Question 48: But if His human nature is not present, wherever His Godhead is, are not then these two natures in Christ separated from one another?

Not at all, for since the Godhead is illimitable and omnipresent, it must necessarily follow that the same is beyond the limits of the human nature He assumed, and yet is nevertheless in this human nature, and remains personally united to it.

Question 49: Of what advantage to us is Christ's ascension into heaven?

First, that He is our Advocate in the presence of His Father in heaven; secondly, that we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that He, as the head, will also take up to Himself, us, His members; thirdly, that He sends us His Spirit as an earnest, by whose power we "seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and not things on earth.

LORD'S DAY 19

Question 50: Why is it added, "and sitteth at the right hand of God"?

Because Christ is ascended into heaven for this end, that He might appear as head of His church, by whom the Father governs all things.

Question 51: What profit is this glory of Christ, our Head, unto us?

First, that by His Holy Spirit He pours out heavenly graces upon us His members; and then that by His power He defends and preserves us against all enemies.

Question 52: What comfort is it to thee that "Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead"?

That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head I look for the very same person, who before offered Himself for my sake to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me, to come as judge from heaven; who shall cast all His and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall translate me with all His chosen ones to Himself, into heavenly joys and glory.

OF GOD THE HOLY GHOST

LORD'S DAY 20

Question 53: What dost thou believe concerning the Holy Ghost?

First, that He is true and coeternal God with the Father and the Son; secondly, that He is also given me, to make me by a true faith,

partaker of Christ and all His benefits, that He may comfort me and abide with me for ever.

LORD'S DAY 21

Question 54: What believest thou concerning the "holy catholic church" of Christ?

That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a Church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof.

Question 55: What do you understand by "the communion of saints"?

First, that all and every one who believes, being members of Christ, are in common, partakers of Him, and of all His riches and gifts; secondly, that every one must know it to be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts, for the advantage and salvation of other members.

Question 56: What believest thou concerning "the forgiveness of sins"?

That God, for the sake of Christ's satisfaction, will no more remember my sins, neither my corrupt nature, against which I have to struggle all my life long; but will graciously impute to me the righteousness of Christ, that I may never be condemned before the tribunal of God.

LORD'S DAY 22

Question 57: What comfort doth the "resurrection of the body" afford thee?

That not only my soul after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its Head; but also, that this my body, being raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul, and made like unto the glorious body of Christ.

Question 58: What comfort takest thou from the article of "life everlasting"?

That since I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, after this life I shall inherit perfect salvation, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" to conceive, and that, to praise God therein for ever.

LORD'S DAY 23

Question 59: But what doth it profit thee now that thou believest all this?

That I am righteous in Christ, before God, and an heir of eternal life.

Question 60: How art thou righteous before God?

Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that, though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin; yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me, inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart.

Question 61: Why sayest thou that thou art righteous by faith only?

Not that I am acceptable to God, on account of the worthiness of my faith, but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, is my righteousness before God; and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith only.

LORD'S DAY 24

Question 62: But why cannot our good works be the whole or part of our righteousness before God?

Because that the righteousness, which can be approved of before the tribunal of God, must be absolutely perfect, and in all respects conformable to the divine law; and also, that our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.

Question 63: What! Do not our good works merit, which yet God will reward in this and in a future life?

This reward is not of merit, but of grace.

Question 64: But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane?

By no means: for it is impossible that those, who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.

OF THE SACRAMENTS

LORD'S DAY 25

Question 65: Since then we are made partakers of Christ and all His benefits by faith only, whence doth this faith proceed?

From the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments.

Question 66: What are the sacraments?

The sacraments are holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, namely, that He grants us freely the remission of sin and life eternal for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross.

Question 67: Are both Word and sacraments, then, ordained and appointed for this end, that they may direct our faith to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

Yes, indeed, for the Holy Ghost teaches us in the gospel, and assures us by the sacraments, that the whole of our salvation depends upon that one sacrifice of Christ which He offered for us on the cross.

Question 68: How many sacraments has Christ instituted in the new covenant, or testament?

Two, namely, holy baptism and the holy supper.

LORD'S DAY 26

Question 69: How art thou admonished and assured by holy baptism that the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross is of real advantage to thee?

Thus: That Christ appointed this external washing with water, adding thereto this promise, that I am as certainly washed by His blood and Spirit from all the pollution of my soul, that is, from all my sins, as I am washed externally with water, by which the filthiness of the body is commonly washed away.

Question 70: What is it to be washed with the blood and Spirit of Christ?

It is to receive of God the remission of sins freely, for the sake of Christ's blood which He shed for us by His sacrifice upon the cross; and also to be renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives.

Question 71: Where has Christ promised us, that He will as certainly wash us by His blood and Spirit, as we are washed with the water of baptism?

In the institution of baptism, which is thus expressed: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This promise is also repeated, where the Scripture calls baptism the washing of regeneration and the washing away of sins.

> ***TEC Note on Lord's Day 26***
>
> We receive Questions 69 through 71 without qualification, and we teach them as they stand. They confess that baptism is an outward washing to which Christ has annexed a promise, and that the water neither contains nor conveys what it signifies.
>
> We observe only what the Catechism itself puts in the mouth of the one baptised. It does not say that a man may be washed; it says I am as certainly washed by His blood and Spirit from all the pollution of my soul

as I am washed externally with water. This is the speech of one who believes, and it is to such that we administer the sign.

LORD'S DAY 27

Question 72: Is then the external baptism with water the washing away of sin itself?

Not at all; for the blood of Jesus Christ only, and the Holy Ghost cleanse us from all sin.

Question 73: Why then doth the Holy Ghost call baptism "the washing of regeneration" and the "washing away of sins"?

God speaks thus not without great cause, to wit, not only thereby to teach us that as the filth of the body is purged away by water, so our sins are removed by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ; but especially that by this divine pledge and sign He may assure us that we are spiritually cleansed from our sins as really as we are externally washed with water.

Question 74: Are infants also to be baptized?

Yes, for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church, and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant.

TEC Addendum to Question 74

Question 74 is printed above as the Catechism has it. This church does not baptise infants, and we set down here what we hold and why, so that no one who uses this book is left to guess at it.

The answer rests upon three grounds: that children are included in the covenant and church of God; that redemption by the blood of Christ and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the grown; and that baptism is instituted in the room of circumcision.

Upon the first we grant what Scripture grants. The children of believers are holy, not by nature but in virtue of the covenant of grace (1 Cor. 7:14).

They are set apart, of the household, and are not to be reckoned among the children of unbelievers. They are wards of the covenant and are to be catechised as such. We do not grant that this holiness is union with Christ, for union with Christ is by faith, and what is promised to a child is not thereby possessed by him. Nor does this leave them in an unheard-of condition. Under the former administration the sojourner shared the whole life of the commonwealth, keeping the Sabbath, bringing his offering, hearing the law read with the congregation, and was shut out only from the sign and the covenant meal until he took circumcision (Ex. 12:48; 20:10; Num. 15:14-16; Deut. 31:12). A real standing short of the sign is God's own arrangement, and our children hold it.

Upon the second we confess that the promise is truly held out to them, and we hold it out to them continually in our preaching, our catechising, and our prayers. A promise held out is received by faith. The inheritance promised to the children of believers is an inheritance of faith, and they enter upon it when God brings them into the state of grace.

Upon the third, that baptism is instituted in the room of circumcision. We grant that the two signify one thing, and we deny that they are administered upon the same ground or mark the same people. The covenant of grace is one from the fall to the last day, and every covenant God has made contains it. But each succeeding covenant came with greater light, and the sign has narrowed as the light increased: given first to Ishmael and to the servants of Abraham's house, then to the line of Isaac and of Jacob within one nation, then within that nation to the circumcised and the uncircumcised in heart alike, until the new covenant, which is promised as not according to that covenant and in which they shall all know the Lord (Jer. 31:31-34). The sign now rests where the thing signified is. This is set out at length in our addendum to Article 34 of the Belgic Confession.

OF THE HOLY SUPPER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

LORD'S DAY 28

Question 75: How art thou admonished and assured in the Lord's Supper that thou art a partaker of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross, and of all His benefits?

Thus: That Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread and to drink of this cup in remembrance of Him, adding these promises: first, that His body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and His blood shed for me, as certainly as I see with my eyes the bread of the Lord broken for me and the cup

communicated to me; and further, that He feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with His crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ.

Question 76: What is it then to eat the crucified body, and drink the shed blood of Christ?

It is not only to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and death of Christ, and thereby to obtain the pardon of sin and life eternal; but also, besides that, to become more and more united to His sacred body, by the Holy Ghost, who dwells both in Christ and in us; so that we, though Christ is in heaven and we on earth, are notwithstanding "flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bone"; and that we live, and are governed forever by one spirit, as members of the same body are by one soul.

Question 77: Where has Christ promised that He will as certainly feed and nourish believers with His body andblood, as they eat of this broken bread, and drink of this cup?

In the institution of the supper, which is thus expressed: "The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood; this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." This promise is repeated by the holy apostle Paul, where he says: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

LORD'S DAY 29

Question 78: Do then the bread and wine become the very body and blood of Christ?

Not at all; but as the water in baptism is not changed into the blood of Christ, neither is the washing away of sin itself, being only the sign and confirmation thereof appointed of God; so the bread in the Lord's Supper is not changed into the very body of Christ, though agreeably to the nature and properties of sacraments, it is called the body of Christ Jesus.

Question 79: Why then doth Christ call the bread His body, and the cup His blood, or the new covenant in His blood; and Paul, the "communion of the body and blood of Christ"?

Christ speaks thus not without great reason, namely, not only thereby to teach us that as bread and wine support this temporal life, so His crucified body and shed blood are the true meat and drink whereby our souls are fed to eternal life; but more especially by these visible signs and pledges to assure us that we are as really partakers of His true body and blood (by the operation of the Holy Ghost) as we receive by the mouths of our bodies these holy signs in remembrance of Him; and that all His sufferings and obedience are as certainly ours, as if we had in our own persons suffered and made satisfaction for our sins to God.

LORD'S DAY 30

Question 80: What difference is there between the Lord's Supper and the popish Mass?

