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An Introduction to the Ecumenical Creeds of the Church of Jesus Christ

“We have no creed but Christ!” This is a common slogan from the lips of many professing Christians in our day and place in history. But you see the practice of writing and confessing creeds (from the Latin *credo*, “I believe”) is as old as the Lord’s Church herself. Thus we find in both the Old and New Testaments of the holy Scriptures summary statements of the faith of God’s covenant people.

The primary confession of the Old Testament is the *Shema*, or, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” (Deut 6:4). This creed was upon the lips of the ancient people of God as the core belief of their faith. Yahweh alone was God, and the “gods” of the nations, Baal, the ashtoreths, Molech, Chemosh, Dagon, etc. were nothing but man-made idols.

The primary confession of the New Testament is found upon the lips of St. Peter in Matthew 16:16, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” He confessed our Lord not only as the long ago promised Messiah, the Savior of His people, but also as the very Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Later in the history of the Church the Apostles gave to the Churches short creedal formulas such as 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” He also gave the Ephesians what is commonly regarded as a creed professed just before a convert was baptized in Ephesians 4:4-6, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.” While St. Paul could not return to Ephesus he gave young St. Timothy, pastor of the Ephesian Church, this poetic confession (at least in Greek) in 1 Timothy 3:16, “And confessedly great is the mystery of piety: who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory” (own translation).

As the post-apostolic Church progressed in evangelism two urgent needs confronted her. First, these new converts had to be catechized, or orally instructed in the faith, and second, many heresies had arisen which needed to be confronted. Thus the Churches wrote ecumenical (“general/universal”) creeds in order to instruct pagan converts and to protect the Church from error. They are called “ecumenical” creeds because nearly all the Churches of Christendom accepted them, as do we.

The Apostles' Creed

This Creed is called the "Apostles' Creed," not because it is a production of the apostles themselves, but because it contains a brief summary of their teachings. It sets forth their doctrine, as has been well said, "in sublime simplicity, in unsurpassable brevity, in beautiful order, and with liturgical solemnity." In its present form it is of no later date than the 4th century. More than any other creed of Christendom, it may justly be called an ecumenical symbol of faith.

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

And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; a holy catholic* Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

*("catholic" here means "universal", affirming that there has always been and always will be only one true Christian Church.)

The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed, also called the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed, is a statement of the orthodox faith of the early Christian Church, in opposition to certain heresies, especially Arianism. These heresies disturbed the Church during the 4th century, and concerned the doctrine of the Trinity and of person of Christ. Both the Greek, or Eastern, and the Latin, or Western, Church held this Creed in honor, though with one important difference. The Western Church insisted on the inclusion of the phrase "and the Son" (known as the *Filioque*) in the article on the procession of the Holy Spirit, which phrase to this day is repudiated by the Eastern Church. Though in its present form this Creed does not go back to the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.), nor to the Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.), as was erroneously held until recent times, it is in substance an accurate and majestic formulation of the Nicene faith.

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And we believe one holy catholic* and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

*("catholic" here means "universal", affirming that there has always been and always will be only one true Christian Church.)

The Athanasian Creed

This Creed is named after Athanasius (293-373 A.D.), the champion of orthodoxy over against Arian attacks upon the doctrine of the Trinity. Although Athanasius did not write this Creed and is improperly named after him, the name persists because until the 17th century it was commonly ascribed to him. Another name for it is the Symbol Quicumque, this being its opening word in the Latin original. Its author is unknown, but in its present form it probably does not date back farther than the 6th century. It is not from the Greek Eastern, but from Latin Western origin, and is not recognized by the Greek Church today. Apart from the opening and closing sentences, this symbol consists of two parts, the first setting forth the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity (3-28), and the second dealing chiefly with the incarnation and the two natures doctrine (29-43). This Creed, though more explicit and advanced theologically than the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds, cannot be said to possess the simplicity, spontaneity, and majesty of these. For centuries it has been the custom of the Roman and Anglican Churches to chant this Creed in public worship on certain solemn occasions.

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith;

Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;

Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.

For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit.

The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.

And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal.

As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.

So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty;

And yet there are not three almighties, but one almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God;

And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.

So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Spirit is Lord;

And yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord.

For like as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord;

So we are forbidden by the catholic religion to say: There are three Gods or three Lords.

The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.

The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten.

The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.

And in this Trinity none is before, or after another; none is greater, or less than another.

But the whole three persons are co-eternal, and co-equal.

So that in all things, as said before, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped.

He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man.

God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of the substance of His mother, born in the world.

Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.

Who, although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.

One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.

One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.

Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;

He ascended into heaven, He sits on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty;

From there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;

And shall give account of their own works.

And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting. And they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

The Chalcedonian Creed

The council of Chalcedon (451) met to resolve the Monophysite (a heresy saying Christ had one nature) controversy in which the Eutychians refused to confess the existence of two natures in Christ. It summarizes the Church's teaching on the natures of Christ in negative terms. This Council asked, "in what sense was Jesus truly man," and, "how was He both God and man?" Many answers had been given: Apollinarianism destroyed Christ's true manhood by saying He did not have a "rational soul." Nestorianism destroyed the unity of His person by radically separating His divine nature from His human nature and making two Christ's. Eutychianism destroyed the distinction of the two natures by teaching that Christ's human nature was absorbed into His divine nature.

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 rational 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 the 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 Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, 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.

The Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

The Heidelberg Catechism, originated in Heidelberg, the capital of the German Electorate of the Palatinate, at the request of the Elector, Frederick III. In order that the Calvinistic Reformation might gain the ascendancy in his domain, this pious ruler commissioned Zacharias Ursinus, professor at the Heidelberg University, and Caspar Olevianus, the court preacher, to prepare a manual for catechetical instruction. Out of this initiative came the Catechism, which was approved by the Elector himself and by the Synod of Heidelberg and first published in 1563. With its comfort motif and its warm, personal style, the Catechism soon won the love of the people of God, as is evident from the fact that more editions of the Catechism had to be printed that same year. While the first edition had 128 questions and answers, in the second and third editions, at the behest of the Elector, the eightieth question and answer, which refers to the popish mass as an accursed idolatry, was added. In the third edition the 129 questions and answers were divided into 52 "Lord's Days" with a view to the Catechism being explained in one of the services on the Lord's Day. That salutary practice is still maintained today, in harmony with the prescription of the Church Order of Dordrecht.

In the Netherlands the Heidelberg Catechism was translated into the Dutch language as early as 1566, and it soon became widely loved and used in the churches there. It was adopted by several National Synods during the later sixteenth century, and finally included by the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-1619, among our "Three Forms of Unity," a place which it has to this day.

Introduction

Lord's Day 1

1. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death,¹ am not my own,² but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ,³ who with His precious blood⁴ has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil;⁵ and so preserves me,⁶ that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head;⁷ yea, that all things must work together for my salvation.⁸ Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life,⁹ and makes me heartily willing and ready henceforth to live unto Him.¹⁰

¹ Rom 14:7-9; ² 1 Cor 6:19-20; ³ 1 Cor 3:23; Tit 2:14; ⁴ 1 Pt 1:18-19; 1 Jn 1:7, 2:2; ⁵ Jn 8:34-36; Heb 2:14-15; 1 Jn 3:8; ⁶ Jn 6:39-40, 10:27-30; 2 Thes 3:3; 1 Pt 1:5; ⁷ Mt 10:29-31; Lk 21:16-18; ⁸ Rom 8:28; ⁹ Rom 8:15-16; 2 Cor 1:21-22, 5:5; Eph 1:13-14; ¹⁰ Rom 8:14

2. How many things are necessary for you to know, that you in this comfort may live and die happily?

Three things: first, the greatness of my sin and misery.¹ Second, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery.² Third, how I am to be thankful to God for such redemption.³

¹ Rom 3:9-10; 1 Jn 1:10; ² Jn 17:3; Acts 4:12, 10:43; ³ Mt 5:16; Rom 6:13; Eph 5:8-10; 1 Pt 2:9-10

First Part: Guilt

Lord's Day 2

3. From where do you know your sins and misery?

From the Law of God.¹

¹ Rom 3:20

4. What does the Law of God require of us?

Christ teaches us in sum, in Matthew 22: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.*¹ *This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*²

¹ Deut 6:5; ² Lev 19:18

5. Can you keep all this perfectly?

No;¹ for I am by nature prone to hate God and my neighbor.²

¹ Rom 3:10, 23; 1 Jn 1:8, 10; ² Gen 6:5, 8:21; Jer 17:9; Rom 7:23, 8:7; Eph 2:3; Tit 3:3

Lord's Day 3

6. Did God create man, therefore, wicked and perverse?

No, but God created man good,¹ and after His own image,² that is, in true righteousness and true holiness;³ that he might rightly know God his Creator,⁴ heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal blessedness, to praise and glorify Him.⁵

¹ Gen 1:31; ² Gen 1:26-27; ³ Eph 4:24; ⁴ Col 3:10; ⁵ Ps 8

7. From where, then, comes this depraved nature of man?

From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise,¹ whereby our nature became so corrupt,² that we are all conceived and born in sin.³

¹ Gen 3; ² Rom 5:12, 18-19; ³ Ps 51:5

8. But are we so depraved, that we are totally unable to do any good and prone to all evil?

Yes;¹ unless we are born again by the Spirit of God.²

¹ Gen 6:5, 8:21; Job 14:4; Isa 53:6; ² Jn 3:3-5

Lord's Day 4

9. Does not God, then, wrong man, by requiring of him in His Law that which he cannot perform?

No; for God so made man, that he could perform it;¹ but man, through the instigation of the devil,² by willful disobedience³ deprived himself and all his posterity of this power.

¹ Gen 1:31; ² Gen 3:13; Jn 8:44; 1 Tim 2:13-14; ³ Gen 3:6; ⁴ Rom 5:12, 18-19

10. Will God permit such disobedience and apostasy to go unpunished?

By no means; but He is terribly displeased with our inborn as well as our actual sins, and will punish them in just judgment in time and eternity,¹ as He has declared: *Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.* (Deut 27:26)

¹ Ex 34:7; Ps 5:4-6, 7:10; Nah 1:2; Rom 1:18, 5:12; Eph 5:6; Heb 9:27

11. Is then God not merciful?

God is indeed merciful,¹ but He is likewise just;² wherefore 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 both of body and soul.³

¹ Ex 20:6, 34:6-7; Ps 103:8-9; ² Ex 20:5, 34:7; Deut 7:9-11; Ps 5:4-6; Heb 10:30-31; ³ Mt 25:45-46

Second Part: Grace Lord's Day 5

12. Since then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal and eternal punishment, what is required that we may escape this punishment and be again received into favor?

God wills that His justice be satisfied,¹ therefore we must make full satisfaction to the same, either by ourselves or by another.²

¹ Ex 20:5, 23:7; Rom 2:1-11; ² Isa 53:11; Rom 8:3-4

13. Can we ourselves make this satisfaction?

By no means; on the contrary, we daily increase our guilt.¹

¹ Ps 130:3; Mt 6:12; Rom 2:4-5

14. Can any mere creature make satisfaction for us?

None; for first, God will not punish, in any other creature, that of which man has made himself guilty;¹ and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, and redeem others from it.²

¹ Ezek 18:4, 20; Heb 2:14-18; ² Ps 130:3; Nah 1:6

15. What manner of Mediator and Redeemer then must we seek?

One who is a true¹ and sinless man,² and yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is at the same time true God.³

¹ 1 Cor 15:21; Heb 2:17; ² Isa 53:9; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 7:26; ³ Isa 7:14, 9:6; Jer 23:6; Jn 1:1; Rom 8:3-4

Lord's Day 6

16. Why must He be a true and sinless man?

Because the justice of God requires, that the same human nature which has sinned should make satisfaction for sin;¹ but no man, being himself a sinner, could satisfy for others.²

¹ Rom 5:12, 15; 1 Cor 15:21; Heb 2:14-16; ² Heb 7:26-27; 1 Pt 3:18

17. Why must He be at the same time true God?

That by the power of His Godhead¹ He might bear in His manhood the burden of God's wrath² and so obtain for and restore to us righteousness and life.³

¹ Isa 9:5; ² Deut 4:24; Nah 1:6; Ps 130:3; ³ Isa 53:5, 11; Jn 3:16; 2 Cor 5:21

18. But who now is that Mediator, who is at the same time true God and a true, sinless man?

Our Lord Jesus Christ,¹ who is freely given unto us for complete redemption and righteousness.²

¹ Mt 1:21-23; Lk 2:11; 1 Tim 2:5, 3:16; ² 1 Cor 1:30

19. From where do you know this?

From the Holy Gospel; which God Himself first revealed in Paradise;¹ afterwards proclaimed by the holy patriarchs² and prophets,³ and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the Law;⁴ and finally fulfilled by His well-beloved Son.⁵

¹ Gen 3:15; ² Gen 12:3, 22:18, 49:10; ³ Isa 53; Jer 23:5-6; Mic 7:18-20; Acts 10:43; Heb 1:1; ⁴ Lev 1:7; Jn 5:46; Heb 10:1-10; ⁵ Rom 10:4; Gal 4:4-5; Col 2:17

Lord's Day 7

20. Are all men then saved by Christ, as they have perished in Adam?

No; only such as by true faith are ingrafted into Him, and receive all His benefits.¹

¹ Mt 7:14; Jn 1:12, 3:16, 18, 36; Rom 11:16-21

21. What is true faith?

It is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word;¹ but also a hearty trust,² which the Holy Spirit works in me by the Gospel,³ that not only to others, but to me also,⁴ forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation,⁵ are freely given by God, merely of grace, for the sake of Christ's merits.

¹ Jn 17:3, 17; Heb 11:1-3; Jas 2:19; ² Rom 4:18-21, 5:1, 10:10; Heb 4:16; ³ Acts 16:14; Rom 1:16, 10:17; 1 Cor 1:21; ⁴ Gal 2:20; ⁵ Rom 1:17; Heb 10:10; ⁶ Rom 3:20-26; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-10

The Apostles' Creed

22. What is then necessary for a Christian to believe?

All that is promised us in the Gospel,¹ which the articles of our catholic, undoubted Christian faith teach us in sum.

¹ Mt 28:19; Jn 20:30-31

23. What are these articles?

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit; a holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.*

The Holy Trinity Lord's Day 8

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 Spirit, and our sanctification.

25. Since there is but one Divine Being,¹ why do you speak of three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Because God has so revealed Himself in His Word,² that these three distinct Persons are the one, true, eternal God.

¹ Deut 6:4; Isa 44:6, 45:5; 1 Cor 8:4, 6; ² Gen 1:2-3; Isa 61, 63:8-10; Mt 3:16-17, 28:18-19; Lk 4:18; Jn 14:26, 15:26; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 4:6; Tit 3:5-6

God the Father
Lord's Day 9

26. What do you believe when you say, *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,¹ who likewise upholds and governs the same by His eternal counsel and providence,² is for the sake of Christ His Son my God and my Father,³ in whom I so trust, as to have no doubt that He will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul;⁴ and further, that whatever evil He sends upon me in this vale of tears He will turn to my good;⁵ for He is able to do it, being Almighty God,⁶ and willing also, being a faithful Father.⁷

¹ Gen 1-2; Ex 20:11; Job 38-39; Ps 33:6; Isa 44:24; Acts 4:24, 14:15; ² Ps 104:27-30; Mt 6:30, 10:29; Eph 1:11; ³ Jn 1:12-13; Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:4-7; Eph 1:5; ⁴ Ps 55:22; Mt 6:25-26; Lk 12:22-31; ⁵ Rom 8:28; ⁶ Gen 18:14; Rom 8:31-39; ⁷ Mt 6:32-33, 7:9-11

Lord's Day 10

27. What do you understand by the providence of God?

The almighty everywhere present power of God,¹ whereby, as it were by His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth, with all creatures;² and so governs them, that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, all things, come not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.

¹ Jer 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-28; ² Heb 1:3; ³ Jer 5:24; Acts 14:15-17; Jn 9:3; Prov 22:2; ⁴ Prov 16:33; ⁵ Mt 10:29

28. What does it profit us to know that God has created, and by His providence still upholds all things?

That we may be patient in adversity;¹ thankful in prosperity;² and for what is future, have good confidence in our faithful God and Father, that no creature shall separate us from His love;³ since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move.⁴

¹ Job 1:21-22; Ps 39:10; Jas 1:3; ² Deut 8:10; 1 Thes 5:18; ³ Ps 55:22; Rom 5:3-5, 8:38-39; ⁴ Job 1:12, 2:6; Prov 21:1; Acts 17:24-28

God the Son
Lord's Day 11

29. Why is the Son of God called *Jesus*, that is, Savior?

Because He saves us from our sins,¹ and no salvation is to be either sought or found in any other.²

¹ Mt 1:21; Heb 7:25; ² Isa 43:11; Jn 15:4-5; Acts 4:11-12; 1 Tim 2:5

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

No; although they may make their boast of Him, yet in act they deny the only Savior Jesus.¹ For either Jesus is not a complete Savior, or they who by true faith receive this Savior, must have in Him all that is necessary to their salvation.²

¹ 1 Cor 1:12-13; Gal 5:4; ² Col 1:19-20, 2:10; 1 Jn 1:7

Lord's Day 12

31. Why is He called *Christ*, that is, Anointed?

Because He is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Spirit,¹ to be our chief Prophet and Teacher,² who fully reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption;³ our only High Priest,⁴ who by the one sacrifice of His body has redeemed us,⁵ and ever lives to make intercession for us with the Father;⁶ and our eternal King,⁷ who governs us by His Word and Spirit, and defends and preserves us in the redemption obtained for us.⁸

¹ Ps 45:7 (Heb 1:9); Isa 61:1 (Lk 3:21-22, 4:18); ² Deut 18:15 (Acts 3:22); ³ Jn 1:18, 15:15; ⁴ Ps 110:4 (Heb 7:17); ⁵ Heb 9:12, 10:11-14; ⁶ Rom 8:34; Heb 9:24; 1 Jn 2:1; ⁷ Zech (Mt 21:5); Lk 1:33; ⁸ Mt 28:18-20; Jn 10:28; Rev 12:10-11

32. But why are you called a Christian?

Because by faith I am a member of Christ,¹ and thus a partaker of His anointing;² in order that I also may confess His name;³ may present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him;⁴ and may with a free conscience fight against sin and the devil in this life,⁵ and hereafter, in eternity, reign with Him over all creatures.⁶

¹ 1 Cor 12:12-27; ² Joel 2:28 (Acts 2:17); 1 Jn 2:27; ³ Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9-10; Heb 13:15; ⁴ Rom 12:1; 1 Pt 2:5, 9; ⁵ Gal 5:16-17; Eph 6:11; 1 Tim 1:18-19; ⁶ Mt 25:34; 2 Tim 2:12

Lord's Day 13

33. Why is He called God's *only begotten Son*, since we also are the children of God?

Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God;¹ but we are the children of God by adoption through grace for His sake.²

¹ 1 Jn 1:1-3, 14, 18, 3:16; Rom 8:32; Heb 1; 1 Jn 4:9; ² Jn 1:12; Rom 8:14-17; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:5-6

34. Why do you call Him *our Lord*?

Because, not with silver and gold, but with His precious blood,¹ He has redeemed and purchased us, body and soul,² from sin and from all the power of the devil, to be His own.³

¹ 1 Pt 1:18-19; ² 1 Cor 6:20; 1 Tim 2:5-6; ³ Col 1:13-14; Heb 2:14-15

Lord's Day 14

35. What is the meaning of, *conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary?*

That the eternal Son of God, who is and continues true and eternal God,¹ took upon Him the very nature of man, of the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary,² by the operation of the Holy Spirit,³ so that He also might be the true seed of David,⁴ like unto His brethren in all things,⁵ sin excepted.⁶

¹ Jn 1:1, 10:30-36; Rom 1:3, 9:5; Col 1:15-17; 1 Jn 5:20; ² Mt 1:18-23; Jn 1:1-4; Gal 4:4; Heb 2:14; ³ Lk 1:35; ⁴ 2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 132:11; Mt 1:1; Lk 1:32; Rom 1:3; ⁵ Php 2:7; Heb 2:17; ⁶ Heb 4:15, 7:26-27

36. What benefit do you receive from the holy conception and birth of Christ?

That He is our Mediator,¹ and with His innocence and perfect holiness² covers, in the sight of God, my sin, wherein I was conceived.

¹ 1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb 9:13-15; ² Rom 8:3-4; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 4:4-5; 1 Pt 1:18-19

Lord's Day 15

37. What do you understand by the word, *suffered*?

That all the time He lived on earth, but especially at the end of His life, He bore, in body and soul, the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race;¹ in order that by His passion, as the only propitiatory sacrifice,² He might redeem our body and soul from everlasting damnation,³ and obtain for us the grace of God, righteousness, and eternal life.⁴

¹ Isa 53; 1 Tim 2:6; 1 Pt 2:2-4, 3:18; ² Rom 3:25; 1 Cor 5:7; Eph 5:2; Heb 10:14; 1 Jn 2:2, 4:10; ³ Rom 8:1-4; Gal 3:13; Col 1:13; Heb 9:12; 1 Pt 1:18-19; ⁴ Jn 3:16; Rom 3:24-26; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 9:15

38. Why did He suffer under Pontius Pilate, as judge?

That He, being innocent, might be condemned by the temporal judge,¹ and thereby deliver us from the severe judgment of God, to which we are exposed.²

¹ Lk 23:13-24; Jn 19:4, 12-16; ² Isa 53:4-5; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13

39. Is there anything more in His having been *crucified*, that if He had died some other death?

Yes; for thereby I am assured, that He took on Himself the curse which lay upon me; because the death of the cross was accursed of God.¹

¹ Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13

Lord's Day 16

40. Why was it necessary for Christ to suffer death?

Because, by reason of the justice and truth of God,¹ satisfaction for our sins could be made no otherwise than by the death of the Son of God.²

¹ Gen 2:17; ² Rom 8:3; Php 2:8; Heb 2:9, 14-15

41. Why was He *buried*?

To show thereby that He was really dead.¹

¹ Isa 53:9; Jn 19:38-42; Acts 13:29; 1 Cor 15:3-4

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

Our death is not a satisfaction for our sin, but only a dying to sins and entering into eternal life.¹

¹ Jn 5:24; Php 1:21-23; 1 Thes 5:9-10

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

That by His power our old man is with Him crucified, slain and buried;¹ that so the evil lusts of the flesh may no more reign in us,² but that we may offer ourselves unto Him a sacrifice of thanksgiving.³

¹ Rom 6:5-11; Col 2:11-12; ² Rom 6:12-14; ³ Rom 12:1; Eph 5:1-2

44. Why is it added, *He descended into Hell*?

That in my greatest temptations I may be assured that Christ, my Lord, by His inexpressible anguish, pains and terrors, which He suffered in His soul on the cross and before,¹ has redeemed me from the anguish and torment of hell.²

¹ Ps 18:5-6, 116:3; Mt 26:36-46; Heb 5:7-10; ² Isa 53

Lord's Day 17

45. What benefit do we receive from the resurrection of Christ?

First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, that He might make us partakers of the righteousness which by His death He has obtained for us.¹ Secondly, we also are now by His power raised up to a new life.² Thirdly, the resurrection of Christ is to us a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.³

¹ Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 15:16-20; 1 Pt 1:3-5; ² Rom 6:5-11; Eph 2:4-6; Col 3:1-4; ³ Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 15:12-23; Php 3:20-21

Lord's Day 18

46. How do you understand the words, *He ascended into heaven*?

That Christ, in sight of His disciples, was taken up from the earth into heaven,¹ and in our behalf there continues,² until He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.³

¹ Mk 16:19; Lk 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11; ² Rom 8:34; Heb 4:14, 7:23-25, 9:24; ³ Mt 24:30; Acts 1:11

47. Is not then Christ with us even unto the end of the world, as He has promised?¹

Christ is true man and true God: according to His human nature, He is now not on earth;² but according to His Godhead, majesty, grace, and Spirit, He is at no time absent from us.³

¹ Mt 28:20; ² Mt 26:11; Jn 16:28, 17:11; Acts 3:19-21; Heb 8:4; ³ Mt 28:18-20; Jn 14:16-19, 16:13

48. But are not, in this way, the two natures in Christ separated from one another, if the manhood be not wherever the Godhead is?

By no means; for since the Godhead is incomprehensible and everywhere present,¹ it must follow that it is indeed beyond the bounds of the manhood, which it has assumed, but is yet nonetheless in the same also, and remains personally united to it.²

¹ Jer 23:23-24; Acts 7:48-49; ² Jn 1:14, 3:13; Col 2:9

49. What benefit do we receive from Christ's ascension into heaven?

First, that He is our Advocate in the presence of His Father in heaven.¹ Secondly, that we have our flesh in heaven, as a sure pledge, that He, as the Head, will also take us, His members, up to Himself.² Thirdly, that He sends us His Spirit, as a down payment,³ by whose power *we seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God, and not on things on the earth.*⁴

¹ Rom 8:34; 1 Jn 2:1; ² Jn 14:2, 17:24; Eph 2:4-6; ³ Jn 14:16; Acts 2:33; 2 Cor 1:21-22, 5:5; ⁴ Col 3:1-4

Lord's Day 19

50. Why is it added, *and sits at the right hand of God*?

Because Christ ascended into heaven for this end, that He might there appear as Head of His Church,¹ by whom the Father governs all things.²

¹ Eph 1:20-23; Col 1:18; ² Mt 28:18; Jn 5:22-23

51. What benefit do we receive from this glory of our Head, Christ?

First, that by His Holy Spirit He sheds forth heavenly gifts in us, His members;¹ then, that by His power He defends and preserves us against all enemies.²

¹ Acts 2:33; Eph 4:7-12; ² Ps 2:9, 110:1-2; Jn 10:27-30; Rev 19:11-16

52. What comfort is it to you, that Christ *shall come again to judge the living and the dead*?

That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head, I look for the selfsame One, who has before offered Himself for me to the judgment of God and removed from me all the curse,¹ to come again as Judge from heaven; who shall cast all His and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall take me, with all His chosen ones, to Himself into heavenly joy and glory.²

¹ Lk 21:28; Rom 8:22-25; Php 3:20-21; Tit 2:13-14; ² Mt 25:31-46; 1 Thes 4:16-17; 2 Thes 1:6-10

God the Holy Spirit **Lord's Day 20**

53. What do you believe concerning the *Holy Spirit*?

First, that He is co-eternal God with the Father and the Son.¹ Secondly, that He is also given unto me;² makes me by a true faith partaker of Christ and all His benefits;³ comforts me;⁴ and shall abide with me forever.⁵

¹ Gen 1:1-2; Mt 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor 3:16; ² 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 1:21-22; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:13; ³ Gal 3:14; 1 Pt 1:2; ⁴ Jn 15:26; Acts 9:31; ⁵ Jn 14:16-17; 1 Pt 4:14

Lord's Day 21

54. What do you believe concerning the *holy catholic Church*?

That, out of the whole human race,¹ from the beginning to the end of the world,² the Son of God,³ by His Spirit and Word,⁴ gathers, defends and preserves for Himself⁵ unto everlasting life,⁶ a chosen communion, in the unity of the true faith;⁷ and that I am,⁸ and forever shall remain, a living member of the same.⁹

¹ Gen 26:4; Rev 5:9; ² Isa 59:21; 1 Cor 11:26; ³ Jn 10:11; Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11-13; Col 1:18; ⁴ Rom 1:16, 10:14-17; Eph 5:26; ⁵ Ps 129:1-5; Mt 16:18; Jn 10:28-30; ⁶ Rom 8:29; Eph 1:3-14; ⁷ Acts 2:42-47; Eph 4:1-6; ⁸ 1 Jn 3:14, 19-21; ⁹ Ps 23:6; Jn 10:27-28; 1 Cor 1:4-9; 1 Pt 1:3-5

55. What do you understand by the *communion of saints*?

First, that believers, all and every one, as members of Christ have part in Him and in all His treasures and gifts;¹ secondly, that each one must feel himself bound to use his gifts, readily and cheerfully, for the advantage and welfare of other members.²