The Lord's Supper testifies to us that we have a full pardon of all sin by the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which He Himself has once accomplished on the cross; and that we by the Holy Ghost are ingrafted into Christ, who, according to His human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven, at the right hand of God His Father, and will there be worshipped by us— but the Mass teaches that the living and dead have not the pardon of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is also daily offered for them by the priests; and further, that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and

therefore is to be worshipped in them; so that the Mass, at bottom, is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry.

Question 81: For whom is the Lord's Supper instituted?

For those who are truly sorrowful for their sins, and yet trust that these are forgiven them for the sake of Christ; and that their remaining infirmities are covered by His passion and death; and who also earnestly desire to have their faith more and more strengthened, and their lives more holy; but hypocrites, and such as turn not to God with sincere hearts, eat and drink judgment to themselves.

Question 82: Are they also to be admitted to this supper, who, by confession and life, declare themselves unbelieving and ungodly?

No; for by this, the covenant of God would be profaned and His wrath kindled against the whole congregation; therefore it is the duty of the Christian church, according to the appointment of Christ and His apostles, to exclude such persons by the keys of the kingdom of heaven till they show amendment of life.

LORD'S DAY 31

Question 83: What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

The preaching of the holy gospel, and Christian discipline, or excommunication out of the Christian church; by these two, the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and shut against unbelievers.

Question 84: How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the holy gospel?

Thus: when according to the command of Christ it is declared and publicly testified to all and every believer, that, whenever they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God for the sake of Christ's merits; and on the contrary, when it is declared and testified to all unbelievers, and such as do not sincerely repent, that they stand exposed to the wrath of God and eternal condemnation, so long as they are unconverted;

according to which testimony of the gospel, God will judge them both in this and in the life to come.

Question 85: How is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened by Christian discipline?

Thus: when according to the command of Christ, those, who under the name of Christians, maintain doctrines or practices inconsistent therewith, and will not, after having been often brotherly admonished, renounce their errors and wicked course of life, are complained of to the church or to those who are thereunto appointed by the church; and if they despise their admonition, are by them forbidden the use of the sacraments; whereby they are excluded from the Christian church and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ; and when they promise and show real amendment, are again received as members of Christ and His church.

THE THIRD PART

— OF THANKFULNESS

LORD'S DAY 32

Question 86: Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace, through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we still do good works?

Because Christ, having redeemed and delivered us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit after His own image; that so we may testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God for His blessings, and that He may be praised by us; also, that every one may be assured in himself of his faith by the fruits thereof; and that by our godly conversation others may be gained to Christ.

Question 87: Cannot they then be saved, who, continuing in their wicked and ungrateful lives, are not converted to God?

By no means; for the Holy Scripture declares that no unchaste person, idolator, adulterer, thief, covetous man, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or any such like, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

LORD'S DAY 33

Question 88: Of how many parts doth the true conversion of man consist?

Of two parts: of the mortification of the old, and the quickening of the new man.

Question 89: What is the mortification of the old man?

It is a sincere sorrow of heart that we have provoked God by our sins, and more and more to hate and flee from them.

Question 90: What is the quickening of the new man?

It is a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works.

Question 91: But what are good works?

Only those which proceed from a true faith, are performed according to the law of God, and to His glory; and not such as are founded on our imaginations or the institutions of men.

LORD'S DAY 34

Question 92: What is the law of God?

God spake all these words (Ex. 20:1–17; Deut. 5:6–21), saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. I. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain. IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the

LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. V. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. VI. Thou shalt not kill. VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery. VIII. Thou shalt not steal. IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Question 93: How are these commandments divided?

Into two tables; the first of which teaches us how we must behave towards God; the second, what duties we owe to our neighbor.

Question 94: What doth God enjoin in the first commandment?

That I, as sincerely as I desire the salvation of my own soul, avoid and flee from all idolatry, sorcery, soothsaying, superstition, invocation of saints, or any other creatures; and learn rightly to know the only true God;6 trust in Him alone; with humility and patience submit to Him; expect all good things from Him only; love, fear, and glorify Him with my whole heart; so that I renounce and forsake all creatures, rather than commit even the least thing contrary to His will.

Question 95: What is idolatry?

Idolatry is, instead of, or besides that one true God who has manifested Himself in His word, to contrive, or have any other object, in which men place their trust.

LORD'S DAY 35

Question 96: What doth God require in the second commandment?

That we in no wise represent God by images, nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word.

Question 97: Are images then not at all to be made?

God neither can, nor may be represented by any means. But as to creatures, though they may be represented, yet God forbids to make, or have any resemblance of them, either in order to worship them or to serve God by them.

Question 98: But may not images be tolerated in the churches as books to the laity?

No, for we must not pretend to be wiser than God, who will have His people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of His Word.

LORD'S DAY 36

Question 99: What is required in the third commandment?

That we, not only by cursing or perjury, but also by rash swearing, must not profane or abuse the name of God; nor by silence or connivance be partakers of these horrible sins in others; and, briefly, that we use the holy name of God no otherwise than with fear and reverence, so that He may be rightly confessed and worshipped by us, and be glorified in all our words and works.

Question 100: Is then the profaning of God's Name by swearing and cursing so heinous a sin that His wrath is kindled against those who do not endeavor, as much as in them lies, to prevent and forbid such cursing and swearing?

It undoubtedly is, for there is no sin greater or more provoking to God than the profaning of His Name; and therefore He has commanded this sin to be punished with death.

LORD'S DAY 37

Question 101: May we then swear religiously by the name of God?

Yes, either when the magistrates demand it of the subjects or when necessity requires us thereby to confirm fidelity and truth to the glory of God and the safety of our neighbor; for such an oath is founded on God's Word, and therefore was justly used by the saints, both in the Old and New Testament.

Question 102: May we also swear by saints or any other creatures?

No; for a lawful oath is calling upon God as the only one who knows the heart, that He will bear witness to the truth and punish me if I swear falsely; which honor is due to no creature.

LORD'S DAY 38

Question 103: What doth God require in the fourth commandment?

First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained; and that I, especially on the Sabbath, that is, on the day of rest, diligently frequent the church of God to hear His word, to use the sacraments, publicly to call upon the Lord, and contribute to the relief of the poor, as becomes a Christian. Secondly, that all the days of my life I cease from my evil works, and yield myself to the Lord, to work by His Holy Spirit in me; and thus begin in this life the eternal Sabbath.

LORD'S DAY 39

Question 104: What doth God require in the fifth commandment?

That I show all honor, love and fidelity, to my father and mother and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand.

LORD'S DAY 40

Question 105: What doth God require in the sixth commandment?

That neither in thoughts, nor words, nor gestures, much less in deeds, I dishonor, hate, wound, or kill my neighbor, by myself or by another; but that I lay aside all desire of revenge; also, that I hurt not myself, nor wilfully expose myself to any danger. Wherefore also the magistrate is armed with the sword to prevent murder.

Question 106: But this commandment seems only to speak of murder?

In forbidding murder, God teaches us that He abhors the causes thereof, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge; and that He accounts all these as murder.

Question 107: But is it enough that we do not kill any man in the manner mentioned above?

No, for when God forbids envy, hatred, and anger, He commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves; to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy, and all kindness towards him, and prevent his hurt as much as in us lies; and that we do good, even to our enemies.

LORD'S DAY 41

Question 108: What doth the seventh commandment teach us?

That all uncleanness is accursed of God; and that therefore we must with all our hearts detest the same, and live chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock or in single life.

Question 109: Doth God forbid in this commandment only adultery and such like gross sins?

Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, He commands us to preserve them pure and holy; therefore He forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto.

LORD'S DAY 42

Question 110: What doth God forbid in the eighth commandment?

God forbids not only those thefts and robberies which are punishable by the magistrate; but He comprehends under the name of theft all wicked tricks and devices, whereby we design to appropriate to ourselves the goods which belong to our neighbor; whether it be by force, or under the appearance of right, as by unjust weights, ells, measures, fraudulent merchandise, false coins, usury, or by any other way forbidden by God; as also all covetousness, all abuse and waste of His gifts.

Question 111: But what doth God require in this commandment?

That I promote the advantage of my neighbor in every instance I can or may, and deal with him as I desire to be dealt with by others; further also that I faithfully labor, so that I may be able to relieve the needy.

LORD'S DAY 43

Question 112: What is required in the ninth commandment?

That I bear false witness against no man nor falsify any man's words; that I be no backbiter nor slanderer; that I do not judge, nor join in condemning any man rashly or unheard; but that I avoid all sorts of lies and deceit, as the proper works of the devil, unless I would bring down upon me the heavy wrath of God; likewise, that in judgment and all other dealings I love the truth, speak it uprightly and confess it; also that I defend and promote, as much as I am able, the honor and good character of my neighbor.

LORD'S DAY 44

Question 113: What doth the tenth commandment require of us?

That even the smallest inclination or thought contrary to any of God's commandments never rise in our hearts; but that at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness.

Question 114: But can those who are converted to God perfectly keep these commandments?

No, but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience; yet so, that with a sincere resolution they begin to live, not only according to some, but all the commandments of God.

Question 115: Why will God then have the ten commandments so strictly preached, since no man in this life can keep them?

First, that all our lifetime we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin and righteousness in Christ; likewise, that we constantly endeavor and pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of God, till we arrive at the perfection proposed to us in a life to come.

OF PRAYER

LORD'S DAY 45

Question 116: Why is prayer necessary for Christians?

Because it is the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us; and also, because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them.

Question 117: What are the requisites of that prayer which is acceptable to God and which He will hear?

First, that we from the heart pray to the one true God only, who hath manifested Himself in His Word, for all things He hath commanded

us to ask of Him; secondly, that we rightly and thoroughly know our need and misery, that so we may deeply humble ourselves in the presence of His divine majesty; thirdly, that we be fully persuaded that He, notwithstanding that we are unworthy of it, will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as He has promised us in His Word.

Question 118: What hath God commanded us to ask of Him?

All things necessary for soul and body, which Christ our Lord has comprised in that prayer He Himself has taught us.

Question 119: What are the words of that prayer?

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

LORD'S DAY 46

Question 120: Why hath Christ commanded us to address God thus: "Our Father"?

That immediately, in the very beginning of our prayer, He might excite in us a childlike reverence for and confidence in God, which are the foundation of our prayer, namely, that God is become our Father in Christ, and will much less deny us what we ask of Him in true faith than our parents will refuse us earthly things.