¹ Rom 8:32; 1 Cor 6:17, 12:4-7, 12-13; 1 Jn 1:3; ² Rom 12:4-8; 1 Cor 12:20-27, 13:1-7; Php 2:4-8

56. What do you believe concerning the *forgiveness of sins*?

That God, for the sake of Christ's satisfaction, will no more remember my sins,¹ neither the sinful nature with which I have to struggle all my life long;² but graciously imputes to me the righteousness of Christ, that I may nevermore come into condemnation.³

¹ Ps 103:3-4, 10, 12; Mic 7:18-19; 2 Cor 5:18-21; 1 Jn 1:7, 2:2; ² Rom 7:21-25; ³ Jn 3:17-18, 5:24; Rom 8:1-2

Lord's Day 22

57. What comfort does the *resurrection of the body* afford you?

That not only my soul, after this life, shall be immediately taken up to Christ its Head;¹ but also that this my body, raised by the power of Christ, shall again be united with my soul, and made like unto the glorious body of Christ.²

¹ Lk 16:22, 23:43; Php 1:21-23; ² Job 19:25-26; 1 Cor 15:20, 42-46, 54; Php 3:21; 1 Jn 3:2

58. What comfort do you have from the article of *the life everlasting*?

That, inasmuch as I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy,¹ I shall after this life possess complete bliss, such as eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man; therein to praise God forever.²

¹ Jn 17:3; Rom 14:17; 2 Cor 5:2-3; ² Jn 17:24; 1 Cor 2:9

Justification
Lord's Day 23

59. But how does it help you now, that you believe all this?

That I am righteous in Christ before God, and an heir of eternal life.¹

¹ Hab 2:4; Jn 3:36; Rom 1:17, 5:1-2

60. How are you righteous before God?

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.¹ That is, although my conscience accuse me, that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have never kept any of them,² and that I am still prone always to all evil,³ yet God, without any merit of mine,⁴ of mere grace,⁵ grants and imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ,⁶ as if I had never committed nor had any sin, and had myself accomplished all the obedience which Christ has fulfilled for me,⁷ if only I accept such benefit with a believing heart.⁸

¹ Rom 3:21-28; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9; Php 3:8-11; ² Rom 3:9-10; ³ Rom 7:23; ⁴ Deut 9:6; Ezek 36:22; Tit 3:4-5; ⁵ Rom 3:24; Eph 2:8; ⁶ Rom 4:3-5; 2 Cor 5:17-19; 1 Jn 2:1-2; ⁷ Rom 4:24-25; 2 Cor 5:21; ⁸ Jn 3:18; Acts 16:30-31; Rom 3:22

61. Why do you say, that you are righteous only by faith?

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,¹ and I can receive the same and make it my own in no other way than by faith only.²

¹ 1 Cor 1:30-31, 2:2; ² Rom 10:10; 1 Jn 5:10-12

Lord's Day 24

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

Because the righteousness which can stand before the judgment seat of God must be perfect throughout and wholly conformable to the divine Law;¹ whereas even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.²

¹ Deut 27:26; Gal 3:10; ² Isa 64:6

63. How is it that our good works merit nothing, while yet it is God's will to reward them in this life and in that which is to come?

The reward comes not of merit,¹ but of grace.²

¹ Mt 5:12; Heb 11:6; ² Lk 17:10; 2 Tim 4:7-8

64. But does not this doctrine make men careless and profane?

No; for it is impossible that those who are implanted into Christ by true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.¹

¹ Mt 7:18; Lk 6:43-45; Jn 15:5

The Sacraments
Lord's Day 25

65. Since then we are made partakers of Christ and all His benefits by faith only, from where comes this faith?

The Holy Spirit works it in our hearts¹ by the preaching of the Gospel,² and confirms it by the use of the Holy Sacraments.³

¹ Jn 3:5; ¹ Cor 2:10-14; Eph 2:8; Php 1:29; ² Rom 10:17; ¹ Pt 1:23-25; ³ Mt 28:19-20; ¹ Cor 10:16

66. What are the Sacraments?

The sacraments are visible, holy signs and seals, appointed by God for this end, that by the use thereof He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the Gospel;¹ namely, that He grants us out of free grace the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, for the sake of the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the cross.²

¹ Gen 17:11; Deut 30:6; Rom 4:11; ² Mt 26:27-28; Acts 2:38; Heb 10:10

67. Are both these then, the Word and the Sacraments, designed to direct our faith to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, as the only ground of our salvation?

Yes truly; for the Holy Spirit teaches us in the Gospel, and by the Holy Sacraments assures us, that our whole salvation stands in the one sacrifice of Christ made for us on the cross.¹

¹ Rom 6:3; ¹ Cor 11:26; Gal 3:27

68. How many Sacraments has Christ appointed in the New Testament?

Two: holy baptism and the holy supper.¹

¹ Mt 28:19-20; ¹ Cor 11:23-26

Baptism
Lord's Day 26

69. How is it signified and sealed unto you in holy baptism that you have a part in the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross?

Thus: that Christ has appointed this outward washing with water,¹ and has joined therewith this promise, that I am washed with His blood and Spirit from the pollution of my soul, that is, from all my sins, as certainly as I am washed outwardly with water, whereby commonly the filthiness of the body is taken away.²

¹ Mt 28:19; ² Mt 3:11; Mk 16:16; Jn 1:33; Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; ¹ Pt 3:21

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

It is to have the forgiveness of sins from God, through grace, for the sake of Christ's blood, which He shed for us in His sacrifice on the cross;¹ and also, to be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and sanctified to be members of Christ, that so we may more and more die unto sin, and lead holy and unblamable lives.²

¹ Ezek 36:25; Zech 13:1; Eph 1:7; Heb 12:24; 1 Pt 1:2; Rev 1:5, 7:14; ² Jn 3:5-8; Rom 6:4; 1 Cor 6:11; Col 2:11-12

71. Where has Christ promised that we are as certainly washed with His blood and Spirit as with the water of baptism?

In the institution of baptism, which runs thus: *Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*¹ *He that believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be damned.*² This promise is also repeated where the Scripture calls baptism *the washing of regeneration and the washing away of sins.*³

¹ Mt 28:19; ² Mk 16:16; ³ Tit 3:5; Acts 22:16

Lord's Day 27

72. Is then the outward washing with water itself *the washing away of sins*?

No; for only the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sin.¹

¹ Mt 3:11; 1 Pt 3:21; 1 Jn 1:7

73. Why, then, does the Holy Spirit call baptism *the washing of regeneration and the washing away of sins*?

God speaks thus not without great cause; namely, not only to teach us thereby that just as the filthiness of the body is taken away by water, so our sins also are taken away by the blood and Spirit of Christ;¹ but much more, that by this divine pledge and token He may assure us, that we are as really washed from our sins spiritually, as our bodies are washed with water.²

¹ 1 Cor 6:11; Rev 1:5, 7:14; ² Mk 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27

74. Are infants also to be baptized?

Yes. For since they, as well as their parents, belong to the covenant and people of God,¹ and both redemption from sin and the Holy Spirit, who works faith, are through the blood of Christ promised to them no less than to their parents;² they are also by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, to be ingrafted into the Christian Church, and distinguished from the children of unbelievers,³ as was done in the Old Covenant by circumcision,⁴ in place of which in the New Covenant baptism is appointed.⁵

¹ Gen 17:7; Mt 19:14; ² Ps 22:10; Isa 44:1-3; Acts 2:38-39, 16:31; ³ Acts 10:47; 1 Cor 7:14; ⁴ Gen 17:9-14; ⁵ Col 2:11-13

The Lord's Supper Lord's Day 28

75. How is it signified and sealed unto you in the holy supper that you partake of the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross and all His benefits?

Thus: that Christ has commanded me and all believers to eat of this broken bread, and to drink of this cup, and has joined therewith these promises:¹ 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, with His crucified body and shed blood, He Himself feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life as certainly as I receive from the hand of the minister, and taste with my mouth, the bread and cup of the Lord, which are given me as certain tokens of the body and blood of Christ.

¹ Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-25

76. What is it to eat the crucified body and drink the shed blood of Christ?

It is not only to embrace with a believing heart all the suffering and death of Christ, and thereby to obtain the forgiveness of sins and eternal life;¹ but moreover also, to be so united more and more to His sacred body by the Holy Spirit, who dwells both in Christ and in us,² that although He is in heaven,³ and we on the earth, we are nevertheless flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones,⁴ and live and are governed forever by one Spirit, as members of the same body are by one soul.⁵

¹ Jn 6:35, 40, 50-54; ² Jn 6:55-56; 1 Cor 12:13; ³ Acts 1:9-11, 3:21; 1 Cor 11:26; Col 3:1; ⁴ 1 Cor 6:15, 17; Eph 5:29-30; 1 Jn 4:13; ⁵ Jn 6:56-58, 15:1-6; Eph 4:15-16; 1 Jn 3:24

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

In the institution of the supper, which runs thus: *The Lord Jesus Christ, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the New Covenant in My blood; this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*¹ And this promise is repeated also by St. 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 all partake of that one bread.*²

¹ 1 Cor 11:23-26; ² 1 Cor 10:16-17

Lord's Day 29

78. Do then the bread and wine become the real body and blood of Christ? No; but as the water, in baptism, is not changed into the blood of Christ, nor becomes the washing away of sins itself, being only the divine token and assurance thereof,¹ so also, in the Lord's Supper, the sacred bread does not become the body of Christ itself,² though agreeably to the nature and usage of sacraments³ it is called the body of Christ.⁴

¹ Eph 5:26; Tit 3:5; ² Mt 26:26-29; ³ Gen 17:10-11; Ex 12:11, 13; 1 Cor 10:3-4; 1 Pt 3:21; ⁴ 1 Cor 10:16-17, 11:26-28

79. Why then does Christ call the bread His *body*, and the cup His *blood*, or the *New Covenant in His blood*; and St. Paul, the *communion of the body and blood of Christ*?

Christ speaks thus not without great cause; namely, not only to teach us thereby, that, like as bread and wine sustain this temporal life, so also His crucified body and shed blood are the true meat and drink of our souls unto life eternal;¹ but much more, by this visible sign and pledge to assure us, that we are as really partakers of His true body and blood, through the working of the Holy Spirit, as we receive by the mouth of the body these holy tokens in remembrance of Him;² and that all His sufferings and obedience are as certainly our own, as if we had ourselves suffered and done all in our own person.³

¹ Jn 6:51, 55; ² 1 Cor 10:16-17, 11:26; ³ Rom 6:5-11

Lord's Day 30

80. What difference is there between the Lord's Supper and the Popish Mass?

The Lord's Supper testifies to us, that we have full forgiveness of all our sins by the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which He Himself has once accomplished on the cross;¹ and that by the Holy Spirit we are ingrafted into Christ,² who with His true body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father,³ and is to be there worshiped.⁴ But the Mass teaches, that the living and the dead have not forgiveness of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is still daily offered for them by the priests; and that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and is therefore to be worshiped in them. And thus the Mass at bottom is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and passion of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry.

¹ Mt 26:28; Jn 19:30; Heb 7:27, 9:12, 10:10-18; ² 1 Cor 6:17, 10:16-17; ³ Jn 20:17; Acts 7:55-56; Heb 1:3, 8:1; ⁴ Jn 4:21-24; Php 3:20; Col 3:1; 1 Thes 1:10

81. Who are to come unto the table of the Lord?

Those who are displeased with themselves for their sins, yet trust that these are forgiven them, and that their remaining infirmity is covered by the passion and death of Christ; who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and amend their life. But the impenitent and hypocrites eat and drink judgment to themselves.¹

¹ 1 Cor 10:19-22, 11:26-32

82. Are they then also to be admitted to this Supper, who show themselves to be, by their confession and life, unbelieving and ungodly?

No; for by this the covenant of God is profaned, and His wrath provoked against the whole congregation;¹ wherefore the Christian Church is bound, according to the order of Christ and His apostles, by the office of the keys to exclude such persons, until they amend their life.

¹ Ps 50:16; Isa 1:11-17; 1 Cor 11:17-34

Preaching & Discipline

Lord's Day 31

83. What is the office of the keys?

The preaching of the Holy Gospel and Church discipline; by which two things the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and shut against unbelievers.¹

¹ Mt 16:19; Jn 20:21-23

84. How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the Holy Gospel?

In this way: that according to the command of Christ, it is proclaimed and openly witnessed to believers, one and all, that as often as they accept with true faith the promise of the Gospel, all their sins are really forgiven them of God for the sake of Christ's merits; and on the contrary, to all unbelievers and hypocrites, that the wrath of God and eternal condemnation abide on them, so long as they are not converted; according to which witness of the Gospel, will be the judgment of God both in this life and in that which is to come.¹

¹ Mt 16:19; Jn 3:31-36, 20:21-23

85. How is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened by Church discipline?

In this way: that according to the command of Christ, if any under the Christian name show themselves unsound either in doctrine or life, and after repeated brotherly admonition refuse to turn from their errors of evil ways, they are complained of to the Church or to its proper officers, and, if they neglect to hear them also, are by them excluded from the Holy Sacraments and the Christian communion, and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ;¹ and if they promise and show real amendment, they are again received as members of Christ and His Church.²

¹ Mt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:3-5, 11-13; 2 Thes 3:14-15; ² Lk 15:20-24; 2 Cor 2:6-11

Third Part: Gratitude Sanctification Lord's Day 32

86. Since then we are redeemed from our misery by grace through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we do good works?