Question 121: Why is it here added, "which art in heaven"?

Lest we should form any earthly conceptions of God's heavenly majesty, and that we may expect from His almighty power all things necessary for soul and body.

LORD'S DAY 47

Question 122: Which is the first petition?

"Hallowed be Thy name"; that is, grant us, first, rightly to know Thee, and to sanctify, glorify and praise Thee in all Thy works, in which Thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth, are clearly displayed; and further also, that we may so order and direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words and actions, that Thy Name may never be blasphemed, but rather honored and praised on our account.

LORD'S DAY 48

Question 123: Which is the second petition?

"Thy kingdom come"; that is, rule us so by Thy Word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to Thee; preserve and increase Thy church; destroy the works of the devil, and all violence which would exalt itself against Thee; and also, all wicked counsels devised against Thy holy Word; till the full perfection of Thy kingdom take place, wherein Thou shalt be all in all.

LORD'S DAY 49

Question 124: Which is the third petition?

"Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven"; that is, grant that we and all men may renounce our own will, and without murmuring obey Thy will, which is only good; that so every one may attend to and perform the duties of his station and calling as willingly and faithfully as the angels do in heaven.

LORD'S DAY 50

Question 125: Which is the fourth petition?

"Give us this day our daily bread"; that is, be pleased to provide us with all things necessary for the body, that we may thereby acknowledge Thee to be the only fountain of all good, and that neither our care nor industry, nor even Thy gifts, can profit us

without Thy blessing; and therefore that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it alone in Thee.

LORD'S DAY 51

Question 126: Which is the fifth petition?

"And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"; that is, be pleased for the sake of Christ's blood, not to impute to us poor sinners our transgressions, nor that depravity which always cleaves to us; even as we feel this evidence of Thy grace in us, that it is our firm resolution from the heart to forgive our neighbor.

LORD'S DAY 52

Question 127: Which is the sixth petition?

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil"; that is, since we are so weak in ourselves that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us, do Thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes till at last we obtain a complete victory.

Question 128: How dost thou conclude thy prayer?

"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever"; that is, all these we ask of Thee, because Thou, being our King and almighty, art willing and able to give us all good; and all this we pray for, that thereby not we, but Thy holy Name, may be glorified for ever.

Question 129: What doth the word "Amen" signify?

"Amen" signifies it shall truly and certainly be, for my prayer is more assuredly heard of God than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of Him.

Historical Background

The Heidelberg Catechism was composed in Heidelberg at the request of Elector Frederick III (1516–1576), ruler of the Palatinate, to promote harmony in Protestant teaching and establish the Reformed faith in his province. Frederick

commissioned Zacharias Ursinus (1534–1583), a theology professor, and Caspar Olevianus (1536–1587), his court preacher, to create a catechism for instructing the youth and guiding pastors. Ursinus primarily developed the content, while Olevianus focused on composition and editing. Their collaboration, supported by the Palatinate church's theological faculty, resulted in a catechism renowned for its power and beauty.

Approved by a Heidelberg Synod in January 1563, the Catechism saw three additional German editions and a Latin translation published that year, with the fourth edition serving as the official text. Initially, the German Bible lacked verse divisions, and the Catechism's questions were unnumbered, issues rectified in a subsequent Latin edition. The Catechism was later divided into fifty-two sections, or "Lord's Days," for weekly Sunday exposition.

The Heidelberg Catechism features over 700 textual references, emphasizing its basis in Scripture. Its 129 questions and answers are divided into three parts patterned after the book of Romans: sin and misery (questions 3–11, Romans 1–3:20), redemption in Christ (questions 12–85, Romans 3:21–11:36), and gratitude for deliverance (questions 86–129, Romans 12–16). The Catechism is known for its clarity, warm piety, and experiential, practical presentation of doctrine, earning it the title "the book of comfort" for its personal and devotional style.

Translated into Dutch by Petrus Dathenus in 1563, the Catechism quickly gained popularity in the Netherlands. Dutch ministers began expounding it every Sunday, and it was approved by various Synods, including the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), which made its weekly exposition mandatory for ministers. The Heidelberg Catechism has been translated into numerous languages and is considered one of the most widely circulated catechisms of the Reformation, praised for its Calvinistic yet moderate and irenic tone.

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. (n.d.). The Heidelberg Catechism. Retrieved July 5, 2024, from https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Heidelberg-Catechism-with-Intro.pdf

The Canons of Dort

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE

Of Divine Predestination

Article 1

As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish, and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin, according to the words of the apostle, “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19). And verse 23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” And Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death.”

Article 2

But in this the love of God was manifested, that He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (1 John 4:9). “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Article 3

And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom He will and at what time He pleaseth; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” (Rom. 10:14–15).

Article 4

The wrath of God abideth upon those who believe not this gospel. But such as receive it, and embrace Jesus the Savior by a true and living faith, are by Him delivered from the wrath of God and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them.

Article 5

The cause or guilt of this unbelief, as well as of all other sins, is no wise in God, but in man himself; whereas faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through Him is the free gift of God, as it is written: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him," etc. (Phil. 1:29).

Article 6

That some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree, for "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). "Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11). According to which decree, He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while He leaves the non-elect in His just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation revealed in the Word of God, which though men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

Article 7

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation.

This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by Him, and effectually to call and draw them to His communion by His Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of His Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of His mercy and for the praise of His glorious grace, as it is written: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:4–6). And elsewhere: "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).

Article 8

There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved, both under the Old and New Testament; since the Scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which He hath chosen us from eternity, both to grace and glory, to salvation and the way of salvation, which He hath ordained that we should walk therein.

Article 9

This election was not founded upon foreseen faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc.; therefore election is the fountain of every saving good, from which proceeds faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to that of the apostle: "He hath chosen us [not because we were but] that we should be holy, and without blame, before Him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

Article 10

The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election, which doth not consist herein, that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation; but that He was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to Himself, as it is written, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil," etc., it was said (namely to Rebecca): "The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:11-13). "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

Article 11

And as God Himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient and omnipotent, so the election made by Him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.

Article 12

The elect in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves, with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God — such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.

Article 13

The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before Him, for adoring the depth of His mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to Him, who first manifested so great love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands or from sinking men in carnal security, that these, in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of election in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

Article 14

As the doctrine of divine election by the most wise counsel of God was declared by the prophets, by Christ Himself, and by the apostles, and is clearly revealed in the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, so it is still to be published in due time and place in the Church of God, for which it was peculiarly designed, provided it be done with reverence, in the spirit of discretion and piety, for the glory of God's most holy Name, and for enlivening and comforting His people, without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High. “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27); “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?” (Rom. 11:33–34); “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Rom. 12:3); “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:17–18).

Article 15

What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election, is the express testimony of sacred Scripture that not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree; whom God, out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have wilfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but permitting them in His just judgment to follow their own ways, at last for the declaration of His justice, to condemn and perish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares Him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous Judge and avenger thereof.

Article 16

Those who do not yet experience a lively faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, and glorying in God through Christ, efficaciously wrought in them, and do nevertheless persist in the use of the means which God hath appointed for working these graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to rank themselves among the reprobate, but diligently to persevere in the use of means, and with ardent desires devoutly and humbly to wait for a season of richer grace. Much less cause have they to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation, who, though they seriously desire to be turned to God, to please Him only, and to be delivered from the body of death, cannot yet reach that measure of holiness and faith to which they aspire; since a merciful God has promised that He will not quench the smoking flax nor break the bruised reed. But this doctrine is justly terrible to those, who, regardless of God and of the Savior Jesus Christ, have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh, so long as they are not seriously converted to God.

Article 17

Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they, together with the parents, are comprehended, godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy.

> ***TEC Note on the First Head, Article 17***
>
> We receive this article and confess it gladly, and we commend it to every bereaved parent among us.
>
> The holiness of which it speaks, upon the testimony of 1 Corinthians 7:14, is not a holiness of nature but of covenant standing. It is the holiness of the ward: a child set apart, placed under the administration of the covenant and under the instruction of the church.
>
> We observe further that the comfort of this article rests nowhere upon the sign. It rests upon the election of God and upon the word of His covenant, and it therefore stands entire for those of us who do not administer baptism in infancy. Godly parents in this church who are bereaved of a child in infancy have no reason to doubt the election and

> salvation of that child. Their comfort is not the less for the water withheld, because it never lay in the water.

Article 18

To those who murmur at the free grace of election and just severity of reprobation, we answer with the apostle: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. 9:20), and quote the language of our Savior: "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own?" (Matt. 20:15). And therefore with holy adoration of these mysteries, we exclaim in the words of the apostle: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:33–36).

The true doctrine concerning election and rejection having been explained, the Synod **rejects** the errors of those who teach:

Rejection 1

That the will of God to save those who would believe and would persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith, is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in God's Word.

For these deceive the simple and plainly contradict the Scriptures which declare that God will not only save those who will believe, but that He has also from eternity chosen certain particular persons to whom above others He in time will grant both faith in Christ and perseverance, as it is written: "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world" (John 17:6). "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). And: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

Rejection 2

That there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, nondecisive and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive and absolute. Likewise: that there is one election unto faith and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith without being a decisive election unto salvation.

For this is a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the Scriptures, whereby the doctrine of election is corrupted, and this golden chain of our salvation is broken: "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).

Rejection 3

That the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which Scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain persons rather than others, but in this, that He chose out of all possible conditions (among which are also the works of the law), or out of the whole order of things, the act of faith which from its very nature is undeserving, as well as its incomplete obedience, as a condition of salvation, and that He would graciously consider this in itself as a complete obedience and count it worthy of the reward of eternal life.

For by this injurious error the pleasure of God and the merits of Christ are made of none effect, and men are drawn away by useless questions from the truth of gracious justification and from the simplicity of Scripture, and this declaration of the apostle is charged as untrue: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9).

Rejection 4

That in the election unto faith this condition is beforehand demanded, namely, that man should use the light of nature aright,

be pious, humble, meek, and fit for eternal life, as if on these things election were in any way dependent.

For this savors of the teaching of Pelagius, and is opposed to the doctrine of the apostle, when he writes: "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:3–9).