Because Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, renews us also by His Holy Spirit after His own image, that with our whole life we may show ourselves thankful to God for His blessings,¹ and that He may be glorified through us;² then also, that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by the fruits thereof,³ and by our godly walk may win others also to Christ.⁴

¹ Rom 6:13, 12:1-2; 1 Pt 2:5-10; ² Mt 5:16; 1 Cor 6:19-20; ³ Mt 7:17-18; Gal 5:22-24; 2 Pt 1:10-11; ⁴ Mt 5:14-16; Rom 14:17-19; 1 Pt 2:12, 3:1-2

87. Can they then be saved who do not turn to God from their unthankful, impenitent life?

By no means; for, as the Scripture says, *no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, covetous man, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or any such like, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*¹

¹ 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5-6; 1 Jn 3:14

Lord's Day 33

88. In how many things does true repentance or conversion consist?
In two things: the dying of the old man, and the quickening of the new.¹

¹ Rom 6:1-11; 1 Cor 5:7; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:22-24; Co 3:5-10

89. What is the dying of the old man?

Heartfelt sorrow for sin; causing us to hate and turn from it always more and more.¹

¹ Ps 51:3-4, 17; Joel 2:12-13; Rom 8:12-13; 2 Cor 7:10

90. What is the quickening of the new man?

Heartfelt joy in God through Christ;¹ causing us to take delight in living according to the will of God in all good works.²

¹ Ps 51:8, 12; Isa 57:15; Rom 5:1, 14:17; ² Rom 6:10-11; Gal 2:20

91. But what are good works?

Those only which are done from true faith,¹ according to the Law of God,² for His glory;³ and not such as rest on our own opinion, or the commandments of men.⁴

¹ 1 Jn 15:5; Rom 14:23; Heb 11:6; ² Lev 18:4; 1 Sam 15:22; Eph 2:10; ³ 1 Cor 10:31; ⁴ Deut 12:32; Ezek 20:18-19; Mt 15:7-9

The 10 Commandments

Lord's Day 34

92. What is the law of God?

And God spoke all these words, saying:

First Commandment

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.

Second Commandment

You shall not make for yourself a carved image, any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

Third Commandment

You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

Fourth Commandment

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Fifth Commandment

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

Sixth Commandment

You shall not murder.

Seventh Commandment

You shall not commit adultery.

Eighth Commandment

You shall not steal.

Ninth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Tenth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

¹ Ex 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21

93. How are these commandments divided?

Into two tables: the first of which teaches, in four commandments, what duties we owe to God; the second, in six, what duties we owe to our neighbor.¹

¹ Mt 22:37-40

94. What does God require in the first commandment?

That, on peril of my soul's salvation, I avoid and flee all idolatry,¹ sorcery, enchantments,² invocation of saints or of other creatures;³ and that I rightly acknowledge the only true God,⁴ trust in Him alone,⁵ with all humility⁶ and patience⁷ expect all good from Him only,⁸ and love,⁹ fear¹⁰ and honor Him¹¹ with my whole heart; so as rather to renounce all creatures than do the least thing against His will.¹²

¹ 1 Cor 6:9-10, 10:5-14; 1 Jn 5:21; ² Lev 19:31; Deut 18:9-12; ³ Mt 4:10; Rev 19:10, 22:8-9; ⁴ Jn 17:3; ⁵ Jer 17:5, 7; ⁶ 1 Pt 5:5-6; ⁷ Rom 5:3-4; 1 Cor 10:10; Php 2:14; Col 1:11; Heb 10:36; ⁸ Ps 104:27-28; Isa 45:7; Jas 1:17; ⁹ Deut 6:5 (Mt 22:37); ¹⁰ Deut 6:2; Ps 111:10; Prov 1:7, 9:10; Mt 10:28; 1 Pt 1:17; ¹¹ Deut 6:13 (Mt 4:10), 10:20; ¹² Mt 5:29-30, 10:37-39; Acts 5:29

95. What is idolatry?

It is instead of the one true God who has revealed Himself in His Word, or along with the same, to conceive or have something else on which to place our trust¹

¹ 1 Chron 16:26; Gal 4:8-9; Eph 5:5; Php 3:19

Lord's Day 35

96. What does God require in the second commandment?

That we in no wise make any image of God,¹ nor worship Him in any other way than He has commanded in His Word.²

¹ Deut 4:15-19; Isa 40:18-25; Acts 17:29; Rom 1:23; ² Lev 10:1-7; Dt 12:30; 1 Sam 15:22-23; Mt 15:9; Jn 4:23-24

97. Must we then not make any image at all?

God may not and cannot be imaged in any way; as for creatures, though they may indeed be imaged, yet God forbids the making or keeping any likeness of them, either to worship them, or by them to serve Himself.¹

¹ Ex 34:13-14, 17; Num 33:52; 2 Kgs 18:4-5; Isa 40:25

98. But may not pictures be tolerated in churches as books for the laity?

No; for we should not be wiser than God, who will not have His people taught by dumb idols,¹ but by the lively preaching of His Word.²

¹ Jer 10:8; Hab 2:18-20; ² Rom 10:14-15, 17; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pt 1:19

Lord's Day 36

99. What is required in the third commandment?

That we must not by cursing,¹ or by false swearing,² nor yet by unnecessary oaths,³ profane or abuse the name of God; nor even by our silence⁴ and connivance be partakers of these horrible sins in others; and in sum, that we use the holy name of God no otherwise than with fear and reverence,⁵ so that He may be rightly confessed⁶ and worshiped by us,⁷ and be glorified in all our words and works.⁸

¹ Lev 24:10-17, ² Lev 19:12; ³ Mt 5:37; Jas 5:12; ⁴ Lev 5:1; Prov 29:24; ⁵ Ps 99:1-5; Is 45:23; Jer 4:2; ⁶ Mt 10:32-33; Rom 10:9-10; ⁷ Ps 50:14-15; 1 Tim 2:8; ⁸ Rom 2:24; Col 3:17; 1 Tim 6:1

100. Is then the profaning of God's name by swearing and cursing so grievous a sin that His wrath is kindled against those also who seek not, as much as in them lies, to hinder and forbid the same?

Yes truly;¹ for no sin is greater, or more provoking to God than the profaning of His name. Wherefore He even commanded it to be punished with death.²

¹ Lev 5:1; ² Lev 24:16

Lord's Day 37

101. But may we not swear by the name of God in a religious manner?

Yes; when the magistrate requires it, or it may be needful otherwise to maintain and promote fidelity and truth, to the glory of God and our neighbor's good. For such swearing is grounded in God's Word,¹ and therefore was rightly used by the saints in the Old and New Testaments.²

¹ Deut 6:13, 10:20; Jer 4:1-2; Heb 6:16; ² Gen 21:24, 31:53; Josh 9:15; 1 Sam 24:22; 1 Kgs 1:29-30; Rom 1:9; 2 Cor 1:23

102. May we swear by the saints or any other creature?

No; for a lawful oath is a calling upon God, as the only searcher of hearts, to bear witness to the truth, and to punish me if I swear falsely;¹ which honor is due no creature.²

¹ Rom 9:1; 2 Cor 1:23; ² Mt 5:34-37, 23:16-22; Jas 5:12

Lord's Day 38

103. What does God require in the fourth commandment?

In the first place, that the ministry of the Gospel and schools be maintained;¹ and that I, especially on the day of rest, diligently attend Church² to learn the Word of God,³ to use the Holy Sacraments,⁴ to call publicly upon the Lord,⁵ and to give Christian alms.⁶ In the second place, that all the days of my life I rest from my evil works, allow the Lord to work in me by His Spirit, and thus begin in this life the everlasting Sabbath.⁷

¹ Deut 6:4-9, 20-25; 1 Cor 9:13-14; 2 Tim 2:2; 3:13-17; Tit 1:5; ² Deut 12:5-12; Ps 40:9-10, 68:26; Acts 2:42-47; Heb 10:23-25; ³ Rom 10:14-17; 1 Cor 14:26-33; 1 Tim 4:13; ⁴ 1 Cor 11:23-24; ⁵ Col 3:16; 1 Tim 2:1; ⁶ Ps 50:14; 1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8-9; ⁷ Isa 66:23; Heb 4:9-11

Lord's Day 39

104. What does God require in the fifth commandment?

That I show all honor, love and faithfulness to my father and mother, and to all in authority over me; submit myself with due obedience to all their good instruction and correction;¹ and also bear patiently with their infirmities:² since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.³

¹ Ex 21:17; Prov 1:8, 4:1; Rom 13:1-2; Eph 5:21-22; 6:1-9; Col 3:18-4:1; ² Prov 20:20, 23:22; 1 Pt 2:18; ³ Mt 22:21, Rom 13:1-8; Eph 6:1-9; Col 3:18-21

Lord's Day 40

105. What does God require in the sixth commandment?

That I neither in thought, nor in word or look, much less in deed, revile, hate, insult or kill my neighbor, whether by myself or by another;¹ but lay aside all desire of revenge;² moreover, that I harm not myself,³ nor willfully run into any danger. Wherefore also, to restrain murder, the magistrate is armed with the sword.⁴

¹ Gen 9:6; Lev 19:17-18; Mt 5:21-22; 26:52; ² Prov 25:21-22; Mt 18:35; Rom 12:19; Eph 4:26; ³ Mt 4:7; 26:52; Rom 13:11-14; ⁴ Gen 9:6; Ex 21:14; Rom 13:4

106. But this commandment speaks only of killing?

In forbidding this, however, God means to teach us that He abhors the root of murder, namely, envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge;¹ and that all these are in His sight hidden murder.²

¹ Prov 14:30; Rom 1:29; 12:19; Gal 5:19-21; Jas 1:20; 1 Jn 2:9-11; ² 1 Jn 3:15

107. Is it then enough that we do not kill our neighbor in any such way?

No; for in condemning envy, hatred, and anger, God requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves,¹ to show patience, peace, meekness, mercy and kindness towards him,² and, so far as we have power, to prevent his hurt; also to do good even unto our enemies.³

¹ Mt 7:12; 22:39; Rom 12:10; ² Mt 5:5; Lk 6:36; Rom 12:10, 18; Gal 6:1-2; Eph 4:2; Col 3:12; 1 Pt 3:8; ³ Ex 23:4-5; Mt 5:44-45; Rom 12:20

Lord's Day 41

108. What does the seventh commandment teach us?

That all unchastity is accursed of God;¹ and that we should therefore loathe it from the heart,² and live chastely and modestly whether in holy wedlock or single life.³

¹ Lev 18:30; Eph 5:3-5; ² Jude 22-23; ³ 1 Cor 7:1-9; 1 Thes 4:3-8; Heb 13:4

109. Does God in this commandment forbid nothing more than adultery and such like gross sins?

Since our body and soul are both temples of the Holy Spirit, it is His will that we keep both pure and holy; for which reason He forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires,¹ and whatever may entice thereto.²

¹ Mt 5:27-29; 1 Cor 6:18-20; Eph 5:3-4; ² 1 Cor 15:33; Eph 5:18

Lord's Day 42

110. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?

Not only such theft and robbery¹ as are punished by the magistrate; but God views as theft all wicked tricks and devices, whereby we seek to draw to ourselves our neighbor's goods, whether by force or with show of right,² such as unjust weights, lengths, measures, wares, coins, usury,³ or any means forbidden of God; so moreover all covetousness,⁴ and all useless waste of His gifts.⁵

¹ Ex 22:1; 1 Cor 5:9-10; 6:9-10; ² Mic 6:9-11; Lk 3:14; Jas 5:1-62; ³ Deut 25:13-16; Ps 15:5; Prov 11:1; 12:22; Ezek 45:9-12; Lk 6:35; ⁴ Lk 12:15; Eph 5:5; ⁵ Prov 21:20; 23:20-21; Lk 16:10-13

111. But what does God require of you in this commandment?

That I further my neighbor's good, where I can and may; deal with him as I would have others deal with me; and labor faithfully, that I may be able to help the poor in their need.¹

¹ Isa 58:5-10; Mt 7:12; Gal 6:9-10; Eph 4:28

Lord's Day 43

112. What is required in the ninth commandment?

That I bear false witness against no one; wrest no one's words; be no backbiter, or slanderer; join in condemning no one unheard and rashly;¹ but that I avoid, on pain of God's heavy wrath,² all lying and deceit, as being the proper works of the devil; in matters of judgment and justice and in all other affairs love, honestly speak and confess the truth;³ and, so far as I can, defend and promote my neighbor's good name.⁴

¹ Ps 15; Prov 19:5, 9, 21:28; Mt 7:1; Lk 6:37; Rom 1:28-32; ² Lev 19:11-12; Prov 12:22, 13:5; Jn 8:44; Rev 21:8; ³ 1 Cor 13:6; Eph 4:25; ⁴ 1 Pt 3:8-9, 4:8

Lord's Day 44

113. What is required in the tenth commandment?

That not even the least inclination or thought against any of God's commandments ever enter in our heart; but that, with our whole heart, we continually hate all sin, and take pleasure in all righteousness.¹

¹ Ps 19:7-14, 139:23-24; Rom 7:7-8

114. Can those who are converted to God keep these commandments perfectly?

No; but even the holiest men, while in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience;¹ yet so, that with earnest purpose they begin to live, not only according to some, but according to all the commandments of God.²

¹ Ecc 7:20; Rom 7:14-15; 1 Cor 13:9; 1 Jn 1:8; ² Ps 1:1-2; Rom 7:22-25; Php 3:12-16

115. Why then does God so strictly enjoin upon us the Ten Commandments, since in this life no one can keep them?

First, that all our life long, we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and so the more earnestly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ;¹ secondly, that we may continually strive, and beg from God the grace of the Holy Spirit, so as to become more and more changed into the image of God, till we attain finally to full perfection after this life.²

¹ Ps 32:5; Rom 3:19-26, 7:7, 24-25; 1 Jn 1:9; ² 1 Cor 9:24; Php 3:12-14; 1 Jn 3:1-3

The Lord's Prayer **Lord's Day 45**

116. Why is prayer necessary for Christians?

Because it is the chief part of the thankfulness which God requires of us;¹ and because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit only to such, as earnestly and without ceasing, beg them from Him, and render thanks unto Him for them.²

¹ Ps 50:14-15, 116:12-19; 1 Thes 5:16-18; ² Mt 7:7-8; Lk 11:9-13

117. What belongs to such prayer, as God is pleased with and will hear?

First, that from the heart we call only upon the one true God, who has revealed Himself to us in His word, for all that He has commanded us to ask of Him;¹ secondly, that we thoroughly know our need and misery, so as to humble ourselves before the face of His Divine Majesty;² thirdly, that we be firmly assured, that notwithstanding our unworthiness He will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly hear our prayer, as He has promised us in His word.³

¹ Ps 145:18-20; Jn 4:22-24; Rom 8:26-27; Jas 1:5; 1 Jn 5:14-15; Rev 19:10; ² 2 Chron 7:14, 20:12; Ps 2:11, 34:18, 62:8; Isa 66:2; Rev 4; ³ Dan 9:17-19; Mt 7:8; Jn 14:13-14, 16:23; Rom 10:13; Jas 1:6

118. What has God commanded us to ask of Him?

All things necessary for soul and body,¹ which Christ our Lord has comprised in the prayer taught us by Himself.¹

¹ Mt 6:33; Jas 1:17

119. What is the Lord's Prayer?

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*¹

¹ Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4

Lord's Day 46

120. Why has Christ commanded us to address God thus: *Our Father*?

To awaken in us, at the very beginning of our prayer, that filial reverence and trust toward God, which are to be the ground of our prayer; namely, that God has become our Father through Christ, and will much less deny us what we ask of Him in faith, than our parents refuse us earthly things.¹

¹ Mt 7:9-11; Lk 11:11-13

121. Why is it added, *Who art in heaven*?

That we may have no earthly thought of the heavenly majesty of God;¹ and may expect from His almighty power all things necessary for body and soul.²

¹ Jer 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-25; ² Mt 6:25-34; Rom 8:31-32

Lord's Day 47

122. What is the first petition?

Hallowed be Thy name. That is: enable us rightly to know You,¹ and to hallow, magnify and praise You in all Your works, in which shine forth Your power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth;² and likewise so to order our whole life, in thought, word and work, that Your name may not be blasphemed, but honored and praised on our account.³

¹ Jer 9:23-24, 31:33-34; Mt 16:17; Jn 17:3; ² Ex 34:5-8; Ps 145; Jer 32:16-20; Lk 1:46-55, 68-75; Rom 11:33-36; ³ Ps 115:1; Mt 5:16

Lord's Day 48

123. What is the second petition?

Thy kingdom come. That is: so govern us by Your Word and Spirit, that we submit ourselves unto You always more and more;¹ preserve and increase Your Church;² destroy the works of the devil, every power that exalts itself against You, and all wicked devices formed against Your holy Word,³ until the full coming of Your kingdom, wherein You shall be all in all.⁴

¹ Ps 119:5, 105; 143:10; Mt 6:33; ² Ps 51:18, 122:6-9; Mt 16:18; Acts 2:42-47; ³ Rom 16:20; 1 Jn 3:8; ⁴ Rom 8:22-23; 1 Cor 15:28; Rev 22:17, 20

Lord's Day 49

124. What is the third petition?

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. That is: grant that we and all men may renounce our own will, and yield ourselves without murmuring, to Your will which alone is good;¹ that so every one may fulfill his office and calling,² as willingly and truly as the angels do in heaven.³

¹ Mt 7:21, 16:24-26; Lk 22:42; Rom 12:1-2; Tit 2:11-12; ² 1 Cor 7:17-24; Eph 6:5-9; ³ Ps 103:20-21

Lord's Day 50

125. What is the fourth petition?

Give us this day our daily bread. That is: be pleased to provide for all our bodily need,¹ that we may thereby know that You are the only fountain of all good,² and that without Your blessing, neither our care and labor, nor Your gifts can profit us;³ and may therefore withdraw our trust from all creatures, and place it alone in You.⁴

¹ Ps 104:27-30, 145:15-16; Mt 6:25-34; ² Acts 14:17, 17:25; Jas 1:17; ³ Deut 8:3; Ps 37:16, 127:1-2; 1 Cor 15:58; ⁴ Ps 55:22, 62; 146; Jer 17:5-8, Heb 13:5-6

Lord's Day 51

126. What 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, miserable sinners, our manifold transgressions, nor the evil which still cleaves to us,¹ as we find this witness of Your grace in us, that it is our full purpose heartily to forgive our neighbor.²

¹ Ps 51:1-7, 143:2; Rom 8:1; 1 Jn 2:1-2; ² Mt 6:14-15, 18:21-35

Lord's Day 52

127. What 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,¹ while our deadly enemies, the devil,² the world,³ and our own flesh,⁴ assail us without ceasing; be pleased to preserve and strengthen us by the power of your Holy Spirit, that we may make firm stand against them, and not sink in this spiritual war,⁵ until we come off at last with complete victory.⁶

¹ Ps 103:14-16; Jn 15:1-5; ² 2 Cor 11:14; Eph 6:10-13; 1 Pt 5:8; ³ Jn 15:18-21; ⁴ Rom 7:23; Gal 5:17; ⁵ Mt 10:19-20, 26:41; Mk 13:33; Rom 5:3-5; ⁶ 1 Cor 10:13; 1 Thes 3:13, 5:23

128. How do you close this prayer?

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. That is: all this we ask of You, because as our King, having power over all things, You are both willing and able to give us all good;¹ and that thereby not we, but Your holy Name may be glorified forever.²

¹ Rom 10:11-13; 2 Pt 2:9; ² Ps 115:1; Jer 33:8-9; Jn 14:13

129. What is the meaning of the word *Amen*?

Amen means: so shall it truly and surely be. For my prayer is much more certainly heard of God, than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of Him.¹

¹ Isa 65:24; 2 Cor 1:20; 2 Tim 2:13

The Belgic Confession (1561)

Our Confession of Faith is called the Belgic Confession because it originated in what is now known as Belgium. Its chief author was Guido de Brès, an itinerant preacher of the Reformed Churches, who died a martyr to the faith in the year 1567. During the 16th century the Churches in this country were exposed to the most terrible persecution by the Roman Catholic government. To protest against this cruel oppression, and to prove to the persecutors that the adherents of the Reformed faith were not rebels, as they were accused of being, but law-abiding citizens who professed the true Christian doctrine according to the Holy Scriptures, de Brès prepared this confession in the year 1561. In the following year a copy was sent to King Philip II, together with a letter in which the Reformed Churches declared that they were ready to obey the government in all lawful things, but that they would “offer their backs to stripes, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to fire,” rather than deny the truth expressed in this confession. Although the immediate purpose of securing freedom from persecution was not attained, and de Brès himself fell as one of the many thousands who sealed their faith with their lives, his work has endured and will continue to endure for ages.

Article 1 Of the Nature of God

We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth¹ that there is only one God,² who is a simple and spiritual Being;³ He is eternal,⁴ incomprehensible,⁵ invisible,⁶ immutable,⁷ infinite,⁸ almighty,⁹ perfectly wise,¹⁰ just,¹¹ good,¹² and the overflowing fountain of all good.¹³

¹ Rom 10:10; ² Deut 6:4; 1 Cor 8:4, 6; 1 Tim 2:5; ³ Jn 4:24; ⁴ Ps 90:2; ⁵ Rom 11:33; ⁶ Col 1:15; 1 Tim 6:16; ⁷ Jas 1:17; ⁸ 1 Kgs 8:27; Jer 23:24; ⁹ Gen 17:1; Mt 19:26; Rev 1:8; ¹⁰ Rom 16:27; ¹¹ Rom 3:25-26; Rom 9:14; Rev 16:5, 7; ¹² Mt 19:17; ¹³ Jas 1:17

Article 2 Of the Knowledge of God

We know Him by two means:

First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most beautiful book,¹ wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters leading us to perceive clearly the invisible things of God, namely, His eternal power and deity, as the apostle Paul says (Rom 1:20). All these things are sufficient to convict men and leave them without excuse.

Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word² as far as is necessary for us in this life, to His glory and our salvation.

¹ Ps 19:1-4; ² Ps 19:7-8; 1 Cor 1:18-21

Article 3

Of Holy Scripture

We confess that this Word of God did not come by the impulse of man, but that men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God, as the apostle Peter says (2 Pt 1:21). Thereafter, in His special care for us and our salvation, God commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit His revealed Word to writing¹ and He Himself wrote with His own finger the two tables of the law.² Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.³

¹ Ex 34:27; Ps 102:18; Rev 1:11, 19; ² Ex 31:18; ³ 2 Tim 3:16

Article 4

Of the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments

We believe that the Holy Scriptures consist of two parts, namely, the Old and the New Testament, which are canonical, against which nothing can be alleged. These books are listed in the church of God as follows:

The books of the Old Testament: the five books of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther; Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

The books of the New Testament: the four gospels, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles; the thirteen letters of the apostle Paul, namely, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon; the letter to the Hebrews; the seven other letters, namely, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, Jude; and the Revelation to the apostle John.

Article 5

Of the Authority of Holy Scripture

We receive¹ all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith.² We believe without any doubt all things contained in them, not so much because the church receives and approves them as such, but especially because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they are from God,³ and also because they contain the evidence thereof in themselves; for, even the blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are being fulfilled.⁴

¹ 1 Thes 2:13; ² 2 Tim 3:16-17; ³ 1 Cor 12:3; 1 Jn 4:6, 5:7; ⁴ Deut 18:21-22; 1 Kgs 22:28; Jer 28:9; Ezek 33:33

Article 6

Of the Difference Between the Canonical and Apocryphal Books

We distinguish these holy books from the apocryphal, namely, 3 and 4 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, additions to Esther, the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men in the Furnace, Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasseh, and 1 and 2 Maccabees.

The church may read and take instruction from these so far as they agree with the canonical books. They are, however, far from having such power and authority that we may confirm from their testimony any point of faith or of the Christian religion; much less may they be used to detract from the authority of the holy books.

Article 7

Of the Perfection of Holy Scripture

We believe that this Holy Scripture fully contains the will of God and that all that man must believe in order to be saved is sufficiently taught therein.¹ The whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in it at length. It is therefore unlawful for any one, even for an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in Holy Scripture:² yes, even if it be an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul says (Gal 1:8). Since it is forbidden to add to or take away anything from the Word of God (Deut 12:32),³ it is evident that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.⁴

We may not consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with the divine Scriptures; 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, since the truth is above all;⁵ for all men are of themselves liars, and lighter than a breath (Ps 62:9).

We therefore reject with all our heart whatever does not agree with this infallible rule,⁶ as the apostles have taught us: Test the spirits to see whether they are of God (1 Jn 4:1). Likewise: If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting (2 Jn 10).

¹ 2 Tim 3:16-17; 1 Pt 1:10-12; ² 1 Cor 15:2; 1 Tim 1:3; ³ Deut 4:2; Prov 30:6; Acts 26:22; 1 Cor 4:6; Rev 22:18-19; ⁴ Ps 19:7; Jn 15:15; Acts 18:28, 20:27; Rom 15:4; ⁵ Mk 7:7-9; Acts 4:19; Col 2:8; 1 Jn 2:19; ⁶ Deut 4:5-6; Isa 8:20; 1 Cor 3:11; Eph 4:4-6; 2 Thes 2:2; 2 Tim 3:14-15

Article 8

Of the Holy Trinity of Persons in One Divine Essence

According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God,¹ who is one single essence, in which are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct according to their incommunicable properties; namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.² The Father is the cause, origin, and beginning of all things visible and invisible.³ The Son is the Word, the wisdom, and the image of the Father.⁴ The Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might who proceeds from the Father and the Son.⁵ Nevertheless, God is not by this distinction divided into three, since the Holy Scriptures teach us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each has His personal existence, distinguished by Their properties; but in such a way that these three persons are but one only God. It is therefore evident that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, and likewise the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. Nevertheless, these persons thus distinguished are not divided, nor intermixed; for the Father has not assumed our flesh and blood, neither has the Holy Spirit, but the Son only. The Father has never been without His Son,⁶ or without His Holy Spirit. For these three, in one and the same essence, are equal in eternity. There is neither first nor last; for They are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy.

¹ 1 Cor 8:4-6; ² Mt 3:16-17, 28:19; ³ Eph 3:14-15; ⁴ Prov 8:22-31; Jn 1:14, 5:17-26; 1 Cor 1:24; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:3; Rev 19:13; ⁵ Jn 15:26; ⁶ Mic 5:2; Jn 1:1-2

Article 9

Of the Scripture Testimony of the Holy Trinity

All this we know both from the testimonies of Holy Scripture¹ and from the respective works of the three Persons, and especially those we perceive in ourselves. The testimonies of Scripture which lead us to believe this Holy Trinity, are written in many places of the Old Testament. It is not necessary to mention them all; it is sufficient to select some with discretion. In the book of Genesis God says, "Let Us make man in our image after our likeness... So God created man in His own image... male and female He created them" (Gen 1:26-27). Also: "Behold, the man has become like one of Us" (Gen 3:22). From God's saying, "Let Us make man in Our image," it appears that there are more divine persons than one; and when He says, "God created," He indicates that there is one God.

It is true, He does not say how many persons there are, but what seems to be somewhat obscure in the Old Testament is very plain in the New Testament. For when our Lord was baptized in the river Jordan, the voice of the Father was heard, who said, "This is My beloved Son" (Mt 3:17); the Son was seen in the water, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form as a dove.² For the baptism of all believers Christ prescribed this formula: "Baptize all nations into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19). In the gospel according to Luke the angel Gabriel thus addressed Mary, the mother of our Lord: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). Likewise: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor 13:14). In all these places we are fully taught that there are three persons in one only divine essence. Although this doctrine far surpasses all human understanding, nevertheless in this life we believe it on the ground of the Word of God, and we expect to enjoy its perfect knowledge and fruit hereafter in heaven.

Moreover, we must observe the distinct offices and works of these three Persons towards us. The Father is called our Creator by His power; the Son is our Savior and Redeemer by His blood; the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier by His dwelling in our hearts.

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity has always been maintained and preserved in the true church since the time of the apostles to this very day, over against Jews, Muslims, and against false Christians and heretics such as Marcion, Mani, Praxeas, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Arius, and such like, who have been justly condemned by the orthodox fathers. In this doctrine, therefore, we willingly receive the three creeds, of the Apostles, of Nicea, and of Athanasius; likewise that which in accordance with them is agreed upon by the early fathers.