Rejection 5

That the incomplete and non-decisive election of particular persons to salvation occurred because of a foreseen faith, conversion, holiness, godliness, which either began or continued for some time; but that the complete and decisive election occurred because of foreseen perseverance unto the end in faith, conversion, holiness and godliness; and that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness for the sake of which he who is chosen is more worthy than he who is not chosen; and that therefore faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness and perseverance are not fruits of the unchangeable election unto glory, but are conditions, which, being required beforehand, were foreseen as being met by those who will be fully elected, and are causes without which the unchangeable election to glory does not occur.

This is repugnant to the entire Scripture which constantly inculcates this and similar declarations: Election is not out of works, but of Him that calleth. "That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth"

(Rom. 9:11). "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy" (Eph. 1:4). "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). "But if it be of works, then is it

no more grace" (Rom. 11:6). "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son" (1 John 4:10).

Rejection 6

That not every election unto salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the elect, any decree of God notwithstanding, can yet perish and do indeed perish.

By which gross error they make God to be changeable, and destroy the comfort which the godly obtain out of the firmness of their election, and contradict the Holy Scripture which teaches that the elect cannot be led astray: "Insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:24); that Christ does not lose those whom the Father gave Him: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing" (John 6:39); and that God hath also glorified those whom He foreordained, called and justified: "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).

Rejection 7

That there is in this life no fruit and no consciousness of the unchangeable election to glory, nor any certainty, except that which depends on a changeable and uncertain condition.

For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain certainty, but also contrary to the experience of the saints, who by virtue of the consciousness of their election rejoice with the apostle and praise this favor of God, Ephesians 1; who according to Christ's admonition rejoice with His disciples that their names are written in heaven, "but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20); who also place the consciousness of their election over against the fiery darts of the devil, asking: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom. 8:33).

Rejection 8

That God, simply by virtue of His righteous will, did not decide either to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the

communication of grace which is necessary for faith and conversion.

For this is firmly decreed: "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18). And also this: "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given" (Matt. 13:11). Likewise: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. 11:25–26).

Rejection 9

That the reason why God sends the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely the good pleasure of God, but rather the fact that one people is better and worthier than another to whom the gospel is not communicated.

For this Moses denies, addressing the people of Israel as follows: "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day" (Deut. 10:14–15).

And Christ said: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matt. 11:21).

SECOND HEAD OF DOCTRINE

Of the Death of Christ and the Redemption of Men Thereby

Article 1

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And His justice requires (as He hath revealed Himself in His Word), that our sins committed against His infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal, but with eternal punishment, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.

Article 2

Since therefore we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, He hath been pleased in His infinite mercy to give His only begotten Son, for our surety, who was made sin, and became a curse for us and in our stead, that He might make satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf.

Article 3

The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin, and is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.

Article 4

This death derives its infinite value and dignity from these considerations because the person who submitted to it was not only really man and perfectly holy, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, which qualifications were necessary to constitute Him a Savior for us; and because it was attended with a sense of the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin.

Article 5

Moreover, the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel.

Article 6

And whereas many who are called by the gospel do not repent nor believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief, this is not owing to any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, but is wholly to be imputed to themselves.

Article 7

But as many as truly believe, and are delivered and saved from sin and destruction through the death of Christ, are indebted for this

benefit solely to the grace of God, given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own.

Article 8

For this was the sovereign counsel, and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father, that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation: that is, it was the will of God, that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given to Him by the Father; that He should confer upon them faith, which together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He purchased for them by His death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them free from every spot and blemish to the enjoyment of glory in His own presence forever.

Article 9

This purpose proceeding from everlasting love towards the elect has from the beginning of the world to this day been powerfully accomplished, and will henceforward still continue to be accomplished, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell, so that the elect in due time may be gathered together into one, and that there never may be wanting a church composed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ, which may steadfastly love and faithfully serve Him as their Savior, who as a bridegroom for his bride, laid down His life for them upon the cross, and which may celebrate His praises here and through all eternity.

The true doctrine (concerning redemption) having been explained, the Synod **rejects** the errors of those who teach:

Rejection 1

That God the Father has ordained His Son to the death of the cross without a certain and definite decree to save any, so that the necessity, profitableness and worth of what Christ merited by His

death might have existed, and might remain in all its parts complete, perfect and intact, even if the merited redemption had never in fact been applied to any person.

For this doctrine tends to the despising of the wisdom of the Father and of the merits of Jesus Christ, and is contrary to Scripture. For thus saith our Savior: "I lay down My life for the sheep, and I know them" (John 10:15, 27). And the prophet Isaiah saith concerning the Savior: "When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (Is. 53:10). Finally, this contradicts the article of faith according to which we believe the catholic Christian church.

Rejection 2

That it was not the purpose of the death of Christ that He should confirm the new covenant of grace through His blood, but only that He should acquire for the Father the mere right to establish with man such a covenant as He might please, whether of grace or of works.

For this is repugnant to Scripture which teaches that Christ has become the Surety and Mediator of a better, that is, the new covenant, and that a testament is of force where death has occurred. "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament" (Heb. 7:22); "And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance"; "For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Heb. 9:15, 17).

Rejection 3

That Christ by His satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for anyone, nor faith, whereby this satisfaction of Christ unto salvation is effectually appropriated; but that He merited for the Father only the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as He might desire, obedience to which, however, depended on the free will of man, so that it therefore

might have come to pass that either none or all should fulfill these conditions.

For these adjudge too contemptuously of the death of Christ, do in no wise acknowledge the most important fruit or benefit thereby gained, and bring again out of hell the Pelagian error.

Rejection 4

That the new covenant of grace, which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein consist that we by faith, inasmuch as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace.

For these contradict the Scriptures: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood" (Rom. 3:24–25). And these proclaim, as did the wicked Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God against the consensus of the whole church.

Rejection 5

That all men have been accepted unto the state of reconciliation and unto the grace of the covenant, so that no one is worthy of condemnation on account of original sin, and that no one shall be condemned because of it, but that all are free from the guilt of original sin.

For this opinion is repugnant to Scripture which teaches that we are by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:3).

Rejection 6

The use of the difference between meriting and appropriating, to the end that they may instill into the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced this teaching that God, as far as He is concerned, has been minded of applying to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; but that, while some obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life, and others do not, this difference depends on their own

free will, which joins itself to the grace that is offered without exception, and that it is not dependent on the special gift of mercy, which powerfully works in them, that they rather than others should appropriate unto themselves this grace.

For these, while they feign that they present this distinction in a sound sense, seek to instill into the people the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors.

Rejection 7

That Christ neither could die, needed to die, nor did die for those whom God loved in the highest degree and elected to eternal life, and did not die for these, since these do not need the death of Christ.

For they contradict the apostle, who declares: "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Likewise: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died" (Rom. 8:33–34), namely, for them; and the Savior who says: "I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:15). And: "This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12–13).

THIRD AND FOURTH HEADS OF DOCTRINE

Of the Corruption of Man, His Conversion to God, and the Manner Thereof

Article 1

Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright; all his affections pure; and the whole man was holy; but revolting from God by the instigation of the devil, and abusing the freedom of his own will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and on the contrary entailed on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections.

Article 2

Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring. Hence all the posterity of Adam, Christ only excepted, have derived corruption from their original parent, not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature.

Article 3

Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, or to dispose themselves to reformation.

Article 4

There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the differences between good and evil, and discovers some regard for virtue, good order in society, and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But so far is this light of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion, that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay, further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted and holds it in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.

Article 5

In the same light are we to consider the law of the decalogue, delivered by God to His peculiar people the Jews by the hands of Moses. For though it discovers the greatness of sin, and more and more convinces man thereof, yet as it neither points out a remedy nor imparts strength to extricate him from misery, and thus being weak through the flesh leaves the transgressor under the curse, man cannot by this law obtain saving grace.

Article 6

What therefore neither the light of nature, nor the law could do, that God performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word

or ministry of reconciliation, which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it hath pleased God to save such as believe, as well under the Old, as under the New Testament.

Article 7

This mystery of His will God discovered to but a small number under the Old Testament; under the New (the distinction between various peoples having been removed), He reveals Himself to many without any distinction of people. The cause of this dispensation is not to be ascribed to the superior worth of one nation above another, nor to their making a better use of the light of nature, but results wholly from the sovereign good pleasure and unmerited love of God. Hence they, to whom so great and so gracious a blessing is communicated above their desert, or rather notwithstanding their demerits, are bound to acknowledge it with humble and grateful hearts, and with the apostle to adore, not curiously to pry into the severity and justice of God's judgments displayed to others, to whom this grace is not given.

Article 8

As many as are called by the gospel are unfeignedly called. For God hath most earnestly and truly declared in His Word what will be acceptable to Him; namely, that all who are called, should comply with the invitation. He, moreover, seriously promises eternal life and rest to as many as shall come to Him and believe on Him.

Article 9

It is not the fault of the gospel nor of Christ, offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come and be converted. The fault lies in themselves, some of whom when called, regardless of their danger, reject the word of life; others, though they receive it, suffer it not to make a lasting impression on their heart; therefore, their joy, arising only from a temporary faith, soon vanishes and they fall away; while others choke the seed of the Word by perplexing cares and the pleasures of this world, and produce no fruit. This our Savior teaches in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13).

Article 10

But that others who are called by the gospel obey the call and are converted is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will, whereby one distinguishes himself above others, equally furnished with grace sufficient for faith and conversions as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains; but it must be wholly ascribed to God, who as He has chosen His own from eternity in Christ, so He confers upon them faith and repentance, rescues them from the power of darkness, and translates them into the kingdom of His own Son, that they may show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light; and may glory not in themselves, but in the Lord according to the testimony of the apostles in various places.

Article 11

But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them and powerfully illuminates their mind by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man; He opens the closed, and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised, infuses new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead, He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions.

Article 12

And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture and denominated a new creation: a resurrection from the dead, a making alive, which God works in us without our aid. But this is in no wise effected merely by the external preaching of the gospel, by moral suasion, or such a mode of operation, that after God has performed His part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not, to be converted or to continue unconverted; but it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead, as the

Scripture inspired by the author of this work declares; so that all in whose heart God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe. Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence, becomes itself active. Wherefore also, man is himself rightly said to believe and repent, by virtue of that grace received.

Article 13

The manner of this operation cannot be fully comprehended by believers in this life. Notwithstanding which, they rest satisfied with knowing and experiencing that by this grace of God they are enabled to believe with the heart, and love their Savior.

Article 14

Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure; but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him; or even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will, consent to the terms of salvation and actually believe in Christ; but because He who works in man both to will and to do, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also.

Article 15

God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any; for how can He be indebted to man, who had no previous gifts to bestow, as a foundation for such recompense? Nay, who has nothing of his own but sin and falsehood? He therefore who becomes the subject of this grace, owes eternal gratitude to God, and gives Him thanks forever. Whoever is not made partaker thereof, is either altogether regardless of these spiritual gifts and satisfied with his own condition, or is in no apprehension of danger and vainly boasts the possession of that which he has not. With respect to those who make an external profession of faith and live regular lives, we are bound, after the example of the apostle, to judge and speak of them in the most favorable manner. For the secret recesses of the heart are unknown to us. And as to others, who have not yet been called, it is our duty to

pray for them to God, who calls the things that are not, as if they were. But we are in no wise to conduct ourselves towards them with haughtiness, as if we had made ourselves to differ.

Article 16

But as man by the fall did not cease to be a creature endowed with understanding and will, nor did sin which pervaded the whole race of mankind deprive him of the human nature, but brought upon him depravity and spiritual death; so also this grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks, nor takes away their will and its properties, neither does violence thereto; but spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully bends it; that where carnal rebellion and resistance formerly prevailed, a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign, in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist. Wherefore unless the admirable Author of every good work wrought in us, man could have no hope of recovering from his fall by his own free will, by the abuse of which, in a state of innocence, he plunged himself into ruin.

Article 17

As the almighty operation of God, whereby He prolongs and supports this our natural life, does not exclude, but requires the use of means, by which God of His infinite mercy and goodness hath chosen to exert His influence, so also the beforementioned supernatural operation of God, by which we are regenerated, in no wise excludes or subverts the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration and food of the soul. Wherefore, as the apostles, and teachers who succeeded them, piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to His glory, and the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them by the sacred precepts of the gospel in the exercise of the Word, sacraments and discipline; so even to this day, be it far from either instructors or instructed to presume to tempt God in the church by separating what He of His good pleasure hath most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more eminent usually is this blessing of God working in us, and the more directly is His work advanced; to whom alone all the glory

both of means, and of their saving fruit and efficacy is forever due. Amen

The true doctrine (concerning corruption and conversion) having been explained, the Synod **rejects** the errors of those who teach:

Rejection 1

That it cannot properly be said that original sin in itself suffices to condemn the whole human race or to deserve temporal and eternal punishment.

For these contradict the apostle, who declares: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). And: "The judgment was by one to condemnation" (Rom. 5:16). And: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

Rejection 2

That the spiritual gifts or the good qualities and virtues, such as goodness, holiness, righteousness, could not belong to the will of man when he was first created, and that these, therefore, could not have been separated therefrom in the fall.

For such is contrary to the description of the image of God which the apostle gives in Ephesians 4:24, where he declares that it consists in righteousness and holiness, which undoubtedly belong to the will.

Rejection 3

That in spiritual death the spiritual gifts are not separate from the will of man, since the will in itself has never been corrupted, but only hindered through the darkness of the understanding and the irregularity of the affections; and that, these hindrances having been removed, the will can then bring into operation its native powers, that is, that the will of itself is able to will and to choose, or not to will and not to choose, all manner of good which may be presented to it.

This is an innovation and an error, and tends to elevate the powers of the free will, contrary to the declaration of the prophet: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9); and of the apostle: "Among whom (sons of disobedience) also we all had

our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2:3).

Rejection 4

That the unregenerate man is not really nor utterly dead in sin, nor destitute of all powers unto spiritual good, but that he can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God.

For these are contrary to the express testimony of Scripture. "Who were dead in trespasses and sins"; "Even when we were dead in sins" (Eph. 2:1, 5); and: "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5); "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). Moreover, to hunger and thirst after deliverance from misery, and after life, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit, is peculiar to the regenerate and those that are called blessed. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me"; "Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar" (Ps. 51:10, 19); "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

Rejection 5

That the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, namely, the evangelical or saving grace and salvation itself. And that in this way God on His part shows Himself ready to reveal Christ unto all men, since He applies to all sufficiently and efficiently the means necessary to conversion.

For the experience of all ages and the Scriptures do both testify that this is untrue. "He sheweth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Ps. 147:19, 20). "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16). And: "Now when they (Paul and his companions) had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they

were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not" (Acts 16:6, 7).

Rejection 6

That in the true conversion of man no new qualities, powers or gifts can be infused by God into the will, and that therefore faith through which we are first converted, and because of which we are called believers, is not a quality or gift infused by God, but only an act of man, and that it cannot be said to be a gift, except in respect of the power to attain to this faith.

For thereby they contradict the Holy Scriptures which declare that God infuses new qualities of faith, of obedience, and of the consciousness of His love into our hearts: "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jer. 31:33). And:

"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed" (Is. 44:3). And: "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). This is also repugnant to the continuous practice of the Church, which prays by the mouth of the prophet thus: "turn Thou me, and I shall be turned" (Jer. 31:18).

Rejection 7

That the grace whereby we are converted to God is only a gentle advising, or (as others explain it), that this is the noblest manner of working in the conversion of man, and that this manner of working, which consists in advising, is most in harmony with man's nature; and that there is no reason why this advising grace alone should not be sufficient to make the natural man spiritual, indeed, that God does not produce the consent of the will except through this manner of advising; and that the power of the divine working, whereby it surpasses the working of Satan, consists in this, that God promises eternal, while Satan promises only temporal goods.

But this is altogether Pelagian and contrary to the whole Scripture which, besides this, teaches yet another and far more powerful and divine manner of the Holy Spirit's working in the conversion of man, as in Ezekiel: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will

I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26).

Rejection 8

That God in the regeneration of man does not use such powers of His omnipotence as potently and infallibly bend man's will to faith and conversion; but that all the works of grace having been accomplished, which God employs to convert man, man may yet so resist God and the Holy Spirit when God intends man's regeneration and wills to regenerate him, and indeed that manoften does so resist that he prevents entirely his regeneration, and that it therefore remains in man's power to be regenerated or not.

For this is nothing less than the denial of all the efficiency of God's grace in our conversion, and the subjecting of the working of the Almighty God to the will of man, which is contrary to the apostles, who teach: "who believe, according to the working of His mighty power" (Eph. 1:19). And: "That our God would...fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power" (2 Thess. 1:11). And: "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

Rejection 9

That grace and free will are partial causes, which together work the beginning of conversion, and that grace, in order of working, does not precede the working of the will; that is, that God does not efficiently help the will of man unto conversion until the will of man moves and determines to do this.

For the ancient Church has long ago condemned this doctrine of the Pelagians according to the words of the apostle: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Rom. 9:16). Likewise: "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7). And: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

FIFTH HEAD OF DOCTRINE

Of the Perseverance of the Saints

Article 1

Whom God calls, according to His purpose, to the communion of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, He delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life; though not altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh, so long as they continue in this world.

Article 2

Hence spring daily sins of infirmity, and hence spots adhere to the best works of the saints, which furnish them with constant matter for humiliation before God, and flying for refuge to Christ crucified; for mortifying the flesh more and more by the spirit of prayer, and by holy exercises of piety; and for pressing forward to the goal of perfection, till being at length delivered from this body of death, they are brought to reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

Article 3

By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and the temptations of sin and of the world, those who are converted could not persevere in a state of grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.

Article 4

Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God, as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, so as to be seduced by, and comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer that they be not led into temptation. When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins by Satan, the world and the flesh, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually fall into these evils. This the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in Holy Scripture demonstrates.

Article 5

By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God's favor for a time, until on their returning into the right way of serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them.

Article 6

But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people, even in their melancholy falls; nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption, and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death; nor does He permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

Article 7

For in the first place, in these falls He preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing or being totally lost; and again, by His Word and Spirit, certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator, may again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore His mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Article 8

Thus, it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy, that they do not totally fall from faith and grace, nor continue and perish finally in their backslidings; which, with respect to themselves, is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen; but with respect to God, it is utterly impossible, since His counsel cannot be changed nor His promise fail, neither can the call according to His purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated.

Article 9

Of this preservation of the elect to salvation and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers for themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they arrive at the certain persuasion that they ever will continue true and living members of the church; and that they experience forgiveness of sins, and will at last inherit eternal life.

Article 10

This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to, or independent of the Word of God; but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God (Rom. 8:16); and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort that they shall finally obtain the victory and of this infallible pledge or earnest of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.

Article 11

The Scripture moreover testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts and that under grievous temptations they are not always sensible of this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that they may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.

Article 12

This certainty of perseverance, however, is so far from exciting in believers a spirit of pride or of rendering them carnally secure, that on the contrary, it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering, and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God; so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as

appears from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

Article 13

Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness or a disregard to piety in those who are recovering from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which He hath ordained, that they who walk therein may maintain an assurance of persevering, lest by abusing His fatherly kindness, God should turn away His gracious countenance from them, to behold which is to the godly dearer than life, the withdrawing whereof is more bitter than death, and they in consequence hereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience.

Article 14

And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments.

Article 15

The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and the certainty thereof, which God hath most abundantly revealed in His Word, for the glory of His Name, and the consolation of pious souls, and which He impresses upon the hearts of the faithful. Satan abhors it; the world ridicules it; the ignorant and hypocrite abuse, and heretics oppose it; but the spouse of Christ hath always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her to continue this conduct to the end. Now, to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

The true doctrine (concerning perseverance) having been explained, the Synod **rejects** the errors of those who teach:

Rejection 1

That the perseverance of the true believers is not a fruit of election or a gift of God gained by the death of Christ, but a condition of the new covenant, which (as they declare) man before his decisive election and justification must fulfill through his free will.

For the Holy Scripture testifies that this follows out of election, and is given the elect in virtue of the death, the resurrection and intercession of Christ: "but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom. 11:7). Likewise: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:32–35).

Rejection 2

That God does indeed provide the believer with sufficient powers to persevere and is ever ready to preserve these in him, if he will do his duty; but that though all things which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God will use to preserve faith are made use of, it even then ever depends on the pleasure of the will whether it will persevere or not.