¹ Jn 14:16, 15:26; Acts 2:32-33; Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6; Tit 3:4-6; 1 Pt 1:2; 1 Jn 4:13-14, 5:1-12; Jude 20-21; Rev 1:4-5;
² Mt 3:16

Article 10

Of the Eternal Deity of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ according to His divine nature is the only-begotten Son of God,¹ begotten from eternity, not made, nor created, for then He would be a creature, but of the same essence with the Father, equally-eternal, who reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature (Heb 1:3), and is equal to Him in all things.² He is the Son of God, not only from the time that He assumed our nature but from all eternity,³ as these testimonies, when compared with each other, teach us: Moses says that God created the world;⁴ the apostle John says that all things were made by the Word which he calls God.⁵ The letter to the Hebrews says that God made the world through His Son;⁶ likewise the apostle Paul says that God created all things through Jesus Christ.⁷

Therefore it must necessarily 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. Therefore He could say, "Truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am" (Jn 8:58), and He prayed, "Glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (Jn 17:5). And so He is true, eternal God, the Almighty, whom we invoke, worship, and serve.

¹ Mt 17:5; Jn 1:14, 18, 3:16, 14:1-14, 20:17, 31; Rom 1:4; Gal 4:4; Heb 1:2; ²Jn 5:18, 23, 10:30, 14:9, 20:28; Rom 9:5; Php 2:6; Col 1:15; Tit 2:13; ³Jn 8:58, 17:5; Heb 13:8; ⁴ Gen 1:1; ⁵ Jn 1:1-3; ⁶ Heb 1:2; ⁷ 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16

Article 11

Of the Person and Eternal Deity of the Holy Spirit

We believe and confess also that the Holy Spirit from eternity proceeds from the Father and the Son. He is neither made, created, nor begotten, but He can only be said to proceed from both.¹ In order He is the third Person of the Holy Trinity, of one and the same essence, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, true and eternal God, as the Holy Scriptures teach us.²

¹ Jn 14:15-26, 15:26; Rom 8:9; ² Gen 1:2; Mt 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor 2:10, 3:16, 6:11; 1 Jn 5:7

Article 12

Of the Creation of the World, and of the Angels

We believe that the Father through the Word, that is, through His Son, has created out of nothing heaven and earth and all creatures, when it seemed good to Him,¹ and that He has given to every creature its being, shape, and form, and to each its specific task and function to serve its Creator. We believe that He also continues to sustain and govern them according to His eternal providence and by His infinite power in order to serve man, to the end that man may serve his God. He also created the angels good, to be His messengers and to serve His elect.² Some of these have fallen from the exalted position in which God created them into everlasting perdition,³ but the others have by the grace of God remained steadfast and continued in their first state. The devils and evil spirits are so depraved that they are enemies of God and of all that is good.⁴ With all their might, they lie in wait like murderers to ruin the church and all its members and to destroy everything by their wicked devices.⁵ They are therefore by their own wickedness sentenced to eternal damnation and daily expect their horrible torments.⁶

Therefore we detest and reject the error of the Sadducees, who deny that there are any spirits and angels;⁷ and also the error of the Manichees, who say that the devils were not created, but have their origin of themselves, and that without having become corrupted, they are wicked by their own nature.

¹ Gen 1:1, 2:3; Isa 40:26; Jer 32:17; Col 1:15-16; 1 Tim 4:3; Heb 11:3; Rev 4:11; ² Ps 103:20-21; Mt 4:11; Heb 1:14; ³ Jn 8:44; 2 Pt 2:4; Jude 6; ⁴ Gen 3:1-5; 1 Pt 5:8; ⁵ Eph 6:12; Rev 12:4, 13-17, 20:7-9; ⁶ Mt 8:29, 25:41; Rev 20:10; ⁷ Acts 23:8

Article 13

Of the Providence of God

We believe that this good God, after He had created all things, did not abandon them or give them up to fortune or chance,¹ but that according to His holy will He so rules and governs them that in this world nothing happens without His direction.² Yet God is not the author of the sins which are committed nor can He be charged with them.³ For His power and goodness are so great and beyond understanding that He ordains and executes His work in the most excellent and just manner, even when devils and wicked men act unjustly.⁴ And as to His actions surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire farther than our capacity allows us. But with the greatest humility and reverence we adore the just judgments of God, which are hidden from us,⁵ and we content ourselves that we are pupils of Christ, who have only to learn those things which He teaches us in His Word, without transgressing these limits.⁶ This doctrine gives us unspeakable consolation, for we learn thereby that nothing can happen to us by chance, but only by the direction of our gracious heavenly Father. He watches over us with fatherly care, keeping all creatures so under His power that not one hair of our head, for they are all numbered, nor one sparrow can fall to the ground without the will of our Father (Mt 10:29-30). In this we trust, because we know that He holds in check the devil and all our enemies so that they cannot hurt us without His permission and will.⁷

We therefore reject the damnable error of the Epicureans, who say that God does not concern Himself with anything but leaves all things to chance.

¹ 1 Jn 5:17; Heb 1:3; ² Ps 115:3; Prov 16:1, 9, 33, 21:1; Eph 1:11-12; Jas 4:13-15; ³ Jas 1:13; 1 Jn 2:16; ⁴ Job 1:21; Isa 10:5, 45:7; Amos 3:6; Acts 2:23, 4:27-28; ⁵ 1 Kgs 22:19-23; Rom 1:28; 2 Thes 2:11; ⁶ Deut 29:29; 1 Cor 4:6; ⁷ Gen 45:8, 50:20; 2 Sam 16:10; Rom 8:28, 38-39

Article 14 Of the Creation, Fall, and Corruption of Man

We believe that God created man of dust from the ground¹ and He made and formed him after His own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy.² His will could conform to the will of God in every respect. But, when man was in this high position, he did not appreciate it nor did he value his excellency. He gave ear to the words of the devil and willfully subjected himself to sin and consequently to death and the curse.³ For he transgressed the commandment of life which he had received; by his sin he broke away from God, who was his true life; he corrupted his whole nature. By all this he made himself liable to physical and spiritual death.⁴ Since man became wicked and perverse, corrupt in all his ways, he has lost all his excellent gifts which he had once received from God.⁵ He has nothing left but some small traces, which are sufficient to make man inexcusable.⁶ For whatever light is in us has changed into darkness,⁷ as Scripture teaches us, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (Jn 1:5); where the apostle John calls mankind darkness.

Therefore we reject all teaching contrary to this concerning the free will of man, since man is but a slave to sin (Jn 8:34) and no one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven (Jn 3:27). For who dares to boast that he of himself can do any good, when Christ says: "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (Jn 6:44)? Who will glory in his own will, when he understands that the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God (Rom 8:7)? Who can speak of his knowledge, since the unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:14)? In short, who dares to claim anything, when he realizes that we are not competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but that our competence is from God (2 Cor 3:5)? Therefore what the apostle says must justly remain sure and firm: God is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Php 2:13). For there is no understanding nor will conformable to the understanding and will of God unless Christ has brought it about; as He teaches us: "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

¹ Gen 2:7, 3:19; Ecc 12:7; ² Gen 1:26-27; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10; ³ Gen 3:16-19; Rom 5:12; ⁴ Gen 2:17; Eph 2:1, 4:18; ⁵ Ps 94:1; Rom 3:10, 8:6; ⁶ Rom 1:20-21; ⁷ Eph 5:8

Article 15 Of Original Sin

We believe that by the disobedience of Adam original sin has spread throughout the whole human race.¹ It is a corruption of the entire nature of man² and a hereditary evil which infects even infants in their mother's womb.³ As a root it produces in man all sorts of sin. It is, therefore, so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn the human race.⁴ It is not abolished nor eradicated even by baptism, for sin continually streams forth like water welling up from this woeful source.⁵ Yet, in spite of all this, original sin is not imputed to the children of God to their condemnation but by His grace and mercy is forgiven them.⁶ This does not mean that the believers may sleep peacefully in their sin, but that the awareness of this corruption may make them often groan as they eagerly wait to be delivered from this body of death.

In this regard we reject the error of the Pelagians, who say that this sin is only a matter of imitation.

¹ Rom 5:12-14, 19; ² Rom 3:10; ³ Job 14:4; Ps 51:5; Jn 3:6; ⁴ Eph 2:3; ⁵ Rom 7:18-19; ⁶ Eph 2:4-5

Article 16 Of Divine Predestination

We believe that, when the entire offspring of Adam plunged into perdition and ruin by the transgression of the first man,¹ God manifested Himself to be as He is: merciful and just. Merciful, in rescuing and saving from this perdition those whom in His eternal and unchangeable counsel² He has elected³ in Jesus Christ our Lord⁴ by His pure goodness, without any consideration of their works.⁵ Just, in leaving the others in the fall and perdition into which they have plunged themselves.⁶

¹ Rom 3:12; ² Jn 6:37, 44, 10:29, 17:2, 9, 12, 18:9; ³ 1 Sam 12:22; Ps 65:4; Acts 13:48; Rom 9:16, 11:5; Tit 1:1; ⁴ Jn 15:16, 19; Rom 8:29; Eph 1:4-5; ⁵ Mal 1:2-3; Rom 9:11-13; 2 Tim 1:9; Tit 3:4-5; ⁶ Rom 9:19-22; 1 Pt 2:8

Article 17 Of the Restoration of Natural Man Through the Son of God

We believe that, when He saw that man had thus plunged himself into physical and spiritual death and made himself completely miserable, our gracious God in His marvelous wisdom and goodness set out to seek man when he trembling fled from Him.¹ He comforted him with the promise that He would give him His Son, born of a woman (Gal 4:4), to bruise the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15) and to make man blessed.²

¹ Gen 3:9; ² Gen 22:18; Isa 7:14; Jn 1:14, 5:46, 7:42; Acts 13:32-33; Rom 1:2-3; Gal 3:16

Article 18 Of the Incarnation of the Son of God

We confess, therefore, that God has fulfilled the promise He made to the fathers by the mouth of His holy prophets¹ when, at the time appointed by Him,² He sent into the world His own only-begotten and eternal Son, who took the form of a servant and was born in the likeness of men (Php 2:7). He truly assumed a real human nature with all its infirmities,³ without sin,⁴ for He was conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit and not by the act of a man.⁵ He not only assumed human nature as to the body, but also a true human soul, in order that He might be a real man. For since the soul was lost as well as the body, it was necessary that He should assume both to save both.

Contrary to the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of His mother, we therefore confess that Christ partook of the flesh and blood of the children (Heb 2:14). He is a fruit of the loins of David (Acts 2:30); born of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom 1:3); a fruit of the womb of the virgin Mary (Lk 1:42); born of woman (Gal 4:4); a branch of David (Jer 33:15); a shoot from the stump of Jesse (Isa 11:1); sprung from the tribe of Judah (Heb 7:14); descended from the Jews according to the flesh (Rom 9:5); of the seed of Abraham,⁶ since the Son was concerned with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in every respect, yet without sin (Heb 2:16-17, 4:15). In this way He is in truth our *Immanuel*, that is, "God with us" (Mt 1:23).

¹ Gen 26:4; 2 Sam 7:12-16; Ps 132:11; Lk 1:55; Acts 13:23; ² Gal 4:4; ³ 1 Tim 2:5, 3:16; Heb 2:14; ⁴ 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 7:26; 1 Pt 2:22; ⁵ Mt 1:18; Lk 1:35; ⁶ Gal 3:16

Article 19

Of the Hypostatic Union or of the Two Natures in the Person of Christ

We believe that by this conception the person of the Son of God is inseparably united and joined with the human nature,¹ so that there are not two sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person. Each nature retains its own distinct properties: His divine nature has always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life (Heb 7:3), filling heaven and earth;² His human nature has not lost its properties; it has beginning of days and remains created. It is finite and retains all the properties of a true body.³ Even though, by His resurrection, He has given immortality to His human nature, He has not changed its reality,⁴ since our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of His body.⁵ However, these two natures are so closely united in one person that they were not even separated by His death. Therefore, what He, when dying, committed into the hands of His Father was a real human spirit that departed from His body.⁶ Meanwhile His divinity always remained united with His human nature, even when He was lying in the grave.⁷ And the divine nature always remained in Him just as it was in Him when He was a little child, even though it did not manifest itself as such for a little while.

For this reason we profess Him to be true God and true man: true God in order to conquer death by His power; and true man that He might die for us according to the infirmity of His flesh.

¹ Jn 1:14, 10:30; Rom 9:5; Php 2:6-7; ² Mt 28:20; ³ 1 Tim 2:5; ⁴ Mt 26:11; Lk 24:39; Jn 20:25; Acts 1:3, 11, 3:21; Heb 2:9; ⁵ 1 Cor 15:21; Php 3:21; ⁶ Mt 27:50; ⁷ Rom 1:4

Article 20

Of the Means of Redemption Through the Declaration of Justice and Mercy of God in Christ

We believe that God, who is perfectly merciful and just, sent His Son to assume that nature in which disobedience had been committed,¹ to make satisfaction in that same nature; and to bear the punishment of sin by His most bitter passion and death.² God therefore manifested His justice against His Son when He laid our iniquity on Him,³ and poured out His goodness and mercy on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation. Out of a most perfect love He gave His Son to die for us and He raised Him for our justification⁴ that through Him we might obtain immortality and life eternal.