For this idea contains an outspoken Pelagianism, and while it would make men free, it makes them robbers of God's honor, contrary to the prevailing agreement of the evangelical doctrine, which takes from man all cause of boasting and ascribes all the praise for this favor to the grace of God alone; and contrary to the apostle, who declares that it is God "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8).

Rejection 3

That the true believers and regenerate not only can fall from justifying faith and likewise from grace and salvation wholly and to the end, but indeed often do fall from this and are lost forever.

For this conception makes powerless the grace, justification, regeneration, and continued keeping by Christ, contrary to the expressed words of the apostle Paul: "That, while we were yet

sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. 5:8, 9). And contrary to the apostle John: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). And also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:28, 29).

Rejection 4

That true believers and regenerate can sin the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit.

Since the same apostle John, after having spoken in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, verses 16 and 17, of those who sin unto death and having forbidden to pray for them, immediately adds to this in verse 18: "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not (meaning a sin of that character); but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18).

Rejection 5

That without a special revelation we can have no certainty of future perseverance in this life.

For by this doctrine the sure comfort of the true believers is taken away in this life and the doubts of the papist are again introduced into the church, while the Holy Scriptures constantly deduce this assurance, not from a special and extraordinary revelation, but from the marks proper to the children of God and from the constant promises of God. So especially the apostle Paul: "Nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39). And John declares: "And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John 3:24).

Rejection 6

That the doctrine of the certainty of perseverance and of salvation from its own character and nature is a cause of indolence and is

injurious to godliness, good morals, prayers and other holy exercises, but that on the contrary it is praiseworthy to doubt.

For these show that they do not know the power of divine grace and the working of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And they contradict the apostle John, who teaches the opposite with express words in his first epistle: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:2–3). Furthermore, these are contradicted by the example of the saints, both of the Old and the New Testament, who though they were assured of their perseverance and salvation, were nevertheless constant in prayers and other exercises of godliness.

Rejection 7

That the faith of those who believe for a time does not differ from justifying and saving faith except only in duration.

For Christ Himself, in Matthew 13:20, Luke 8:13, and in other places, evidently notes, besides this duration, a threefold difference between those who believe only for a time and true believers, when He declares that the former receive the seed in stony ground, but the latter in the good ground or heart; that the former are without root, but the latter have a firm root; that the former are without fruit, but that the latter bring forth their fruit in various measure with constancy and steadfastness.

Rejection 8

That it is not absurd that one having lost his first regeneration, is again and even often born anew.

For these deny by this doctrine the incorruptibleness of the seed of God, whereby we are born again, contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible" (1 Peter 1:23).

Rejection 9

That Christ has in no place prayed that believers should infallibly continue in faith.

For they contradict Christ Himself, who says: "I have prayed for thee (Simon), that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32); and the evangelist John, who declares that Christ has not prayed for the apostles only, but also for those who through their word would believe: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me," and: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil"; "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word" (John 17:11, 15, 20).

Conclusion

And this is the perspicuous, simple, and ingenuous declaration of the orthodox doctrine respecting the five articles which have been controverted in the Belgic churches, and the rejection of the errors with which they have for some time been troubled. This doctrine the Synod judges to be drawn from the Word of God and to be agreeable to the confessions of the Reformed churches. Whence it clearly appears that some whom such conduct by no means became, have violated all truth, equity, and charity, in wishing to persuade the public:

"That the doctrine of the Reformed churches concerning predestination, and the points annexed to it, by its own genius and necessary tendency, leads off the minds of men from all piety and religion; that it is an opiate administered by the flesh and the devil, and the stronghold of Satan, where he lies in wait for all; and from which he wounds multitudes, and mortally strikes through many with the darts both of despair and security; that it makes God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical; that it is nothing more than interpolated Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, Turcism; that it renders men carnally secure, since they are persuaded by it that nothing can hinder the salvation of the elect, let them live as they please; and therefore, that they may safely perpetrate every species of the most atrocious crimes; and that if the reprobate should even perform truly all the works of the saints, their obedience would not in the least contribute to their salvation; that the same doctrine teaches that God, by a mere arbitrary act of His will, without the least respect or view to any sin, has predestinated the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation; and has created them for this very purpose; that in the same

manner in which the election is the fountain and the cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety; that many children of the faithful are torn guiltless from their mothers' breasts and tyrannically plunged into hell; so that neither baptism nor the prayers of the Church at their baptism, can at all profit by them"; and many other things of the same kind which the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul. Wherefore, this Synod of Dort, in the name of the Lord, conjures as many as piously call upon the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, to judge of the faith of the Reformed Churches not from the calumnies, which on every side are heaped upon it; nor from the private expressions of a few among ancient and modern teachers, often dishonestly quoted or corrupted and wrested to a meaning quite foreign to their intention; but from the public confessions of the Churches themselves and from the declaration of the orthodox doctrine, confirmed by the unanimous consent of all and each of the members of the whole Synod. Moreover, the Synod warns calumniators themselves to consider the terrible judgment of God which awaits them for bearing false witness against the confessions of so many churches, for distressing the consciences of the weak, and for laboring to render suspect the society of the truly faithful. Finally, this Synod exhorts all their brethren in the gospel of Christ to conduct themselves piously and religiously in handling this doctrine, both in the universities and churches; to direct it, as well in discourse as in writing, to the glory of the divine Name, to holiness of life, and to the consolation of afflicted souls; to regulate, by the Scripture, according to the analogy of faith, not only their sentiments, but also their language; and to abstain from all those phrases which exceed the limits necessary to be observed in ascertaining the genuine sense of the holy Scriptures, and may furnish insolent sophists with a just pretext for violently assailing or even vilifying the doctrine of the Reformed churches.

May Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who, seated at the Father's right hand, gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth, bring to the truth those who err, shut the mouths of the calumniators of sound doctrine, and endue the faithful minister of His Word with the spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all their discourses may tend to the glory of God and the edification of those who hear them. Amen.

That this is our faith and decision we certify by subscribing our names.

Here follow the names, not only of President, Assistant President, and Secretaries of the Synod, and of the Professors of Theology in the Dutch Churches, but of all the Members who were deputed to the Synod as the Representatives of their respective Churches, that is, of the Delegates from Great Britain, the Electoral Palatinate, Hessia, Switzerland, Wetteraw, The Republic and Church of Geneva, The Republic and Church of Bremen, The Republic and Church of Emden, The Duchy of Gelderland and of Zutphen, South Holland, North Holland, Zeeland, The Province of Utrecht, Friesland, Transylvania, The State of Groningen and Omland, Drent, The French Churches.

Historical Background

The Canons of Dort, also known as the Five Articles Against the Remonstrants, were established by the Synod of Dort, which convened in Dordrecht from 1618 to 1619. This national Synod of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands included 62 Dutch and 27 foreign delegates from eight countries, giving it an international character.

The Synod addressed the rise of Arminianism, a theological stance promoted by Jacob Arminius (1560–1609) that diverged from Reformed teachings. After Arminius's death, his followers presented their views in the Remonstrance of 1610, advocating for (1) election based on foreseen faith, (2) universal merits of Christ, (3) partial depravity and free will, (4) resistibility of grace, and (5) possibility of lapsing from grace. This controversy led to near civil war in the Netherlands, prompting the States General to call for a national Synod.

Over seven months, the Synod held 154 sessions, during which the Remonstrant theologians attempted to delay proceedings but were ultimately dismissed under the leadership of Johannes Bogerman. The Synod then formulated the Canons, rejecting the Remonstrance and affirming five points of Calvinism: unconditional election, limited atonement, total depravity, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints.

The Canons comprise four sections corresponding to the five Remonstrant articles, with the third and fourth points combined. Each section includes a positive exposition of Reformed doctrine and a negative repudiation of Arminian errors, resulting in 59 articles of exposition and 34 repudiations.

Uniquely composed by an ecclesiastical assembly, the Canons represent a consensus of all Reformed churches of the time, with both Dutch and foreign delegates signing. The Canons emphasize sovereign grace: conceived, merited, needed, applied, and preserved. A thanksgiving service was held upon their completion to acknowledge the preservation of Reformed doctrine.

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary. (n.d.). The Canons of Dort. Retrieved July 5, 2024, from https://prts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Canons-of-Dort-with-Intro.pdf

Our Theological Vision

Doctrines of This House

This Excellent Church (TEC) is an Evangelical (Reformed) church that affirms that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone as revealed by scripture alone to the glory of God alone.

We are a part of the Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and thus affirm the Nicene Creed and Chalcedonian Creed which embody the orthodox Christian beliefs. We hold to the Three Forms of Unity of the Protestant Reformation consisting of The Belgic Confession, The Canons of Dort and The Heidelberg Catechism while holding to credobaptism.

TEC's mission as a community of believers is to excel at reshaping human values and reconciling humanity back to God. Our vision is to see multitudes of people in our nation who know God, love Him and are satisfied with Him.

Our core values are Love, Faith, Purity, Scholarship and Beauty.

Below is the faithful restatement of the gospel which we believe as it applies to our context in Lagos, Nigeria in the 21st century.

1. FAITH IN THE HOLY TRINITY

Gen 1:26, Gen 11:7, Psalm 110:1, Is 6:8, John 1:18, Matt 28:19, Deut 6:4, 2 Cor 13:14, Eph 1:3-14

We believe in one living and true God, who is simple, holy, loving, eternal, and boundless in power, wisdom, and goodness, the Creator and Sustainer of everything. This Being is tri-personal of one essence, substance and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Father

Romans 1:1-4, 2 Cor 11:31, Eph 3:14-19, 1 Cor 1:3, Gal 1:1-3

We believe the Father is the first person of the God-head who eternally begot the Son and from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds.

The Son

Matt 1:18-24, Luke 1:26-38, John 10:29-30, Phil 2:6-11, John 14:9-12, Matt 28:1-10, 1 Cor 15:3-4, 1 Tim 2:5, Rom 8:34

We believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He is both truly God and truly man. He died on the cross and was buried, serving as a sacrifice for original sin and all human transgressions, reconciling us to God. Christ rose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, and now intercedes for us at the Father's right hand until He returns to judge all humanity on the last day.

The Holy Spirit

Gen 1:2, John 14:16-18, John 15:26-27, John 16:7-15, John 4:10-14, John 7:37-39, Acts 13:2, Acts 20:23, 2 Cor 3:17, Acts 1:8

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, sharing the same essential nature, majesty, and glory as the Father and the Son, truly and eternally God. As the Administrator of grace to all, He is particularly the effective Agent in convicting of sin, regenerating, sanctifying, and glorifying. He is ever present, assuring, preserving, guiding, and empowering believers.

We condemn the teachings of Modalists who claim that God is one person and thus the Father, Son, and Spirit are all the same person with different masks. We also condemn any teachings which imply that each of the three persons of the glorious God are partly God thereby dividing His essence. We also reject any doctrine that says any of the persons of the God-head began to be at a point in time.

We maintain what was most surely taught by the Lord, the prophets and the Apostles and defended by the church - that God is one being which is three co-eternal persons.

2. THE SUFFICIENCY AND FULL AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES FOR SALVATION

Matt 5:17-20, Matt 24:35, Luke 24:27, 2 Tim 3:16-17, 2 Pet 1:19-21, 1 Pet 1:10-12, Eph 2:19-21, 2 Pet 3:15-16

We believe that the books of the Old and New Testaments comprise the Holy Scriptures, inspired and infallibly written by God. They are fully without error in their original manuscripts, surpassing all

human authority, and have been faithfully preserved to this day without corruption of essential doctrine. We affirm that these Scriptures contain everything necessary for salvation; therefore, whatever is not found in them or cannot be proven by them should not be required of anyone to be believed as a matter of faith or deemed necessary for salvation.

In both the Old and New Testaments, life is ultimately offered through Christ, the sole Mediator between God and humanity. The New Testament guides Christians in fulfilling the moral principles of the Old Testament, emphasizing loving obedience to God enabled by the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit.

The canonical books of the Old Testament are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

The canonical books of the New Testament are:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude and Revelation.

We condemn the teachings of the Hypergracers that say that judgement in the old and new testaments were not of God, rather they attribute them to demons, angels or men. We condemn all their teachings that deny the unity of Apostolic doctrine, suggesting that the Apostles did not fully know the truth or were not inspired by God in their teachings.

3. GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY & PROVIDENCE

Ps 135:6, Ps 127:1 Job 42:2, Matt 10:29-30, Neh 9:6, Eph 1:11, Col 1:16-17, Is 45:7-9, Prov 16:33, Lam 3:37-39, Gen 3:22, Ps 14, Ps 63:1, Ps 119:2, Matt 6:33, Acts 10:1-8, 34-35, Rom 2:12-16, Rom

3:9-20, Rom 10:11-13, Heb 11:6, Acts 17:22-28, Rom 1:18-23, 2 Cor 3:13-16, John 5:21,40, 1 Pet 2:7-8, Acts 2:23, 38-39

God, who created everything, sustains everything. He directs, regulates, and governs every creature, action, and thing, from the greatest to the smallest, by His perfectly wise and holy providence. He does this according to His infallible foreknowledge and the voluntary, unchangeable purpose of His own will, all to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

We believe that humanity's creation in the image of God included ability to choose between common right and wrong. Thus, individuals were made morally responsible for their choices.

God, being the first cause and everything else being contingent on him, does no injury to man's volition but rather establishes it.

We affirm that great is the mystery of providence. God, who is love, is absolutely sovereign over all creation yet man is morally responsible for his actions. We accept that both statements are true and evidenced in scripture and our testimonies. We resolve that both statements are reconcilable only in God's infinite mind which exceeds human faculty to fully comprehend.

We condemn the teachings of the open-theists and Deists which say that God has abdicated sovereignty over all creation to men and other created spirits. By extension we reject any ideas which imply that there are details of existence which God has not fore-known and ordained. We insist that God's foreknowledge is not a mere passive awareness of future events but His eternal knowledge as firstcause who upholds all things and does as He pleases.

4. SIN: ORIGINAL, WILLFUL, AND INVOLUNTARY

Gen 6:5-6, Jer 17:9, Rom 3:9-18, Rom 5:12-21, Rom 8:1-11, Gal 5:16-26, 1 Cor 15:21-22

We believe that through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, sin entered the world, affecting all creation. The consequences of sin include a rupture in the relationship between humanity and God, disruption of the natural order, and the exploitation of individuals by corrupt or misguided social systems. The entire creation eagerly awaits redemption.

Each person is born with a tendency toward sin, known as Original Sin, which inclines them towards selfcenteredness and independence from God, resulting in deliberate acts of unrighteousness.

The ongoing effects of Adam and Eve's disobedience include a flawed human nature from which arise involuntary shortcomings, faults, weaknesses, and imperfect judgments. These imperfections, stemming from humanity's fallen state, require the merits of Christ's atonement, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, and the self-discipline of believers.

Willful sin occurs when a morally accountable person knowingly violates God's law, prioritizing selfgratification over obedience to God. The consequences of willful sin include a loss of fellowship with God, self-centeredness instead of love for others, bondage to distorted desires that mar the divine image, an ongoing struggle to live righteously, and ultimately eternal separation from God. The atoning work of Christ is the sole remedy for all forms of sin—whether original, willful, or involuntary.

We therefore reject the doctrine of the Pelagians and Semi-pelagians who say that man has no original sin that is sinful flesh but has the intrinsic ability to please God through saving faith and accept the special grace of God in salvation without the quickening help of the Holy Spirit.

5. THE ATONEMENT

Rom 3:23-25, Mk 14:22-24, Heb 9:9-22, Rom 8:3-4, 2 Cor 5:21, 1 John 2:1-2, 1 John 4:10, Rom 8:28-30, 2 Tim 1:8-10, Eph 1:4-12, 1 Tim 2:3-7, 4:10, Titus 2:11, 2 Pet 3:9, Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11

We believe that Christ’s offering of himself, once and for all, through His sufferings and meritorious death on the cross, provides the perfect redemption and atonement for the sins of the whole world, both original and actual. There is no other ground of salvation from sin but that alone. This atonement is sufficient for every individual of Adam’s race and efficient in those who put their trust in Him. Those who put their trust in Him are God’s chosen ones (the elect) whom He predestined.

6. FAITH AND REPENTANCE

Acts 3:37-39, Acts 17:30-31, Acts 26:19-23, John 16:7-11, Eph 2:8-9, Rom 1:16-17, Rom 9:30-32, Col 2:11-12

We believe that for men and women to appropriate what God's grace has made possible, they must respond in repentance and faith. The ability comes from God, but the act is the individual's.

Repentance is given by the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit. It involves a willful change of mind that renounces sin and longs for righteousness, a godly sorrow for and a confession of past sins, proper restitution for wrongdoings, and a resolution to reform the life.

Faith is the only condition of salvation.

7. REGENERATION, JUSTIFICATION AND ADOPTION

Ezek 36:24-27, Titus 3:4-6, 2 Cor 3:15-18, 4:3-6, Heb 8:7- 13, Eph 1:4-7, Col 1:13-14, Eph 1:11-14, Eph 2: 4-10, Gal 4:4-7, Rom 10:10, 1 Cor 6:11

We believe that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, softening the heart and granting a new spiritual life with the capacity for love and obedience. This transformation enables pardoned sinners to serve God wholeheartedly, delivering them from the power of sin that dominates the unregenerate.

We believe that when someone repents of personal sin and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are justified and adopted into the family of God. Through this act, they receive assurance of personal salvation by the witness of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that justification is God's judicial declaration whereby a person is counted as righteous, fully pardoned of all sin, freed from guilt, and completely released from the penalty of sins through the merit of Jesus Christ, received by faith alone and not by works.

We believe that adoption is God's act by which justified and regenerated believers share fully in the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of being children of God.

8. GOOD WORKS AND SANCTIFICATION

James 2:14-26, Rom 6, Col 2:6, Col 1:9-11, Gal 5:16-26, Rom 8:5-15, 1 John 2:15-17, James 5:16, 19-20, I John 5:16-17, Heb 3:12-13, Heb 6:4-8, Heb 10:26-31, 2 Pet 2:20-22, 2 Tim 2:19-21, 1 Cor 6:15-20, 2 Thes 2:13-14, Rom 12:1-2, Eph 2:10

We believe that while good works do not save us from our sins or from God's judgment, they are the natural result of faith and follow regeneration. Therefore, they are pleasing and acceptable to God through Christ, and they demonstrate a living faith, just as a tree is recognized by its fruit.

We believe that sanctification is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, through which the child of God is set apart from sin to God and enabled to love God with all their heart and walk blamelessly in His holy commandments. Sanctification begins at the moment of justification and regeneration. From then on, there is a gradual or progressive sanctification as the believer continues to walk with God and grows daily in grace, striving for more perfect obedience to God. The life of holiness is sustained through faith in the sanctifying blood of Christ and is evidenced by loving obedience to God's revealed will. It is through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit that we persevere in faith.

We believe that growing in sanctification is a necessary fruit of the new creature and thus reject the doctrine of the Antinomians who say that the confession of sins and prayer of forgiveness are unnecessary. We condemn the implicit or explicit teaching that there are such things as lawless Christians or unrepentant evildoers who are believers in Jesus. By the same measure, we also reject legalism with its belief that good works are what saves us in themselves.

We maintain the teaching of the Apostles that we are justified by faith. But this saving faith cannot be alone.

9. THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Acts 1:4-8, Acts 2:14-21, 1 Cor 12-14, Rom 12:3-8, Eph 4

We believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given sovereignly according to His will. The Lord also commands us to earnestly desire the best gifts and He blesses our desires.

We thus believe that there was no period when any of the gifts of the spirit ceased to be given by the Lord as all giving of the gifts depends on His will and not human times.

The gifts of the Spirit function for the edification of the whole Church. The value of the gifts of the Spirit is to be tested by their edification of the Church and not by the ecstasy produced in the ones receiving them. We therefore condemn all practices of faking miracles and engineering of ecstatic experiences without the edification and renewal of mind by the word of God.

We believe that the offices of the Holy Apostles and Prophets were given once for the laying of the foundation of the church and the giving of scriptures. There are no Apostles or Prophets in their class afterwards. Anyone who insists on the titles of apostle and prophets today must be regarded as not in the same office as the Holy Apostles and Prophets for no man can add to what they have laid for the church.