¹ Rom 8:3; ² Heb 2:14; ³ Rom 3:25-26, 8:32; ⁴ Rom 4:25

Article 21

Of the Satisfaction of Christ for our Sins

We believe that Jesus Christ was confirmed by an oath to be a High Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.¹ He presented Himself in our place before His Father, appeasing God's wrath by His full satisfaction,² offering Himself on the tree of the cross, where He poured out His precious blood to purge away our sins,³ as the prophets had foretold.⁴ For it is written, "Upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole and with His stripes we are healed."⁵ Like a lamb He was led to the slaughter. He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa 53:5, 7, 12),⁶ and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, though he had first declared Him innocent.⁷ He restored what He had not stolen (Ps 69:4). He died as the righteous for the unrighteous (1 Pt 3:18).⁸ He suffered in body and soul,⁹ feeling the horrible punishment caused by our sins, and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground (Lk 22:44). Finally, He exclaimed, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me" (Mt 27:46)? All this He endured for the forgiveness of our sins. Therefore we justly say, with Paul, that we know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2). We count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus our Lord (Php 3:8). We find comfort in His wounds and have no need to seek or invent any other means of reconciliation with God than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which the believers are perfected for all times (Heb 10:14).¹⁰ This is also the reason why the angel of God called Him "Jesus," that is, "Savior, because He would save His people from their sins" (Mt 1:21).¹¹

¹ Ps 110:4; Heb 7:15-17; ² Rom 4:25, 5:8-9, 8:32; Gal 3:13; Col 2:14; Heb 2:9, 17, 9:11-15; ³ Acts 2:23; Php 2:8; 1 Tim 1:15; Heb 9:22; 1 Pt 1:18-19; 1 Jn 1:7; Rev 7:14; ⁴ Lk 24:25-27; Rom 3:21; 1 Cor 15:3; ⁵ 1 Pt 2:24; ⁶ Mk 15:28; ⁷ Jn 18:38; ⁸ Rom 5:6; ⁹ Ps 22:15; ¹⁰ Heb 7:26-28, 9:24-28; ¹¹ Lk 1:31; Acts 4:12

Article 22

Of Justifying Faith and the Justification of Faith

We believe that, in order that we may obtain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts a true faith.¹ This faith embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, makes Him our own, and does not seek anything besides Him.² For it must necessarily follow, either that all we need for our salvation is not in Jesus Christ or, if it is all in Him, that one who has Jesus Christ through faith, has complete salvation.³ It is, therefore, a terrible blasphemy to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something else is needed besides Him; for the conclusion would then be that Christ is only half a Savior. Therefore we rightly say with Paul that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith apart from works of law (Rom 3:28).⁴ Meanwhile, strictly speaking, we do not mean that faith as such justifies us,⁵ for faith is only the instrument by which we embrace Christ our righteousness; He imputes to us all His merits and as many holy works as He has done for us and in our place.⁶

Therefore Jesus Christ is our righteousness, and faith is the instrument that keeps us with Him in the communion of all His benefits. When those benefits have become ours, they are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins.

¹ Jn 16:14; 1 Cor 2:12; Eph 1:17-18; ² Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12; Gal 2:21; ³ Ps 32:1; Mt 1:21; Lk 1:77; Acts 13:38-39; Rom 8:1; ⁴ Rom 3:19-4:8, 10:4-11; Gal 2:16; Php 3:9; Tit 3:5; ⁵ 1 Cor 4:7; ⁶ Jer 23:6; Mt 20:28; Rom 8:33; 1 Cor 1:30-31; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Jn 4:10

Article 23

Of the Justice by Which we Stand Before God

We believe that our blessedness lies in the forgiveness of our sins for Jesus Christ's sake and that therein our righteousness before God¹ consists, as David and Paul teach us. They pronounce a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works (Rom 4:6; Ps 32:1). The apostle also says that we are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Rom 3:24).²

Therefore we always hold to this firm foundation. We give all the glory to God,³ humble ourselves before Him, and acknowledge ourselves to be what we are. We do not claim anything for ourselves or our merits,⁴ but rely and rest on the only obedience of Jesus Christ crucified;⁵ His obedience is ours when we believe in Him.⁶ This is sufficient to cover all our iniquities and to give us confidence in drawing near to God, freeing our conscience of fear, terror, and dread, so that we do not follow the example of our first father, Adam, who trembling tried to hide and covered himself with fig leaves.⁷ For indeed, if we had to appear before God, relying, be it ever so little, on ourselves or some other creature (woe be to us!), we would be consumed.⁸ Therefore everyone must say with David, "O LORD, enter not into judgment with Your servant, for no man living is righteous before You" (Ps 143:2).

¹ 1 Jn 2:1; ² 2 Cor 5:18-18; Eph 2:8; 1 Tim 2:6; ³ Ps 115:1; Rev 7:10-12; ⁴ 1 Cor 4:4; Jas 2:10; ⁵ Acts 4:12; Heb 10:20; ⁶ Rom 4:23-25; ⁷ Gen 3:7; Zeph 3:1; Heb 4:16; 1 Jn 4:17-19; ⁸ Lk 16:15; Php 3:4-9

Article 24

Of Sanctification and of Good Works

We believe that this true faith, worked in man by the hearing of God's Word and by the operation of the Holy Spirit,¹ regenerates him and makes him a new man.² It makes him live a new life and frees him from the slavery of sin.³ Therefore it is not true that this justifying faith makes man indifferent to living a good and holy life.⁴

On the contrary, without it no one would ever do anything out of love for God,⁵ but only out of self-love or fear of being condemned. It is therefore impossible for this holy faith to be inactive in man, for we do not speak of an empty faith but of what Scripture calls "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). This faith induces man to apply himself to those works which God has commanded in His Word.

These works, proceeding from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, since they are all sanctified by His grace. Nevertheless, they do not count toward our justification. For through faith in Christ we are justified, even before we do any good works.⁶ Otherwise they could not be good any more than the fruit of a tree can be good unless the tree itself is good.⁷

Therefore we do good works, but not for merit. For what could we merit? We are indebted to God, rather than He to us, for the good works we do,⁸ since it is He who is at work in us, "both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Php 2:13). Let us keep in mind what is written: "So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'" (Lk 17:10).

Meanwhile we do not deny that God rewards good works,⁹ but it is by His grace that He crowns His gifts. Furthermore, although we do good works, we do not base our salvation on them. We cannot do a single work that is not defiled by our flesh and does not deserve punishment.¹⁰ Even if we could show one good work, the remembrance of one sin is enough to make God reject it.¹¹ We would then always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences would be constantly tormented, if they did not rely on the merit of the death and passion of our Savior.¹²

Article 25

Of the Abrogation of the Ceremonial Law and the Agreement of the Old and New Testaments

We believe that the ceremonies and symbols of the law have ceased with the coming of Christ, and that all shadows have been fulfilled,¹ so that the use of them ought to be abolished among Christians. Yet their truth and substance remain for us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have been fulfilled.²

In the meantime we still use the testimonies taken from the law and the prophets, both to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel and to order our life in all honor, according to God's will and to His glory.³

¹ Mt 27:51; Rom 10:4; Heb 9:9-10; ² Mt 5:17; Gal 3:24; Col 2:17; ³ Rom 13:8-10, 15:4; 2 Pt 1:19, 3:2

Article 26

Of Christ's Intercession

We believe that we have no access to God except through the only Mediator¹ and Advocate Jesus Christ the righteous.² For this purpose He became man, uniting together the divine and human nature, that we men might not be barred from but have access to the divine majesty.³ This Mediator, however, whom the Father has ordained between Himself and us, should not frighten us by His greatness, so that we look for another according to our fancy. There is no creature in heaven or on earth who loves us more than Jesus Christ.⁴

Though He was in the form of God, He emptied Himself, taking the form of man and of a servant for us (Php 2:6-7), and was made like His brethren in every respect (Heb 2:17). If, therefore, we had to look for another intercessor, could we find one who loves us more than He who laid down His life for us, even while we were His enemies (Rom 5:8, 10)? If we had to look for one who has authority and power, who has more than He who is seated at the right hand of the Father⁵ and who has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18)? Moreover, who will be heard more readily than God's own well-beloved Son?⁶

Therefore it was pure lack of trust which introduced the custom of dishonoring the saints rather than honoring them, doing what they themselves never did nor required. On the contrary, they constantly rejected such honor according to their duty,⁷ as appears from their writings. Here one ought not to bring in our unworthiness, for it is not a question of offering our prayers on the basis of our own worthiness, but only on the basis of the excellence and worthiness of Jesus Christ,⁸ whose righteousness is ours by faith.⁹

Therefore with good reason, to take away from us this foolish fear or rather distrust, the author of Hebrews says to us that Jesus Christ was "made like His brethren in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because "He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Heb 2:18). Further, to encourage us more to go to Him, he says: "Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:14-15).¹⁰ The same letter says: "Therefore brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb 10:19, 22). Also, "Christ holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:24-25).¹¹ What more is needed? Christ Himself says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me" (Jn 14:6). Why should we look for another advocate? It has pleased God to give us His Son as our Advocate. Let us then not leave Him for another, or even look for another, without ever finding one. For when God gave Him to us, He knew very well that we were sinners.

In conclusion, according to the command of Christ, we call upon the heavenly Father through Christ our only Mediator,¹² as we are taught in the Lord's Prayer.¹³ We rest assured that we shall obtain all we ask of the Father in His Name (Jn 16:23).¹⁴

¹ 1 Tim 2:5; ² 1 Jn 2:1; ³ Eph 3:12; ⁴ Mt 11:28; Jn 15:13; Eph 3:19; 1 Jn 4:10; ⁵ Heb 1:3, 8:1; ⁶ Mt 3:17; Jn 11:42; Eph 1:6; ⁷ Acts 10:26, 14:15; ⁸ Jer 17:5, 7; Acts 4:12; ⁹ 1 Cor 1:30; ¹⁰ Jn 10:9; Eph 2:18; Heb 9:24; ¹¹ Rom 8:34; ¹² Heb 13:15; ¹³ Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4; ¹⁴ Jn 14:13

Article 27 **Of the Catholic Church**

We believe and profess one catholic or universal church,¹ which is a holy congregation and assembly² of true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ,³ are washed by His blood, and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit.⁴ This church has existed from the beginning of the world and will be to the end, for Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects.⁵ This holy church is preserved by God against the fury of the whole world,⁶ although for a while it may look very small and as extinct in the eyes of man.⁷ Thus during the perilous reign of Ahab, the Lord kept for Himself seven thousand persons who had not bowed their knees to Baal.⁸

Moreover, this holy church is not confined or limited to one particular place or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world.⁹ However, it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith.¹⁰

¹ Gen 22:18; Isa 49:6; Eph 2:17-19; ² Ps 111:1; Jn 10:14, 16; Eph 4:3-6; Heb 12:22-23; ³ Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; ⁴ Eph 1:13, 4:30; ⁵ 2 Sam 7:16; Ps 89:36, 110:4; Mt 28:18, 20; Lk 1:32; ⁶ Ps 46:5; Mt 16:18; ⁷ Isa 1:9; 1 Pt 3:20; Rev 11:7; ⁸ 1 Kgs 19:18; ⁹ Mt 23:8; Jn 4:21-23; Rom 10:12-13; ¹⁰ Ps 119:63; Acts 4:32; Eph 4:4

Article 28 **Of the Communion of the Saints in the True Church**

We believe, since this holy assembly and congregation is the assembly of the redeemed and there is no salvation outside of it,¹ that no one ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself, no matter what his status or standing may be. But all and everyone are obliged to join it and unite with it,² maintaining the unity of the church. They must submit themselves to its instruction and discipline,³ bend their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ,⁴ and serve the edification of the brothers and sisters,⁵ according to the talents which God has given them as members of the same body.⁶ To observe this more effectively, it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate from those who do not belong to the church⁷ and to join this assembly⁸ wherever God has established it. They should do so even though the rulers and edicts of princes were against it, and death or physical punishment might follow.⁹ All therefore who draw away from the church or fail to join it act contrary to the ordinance of God.

¹ Mt 16:18-19; Acts 2:47; Gal 4:26; Eph 5:25-27; Heb 2:11-12, 12:23; ² 2 Chron 30:8; Jn 17:21; Col 3:15; ³ Heb 13:17; ⁴ Mt 11:28-30; ⁵ Eph 4:12; ⁶ 1 Cor 12:7, 27; Eph 4:16; ⁷ Num 16:23-26; Isa 52:11-12; Acts 2:40; Rom 16:17; Rev 18:4; ⁸ Ps 122:1; Isa 2:3; Heb 10:25; ⁹ Acts 4:9-10

Article 29

Of the Marks of the True Church

We believe that we ought to discern diligently and very carefully from the Word of God what is the true church, for all sects which are in the world today claim for themselves the name of church.¹ We are not speaking here of the hypocrites, who are mixed in the church along with the good and yet are not part of the church, although they are outwardly in it.² We are speaking of the body and the communion of the true church which must be distinguished from all sects that call themselves the church.

The true church is to be recognized by the following marks: It practices the pure preaching of the gospel.³ It maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them.⁴ It exercises church discipline for correcting and punishing sins.⁵ In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God,⁶ rejecting all things contrary to it⁷ and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head.⁸ Hereby the true church can certainly be known and no one has the right to separate from it.

Those who are of the church may be recognized by the marks of Christians. They believe in Jesus Christ the only Savior,⁹ flee from sin and pursue righteousness,¹⁰ love the true God and their neighbor¹¹ without turning to the right or left, and crucify their flesh and its works.¹² Although great weakness remains in them, they fight against it by the Spirit all the days of their life.¹³ They appeal constantly to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of Jesus Christ, in whom they have forgiveness of their sins through faith in Him.¹⁴

The false church assigns more authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God. It does not want to submit itself to the yoke of Christ.¹⁵ It does not administer the sacraments as Christ commanded in His Word, but adds to them and subtracts from them as it pleases. It bases itself more on men than on Jesus Christ. It persecutes those who live holy lives according to the Word of God and who rebuke the false church for its sins, greed, and idolatries.¹⁶ These two churches are easily recognized and distinguished from each other.