10. MATERIAL COMFORT AND PROSPERITY

Gen 2:15, Gen 3, Rom 8:18-25, Deut 15:11, Matt 25:14-30, Matt 26:11, Luke 12:15, 1 Tim 6:6-10, Acts 14:17, 1 Tim 6:17-19, Tit 3:14, 1 Thes 4:10-12, 2 Thes 3:6-14, 2 Cor 8-9, James 2:1-7, James 5:1-6.

We believe that because of the fall of man, God in His mercy put limitations on the earth and the mortal strength of man to restrain his capacity for evil. Because of this, there will always be scarcity and thus poverty and other forms of suffering. We believe that the only true and final solution to this is the coming glorification when Jesus will return and replace the corruptible with the incorruptible.

We thus believe that the goal of the believer with respect to material pursuit is to lead a productive life in service to God which will always be enough for him to be dignified and meet urgent needs. We insist that a man's material possessions are not the measure of the worth of a man. For a man can live in full service to God and not be rich and a man may be rich or poor while in service to Satan. We most vociferously reject the despising, disdain, humiliation, oppression of the poor and the idolization of the rich.

We believe that generosity is not a tool to earn financial prosperity as God's blessing, but a fruit of a heart given to God and in love with His work and people.

We believe that God blesses the work of our hands and provides for our needs according to what His plan for us permits. We reject the idea that God does not provide, and all material blessing is only the result of human effort.

Because God provides according to His purposes, we know that not all will be rich, but God in His faithfulness will take care of all even better than He cares for sparrows and lilies with what is necessary to lead a dignified and purposeful life.

11. THE CHURCH

Eph 2:14-22, Eph 3:4-6, 14-15, Eph 4:1-16, Gal 6:16, Rom 4, 12:4-5, 1 Cor 12:12-27, Heb 12:22-24

The Catholic or Universal Church, which is invisible, comprises all the elect who have been, are, or will be gathered under Christ, the Head of the Church. It is His spouse, body, and the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The visible Church, also Catholic or Universal under the Gospel (no longer confined to one nation as it was under the law), consists of all throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children, who are received and held as holy wards under its instruction, its prayers, and its care. It is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

God has given this visible catholic Church the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of Christ, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life until the end of the world. By His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, He makes them effective for His purposes..

This Excellent Church is a local church who, as members of the body of Christ, hold the faith set forth in these Articles of Religion and acknowledge the ecclesiastical authority of its governing bodies.

12. THE SACRAMENTS: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Luke 22:14-23, 1 Cor 10:14-20, 1 Cor 11:23-26, Matt 28:19, Acts 2:37-38, Acts 10:44-48, Acts 22:12-16, 1 Pet 3:20-21

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments commanded by Christ and ordained as means of grace when received through faith. They are signs and seals of God's gracious work in us, and by them He quickens, strengthens, and confirms our faith.

We believe that the sacraments must not be separated from their true essence and substance. A sacrament is a seal set upon a promise, and a seal is set upon the thing it seals.

We believe that baptism is a sacrament commanded by our Lord and administered upon a credible profession of faith. It signifies union with Christ in His death and resurrection, the washing away of sins by His blood and Spirit, and entrance upon the benefits of His atonement. In it the believer confesses Christ before men and is received into the visible fellowship of His church.

We believe that the children of believers are not strangers to the church. They are holy wards: born within the household of faith, committed to the guardianship of their parents and of the congregation, numbered among the catechumens, and to be instructed, prayed for, and brought up in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. The promise of the covenant is truly held out to them, and the inheritance promised to them is an inheritance of faith, received through faith and not by birth. We therefore reserve baptism and the Lord's Table for those who can personally profess faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

It is asked upon what ground we reckon the children of believers to belong to this church when they do not yet bear the sign. We answer that under every administration of the covenant there were those who shared the blessings of God's people without bearing the sign of the covenant, and that their case was neither anomalous nor pitiable.

Lot went out with Abraham and was blessed in his company, was delivered by Abraham's hand from the kings, and was brought out of Sodom because God remembered Abraham (Gen. 14:12-16; 19:29). He bore no sign, and the covenant was not made with him, and yet

the mercy of the covenant reached him through the man with whom it was made.

The sojourner in Israel is the plainer case. He dwelt in the land, rested upon the Sabbath, was protected by the same law and loved as the Israelite loved himself, gathered the gleanings, brought his offering, and stood with the congregation to hear the law read (Ex. 20:10; Lev. 19:10, 33-34; Num. 15:14-16; Deut. 31:12). He shared, in a word, the whole life of the commonwealth. One thing only was shut to him: he might not eat the Passover unless he were circumcised (Ex. 12:48). The sign and the meal were withheld; the commonwealth was not.

We do not say that the sojourner is a type of the covenant child, for he is not. We say that his case shows the shape of the thing: that in God's own ordering of His people there has always been a real standing short of the sign, and that those who hold it are not strangers.

So it is with our children. They do not yet believe, and therefore they do not receive the sign nor come to the Table, for the seal is set where the substance is. But they are not outside. God has revealed that there is promise upon them, and the household He has given them is His own ordained means of bringing His elect to faith. The apostle does not call them tolerated or incidental. He calls them holy (1 Cor. 7:14). We join him in calling them holy. They are wards, given into our guiding and our guarding until the Lord gives what He has promised to give through means.

We do not by this presume upon any child. The promise is held out and is received by faith, and we have no warrant to tell this congregation that every child of a believer will be saved. We have warrant to say that God saves through means, that the Christian household is chief among them.

From this comes the name we use. We call them holy wards, taking the word holy from the apostle and the word ward from what we do. The name is ours and is local to this church. The doctrine it names is not our invention, and we press the name upon no one else. We adopt it because a church that teaches a thing ought to be able to say its name.

We present our infants before the Lord and before His congregation with thanksgiving, with prayer, and with the vow of their parents to bring them up in the fear of God. In this presentation we anoint them with oil. Oil was used in Israel to set persons and things apart unto God, and the apostle directs the elders of the church to pray over the sick, anointing with oil in the name of the Lord (James 5:14); its use therefore neither ceased with the shadows nor became a sacrament of the new covenant. We declare plainly that this anointing is a visible sign of consecration and of prayer offered in the name of the Lord, and nothing more. It is not a sacrament. It neither conveys nor seals grace. It does not admit the child to the church, to the Table, or to membership. It adds nothing to the two sacraments which Christ has instituted. It is prayer and lawful vow made visible; and should any come to regard it otherwise, it were better laid aside than misunderstood.

We do not unchurch those whose conscience leads them to baptise the infants of believers, and we recognise them as brethren holding one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. But we do not hold our own position as a private exception to a settled rule. It is the confession of this church, and the officers of this church subscribe it.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death and of our hope in His victorious return, and a sign of the love Christians bear one another. To those who receive it humbly, in a right spirit and by faith, it is a means through which God communicates grace to the heart.

The bread signifies the body of Jesus Christ, given with the command that we eat it. As God is certain and immutable truth, He performs all that it signifies. Thus we truly receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Supper, as it represents to us the communion of both.

We condemn the teaching of those who reject or mock the sacraments, or who teach them as optional and of little consequence for the saints.

13. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Gen 1:27-28, Gen 2:18-25, Matt 19:3-9, Eph 5:22-33 1 Pet 3:1-7

We believe that every person is created in the image of God, and human sexuality reflects that image through intimate love, communication, fellowship, selflessness, and fulfillment. God's Word uses the marriage relationship as the supreme metaphor for His relationship with His covenant people, illustrating the truth of one God with one people.

Therefore, God's plan for human sexuality is that it should be expressed only within a monogamous, lifelong relationship between one man and one woman in the framework of marriage. This relationship is divinely designed for the birth and rearing of children and is a covenant union made in the sight of God, taking priority over all other human relationships. We adhere to the teachings of Scripture regarding gender identity, sexual conduct, and the sacredness of marriage. We believe that sexual relationships outside of marriage and sexual relationships between persons of the same sex are immoral and sinful.

14. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR HUMANITY

Matt 22:37-40, Col 1:15-18, Rom 8:18-25, Col 3:17,23-25

We believe that the two great commandments—to love the Lord our God with all our heart and to love our neighbors as ourselves—summarize the divine law as revealed in the Scriptures. These commandments are the perfect standard for human duty, guiding the organization and direction of families, nations, social bodies, and individual actions. They require us to acknowledge God as our Supreme Ruler and recognize all people as created by Him, equal in all natural rights.

Therefore, every person should conduct their individual, social, and political actions to give God complete and absolute obedience and ensure that everyone enjoys their natural rights while promoting their fulfillment.

Believers should pursue all their endeavors as acts of worship to God, knowing that we will account for everything He has given us.

We reject gnosticism, which sees the world as entirely evil, nor do we align with those expecting a perfect and suffering-free world. We believe that although this world is broken by Adam's sin, God's abundant common grace permeates every aspect, preventing it from

being hellish. This world is beautifully broken, and believers should cultivate it to the glory of God until He returns.

15. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, RESURRECTION AND JUDGEMENT

1 Thes 5:1-11, 1 Cor 1:7-8, 1 Cor 15, 2 Cor 5:1-5, Rom 8:18-25, 1 Thes 4:13-18, 2 Cor 5:10, Acts 10:38-42, Acts 17:31, John 5:27, Rom 2:16, Rev 19:11, Heb 9:27, 2 Tim 4:8, 1 Tim 6:14-16, Rev 20

We believe in the certain and imminent return of Christ, which motivates holy living and zeal for spreading the gospel worldwide. His return will fulfill all prophecies regarding His complete triumph over evil.

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all people: the righteous to eternal life and the wicked to eternal damnation. Christ's resurrection guarantees this future resurrection at His Second Coming. The resurrected body will be spiritual yet whole and recognizable.

We affirm that Scripture reveals God as the Judge of all, whose judgments are based on His omniscience and eternal justice. His judgment will culminate in a final gathering before His majestic throne, where records will be reviewed and final rewards and punishments administered.

According to Scripture, there exists a conscious personal existence after death. Heaven, with its eternal glory and the blessed presence of Christ, awaits those who accept salvation through Jesus Christ. Conversely, hell, characterized by eternal torment and separation from God, awaits those who reject this salvation.