¹ Rev 2:9; ² Rom 9:6; ³ Gal 1:8; 1 Tim 3:15; ⁴ Acts 19:3-5; 1 Cor 11:20-29; ⁵ Mt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5:4-5, 13; 2 Thes 3:6, 14; Tit 3:10; ⁶ Jn 8:47, 17:20; Acts 17:11; Eph 2:20; Col 1:23; 1 Tim 6:3; ⁷ 1 Thes 5:21; 1 Tim 6:20; Rev 2:6; ⁸ Jn 10:14; Eph 5:23; Col 1:18; ⁹ Jn 1:12; 1 Jn 4:2; ¹⁰ Rom 6:2; Php 3:12; ¹¹ 1 Jn 4:19-21; ¹² Gal 5:24; ¹³ Rom 7:15; Gal 5:17; ¹⁴ Rom 7:24-25; 1 Jn 1:7-9; ¹⁵ Acts 4:17-18; 2 Tim 4:3-4; 2 Jn 9; ¹⁶ Jn 16:2

Article 30

Of the Government of the Church

We believe that this true church must be governed according to the Spiritual order which our Lord has taught us in His Word.¹ There should be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments;² there should also be elders³ and deacons⁴ who, together with the pastors, form the council of the church.⁵ By these means they preserve the true religion; they see to it that the true doctrine takes its course, that evil men are disciplined in a spiritual way and are restrained, and also that the poor and all the afflicted are helped and comforted according to their need.⁶ By these means everything will be done well and in good order when faithful men are chosen⁷ in agreement with the rule that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy.⁸

¹ Acts 20:28; Eph 4:1-12; 1Tim 3:15; Heb 13:20-21; ² Lk 1:2,10:16; Jn 20:23; Rom 10:14; 1Cor 4:1; 2 Cor 5:19-20; 2 Tim 4:2; ³ Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5; ⁴ 1Tim 3:8-10; ⁵ Php 1:1; 1Tim 4:14; ⁶ Acts 6:1-4; Tit 1:7-9; ⁷ 1Cor 4:2; ⁸ 1Tim 3

Article 31

Of the Calling of Ministers in the Church

We believe that ministers of God's Word, elders, and deacons ought to be chosen to their offices by lawful election of the church, with prayer and in good order, as stipulated by the Word of God.¹ Therefore everyone shall take care not to intrude by improper means. He shall wait for the time that he is called by God so that he may have sure testimony and thus be certain that his call comes from the Lord.² Ministers of the Word, in whatever place they are, have equal power and authority, for they are all servants of Jesus Christ,³ the only universal Bishop and the only Head of the church.⁴ In order that this holy ordinance of God may not be violated or rejected, we declare that everyone must hold the ministers of the Word and the elders of the church in special esteem because of their work,⁵ and as much as possible be at peace with them without grumbling or arguing.

¹ Acts 1:23-24, 6:2-3; ² Acts 13:2; 1 Cor 12:28; 1 Tim 4:14, 5:22; Heb 5:4; ³ 2 Cor 5:20; 1 Pt 5:1-4; ⁴ Mt 23:8, 10; Eph 1:22, 5:23; ⁵ 1 Thes 5:12-13; 1 Tim 5:17; Heb 13:17

Article 32

Of the Power of the Church in Establishing Ecclesiastical Laws and in Administering Discipline

We believe that, although it is useful and good for those who govern the church to establish a certain order to maintain the body of the church, they must at all times watch that they do not deviate from what Christ, our only Master, has commanded.¹

Therefore we reject all human inventions and laws introduced into the worship of God which bind and compel the consciences in any way.² We accept only what is proper to preserve and promote harmony and unity and to keep all in obedience to God.³ To that end, discipline and excommunication ought to be exercised in agreement with the Word of God.⁴

¹ 1 Tim 3:15; ² Isa 29:13; Mt 15:9; Gal 5:1; ³ 1 Cor 14:33; ⁴ Mt 16:19, 18:15-18; Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 5; 1 Tim 1:20

Article 33

Of the Sacraments

We believe that our gracious God, mindful of our insensitivity and weakness, has ordained sacraments to seal His promises to us and to be pledges of His good will and grace towards us. He did so to nourish and sustain our faith.¹ He has added these to the Word of the gospel² to represent better to our external senses both what He declares to us in His Word and what He does inwardly in our hearts. Thus He confirms to us the salvation which He imparts to us. Sacraments are visible signs and seals of something internal and invisible, by means of which God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit.³ Therefore the signs are not void and meaningless so that they deceive us. For Jesus Christ is their truth; apart from Him they would be nothing.

Moreover, we are satisfied with the number of sacraments which Christ our Master has instituted for us, namely, two: the sacrament of baptism⁴ and the holy supper of Jesus Christ.⁵

¹ Gen 17:9-14; Ex 12; Rom 4:11; ² Mt 28:19; Eph 5:26; ³ Rom 2:28-29; Col 2:11-12; ⁴ Mt 28:19; ⁵ Mt 26:26-28; 1 Cor 11:23-26

Article 34 Of Baptism

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law (Rom 10:4), has by His shed blood put an end to every other shedding of blood that one could or would make as an expiation or satisfaction for sins. He has abolished circumcision, which involved blood, and has instituted in its place the sacrament of baptism.¹

By baptism we are received into the church of God and set apart from all other peoples and false religions, to be entirely committed to Him² whose mark and emblem we bear. This serves as a testimony to us that He will be our God and gracious Father for ever. For that reason He has commanded all those who are His to be baptized with plain water, into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19). By this He signifies to us that as water washes away the dirt of the body when poured on us, and as water is seen on the body of the baptized when sprinkled on him, so the blood of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, does the same thing internally to the soul.³ It washes and cleanses our soul from sin⁴ and regenerates us from children of wrath into children of God.⁵ This is not brought about by the water as such⁶ but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God,⁷ which is our Red Sea,⁸ through which we must pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the devil, and enter into the spiritual land of Canaan. Thus the ministers on their part give us the sacrament and what is visible, but our Lord gives us what is signified by the sacrament, namely, the invisible gifts and grace. He washes, purges, and cleanses our souls of all filth and unrighteousness,⁹ renews our hearts and fills them with all comfort, gives us true assurance of His fatherly goodness, clothes us with the new nature, and takes away the old nature with all its works.¹⁰

We believe, therefore, that anyone who aspires to eternal life ought to be baptized only once.¹¹ Baptism should never be repeated, for we cannot be born twice. Moreover, baptism benefits us not only when the water is on us and when we receive it, but throughout our whole life.

For that reason we reject the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with a single baptism received only once, and who also condemn the baptism of the little children of believers. We believe that these children ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as infants were circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises which are now made to our children.¹² Indeed, Christ shed His blood to wash the children of believers just as much as He shed it for adults.¹³ Therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of what Christ has done for them, as the Lord commanded in the law that a lamb was to be offered shortly after children were born.¹⁴ This was a sacrament of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. Because baptism has the same meaning for our children as circumcision had for the people of Israel, Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ (Col 2:11).

¹ Col 2:11; ² Ex 12:48; 1 Pt 2:9; ³ Mt 3:11; 1 Cor 12:13; ⁴ Acts 22:16; Heb 9:14; 1 Jn 1:7; Rev 1:5; ⁵ Tit 3:5; ⁶ 1 Pt 3:21; ⁷ Rom 6:3; 1 Pt 1:2, 2:24; ⁸ 1 Cor 10:1-4; ⁹ 1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26; ¹⁰ Rom 6:4; Gal 3:27; ¹¹ Mt 28:19; Eph 4:5; ¹² Gen 17:10-12; Mt 19:14; Acts 2:39; ¹³ 1 Cor 7:14; ¹⁴ Lev 12:6

Article 35 Of the Lord's Supper

We believe and confess that our Savior Jesus Christ has instituted the sacrament of the holy supper¹ to nourish and sustain those whom He has already regenerated and incorporated into His family, which is His church. Those who are born anew have a twofold life.² One is physical and temporal, which they received in their first birth and is common to all men. The other is spiritual and heavenly, which is given them in their second birth and is effected by the word of the gospel³ in the communion of the body of Christ. This life is not common to all but only to the elect of God. For the support of the physical and earthly life God has ordained earthly and material bread. This bread is common to all just as life is common to all. For the support of the spiritual and heavenly life, which believers have, He has sent them a living bread which came down from heaven (Jn 6:51), namely, Jesus Christ,⁴ who nourishes and sustains the spiritual life of the believers⁵ when He is eaten by them, that is, spiritually appropriated and received by faith.⁶ To represent to us the spiritual and heavenly bread, Christ has instituted earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of His body and wine as a sacrament of His blood.⁷ He testifies to us that as certainly as we take and hold the sacrament in our hands and eat and drink it with our mouths, by which our physical life is then sustained, so certainly do we receive by faith,⁸ as the hand and mouth of our soul, the true body and true blood of Christ, our only Saviour, in our souls for our spiritual life.

It is beyond any doubt that Jesus Christ did not commend His sacraments to us in vain. Therefore He works in us all that He represents to us by these holy signs. We do not understand the manner in which this is done, just as we do not comprehend the hidden activity of the Spirit of God.⁹ Yet we do not go wrong when we say that what we eat and drink is the true, natural body and the true blood of Christ. However, the manner in which we eat it is not by mouth but in the spirit by faith. In that way Jesus Christ always remains seated at the right hand of God His Father in heaven;¹⁰ yet He does not cease to communicate Himself to us by faith. This banquet is a spiritual table at which Christ makes us partakers of Himself with all His benefits and gives us the grace to enjoy both Himself and the merit of His suffering and death.¹¹ He nourishes, strengthens, and comforts our poor, desolate souls by the eating of His flesh, and refreshes and renews them by the drinking of His blood.

Although the sacrament is joined together with that which is signified, the latter is not always received by all.¹² The wicked certainly takes the sacrament to his condemnation, but he does not receive the truth of the sacrament. Thus Judas and Simon the sorcerer both received the sacrament, but they did not receive Christ, who is signified by it.¹³ He is communicated exclusively to the believers.¹⁴

Finally, we receive this holy sacrament in the congregation of the people of God¹⁵ with humility and reverence as we together commemorate the death of Christ our Savior with thanksgiving and we confess our faith and Christian religion.¹⁶ Therefore no one should come to this table without careful self-examination, lest by eating this bread and drinking from this cup, he eat and drink judgment upon himself (1 Cor 10:28-29). In short, we are moved by the use of this holy sacrament to a fervent love of God and our neighbors.

Therefore we reject as desecrations all additions and damnable inventions which men have mixed with the sacraments. We declare that we should be content with the ordinance taught by Christ and His apostles and should speak about it as they have spoken.

¹ Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26; ² Jn 3:5-6; ³ Jn 5:25; ⁴ Jn 6:48-51; ⁵ Jn 6:63, 10:10; ⁶ Jn 6:40, 47; ⁷ Jn 6:55; 1 Cor 10:16; ⁸ Eph 3:17; ⁹ Jn 3:8; ¹⁰ Mk 16:19; Acts 3:21; ¹¹ Rom 8:32; 1 Cor 10:3-4; ¹² 1 Cor 2:14; ¹³ Lk 22:21-22; Acts 8:13, 21; ¹⁴ Jn 3:36; ¹⁵ Acts 2:42, 20:7; ¹⁶ Acts 2:46; 1 Cor 11:26

Article 36 Of the Magistrate

We believe that, because of the depravity of mankind, our gracious God has ordained kings, princes, and civil officers.¹ He wants the world to be governed by laws and policies,² in order that the licentiousness of men be restrained and that everything be conducted among them in good order.³ For that purpose He has placed the sword in the hand of the government to punish wrongdoers and to protect those who do what is good (Rom 13:4). Their task of restraining and sustaining is not limited to the public order but includes the protection of the church and its ministry in order that the kingdom of Christ may come, the Word of the gospel may be preached everywhere,⁴ and God may be honored and served by everyone, as He requires in His Word. * Moreover, everyone, no matter of what quality, condition, or rank, ought to be subject to the civil officers, pay taxes, hold them in honor and respect, and obey them in all things⁵ which do not disagree with the Word of God.⁶ We ought to pray for them, that God may direct them in all their ways and that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way (1 Tim 2:1-2).

For that reason we condemn the Anabaptists and other rebellious people, and in general all those who reject the authorities and civil officers, subvert justice,⁷ introduce a communion of goods, and confound the decency that God has established among men.

¹ Prov 8:15; Dan 2:21; Jn 19:11; Rom 13:1; ² Ex 18:30; ³ Deut 1:16, 16:19; Jdgs 21:25; Ps 82; Jer 21:12, 22:3; 1 Pt 2:13-14; ⁴ Ps 2; Rom 13:4; 1 Tim 2:1-4; ⁵ Mt 17:27, 22:21; Rom 13:7; Tit 3:1; 1 Pt 2:17; ⁶ Acts 4:19, 5:29; ⁷ 2 Pt 2:10; Jude 8

[* The Christian Reformed Church Synod of 1958, in line with 1910 and 1938, substituted the following statement in place of the one indicated, which it judged unbiblical: "And being called in this manner to contribute to the advancement of a society that is pleasing to God, the civil rulers have the task, subject to God's law, of removing every obstacle to the preaching of the gospel and to every aspect of divine worship. They should do this while completely refraining from every tendency toward exercising absolute authority, and while functioning in the sphere entrusted to them, with the means belonging to them. They should do it in order that the Word of God may have free course; the kingdom of Jesus Christ may make progress; and every anti-Christian power may be resisted."]

Article 37

Of the Last Judgement, Resurrection of the Body, and Eternal Life

Finally, we believe, according to the Word of God, that when the time, ordained by the Lord but unknown to all creatures, has come¹ and the number of the elect is complete,² our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, bodily and visibly,³ as He ascended (Acts 1:11), with great glory and majesty.⁴ He will declare Himself Judge of the living and the dead⁵ and set this old world afire in order to purge it.⁶ Then all people, men, women, and children, who ever lived, from the beginning of the world to the end, will appear in person before this great Judge.⁷ They will be summoned with the archangel's call and with the sound of the trumpet of God (1 Thes 4:16). Those who will have died before that time will arise out of the earth,⁸ as their spirits are once again united with their own bodies in which they lived. Those who will then be still alive will not die as the others but will be changed in the twinkling of an eye from perishable to imperishable.⁹ Then the books will be opened and the dead will be judged (Rev 20:12) according to what they have done in this world, whether good or evil (2 Cor 5:10).¹⁰ Indeed, all people will render account for every careless word they utter (Mt 12:36), which the world regards as mere jest and amusement. The secrets and hypocrisies of men will then be publicly uncovered in the sight of all.

And so for good reason the thought of this judgment is horrible and dreadful to the wicked and evildoers¹¹ but it is a great joy and comfort to the righteous and elect. For then their full redemption will be completed and they will receive the fruits of their labor and of the trouble they have suffered.¹² Their innocence will be known to all and they will see the terrible vengeance that God will bring upon the wicked who persecuted, oppressed, and tormented them in this world.¹³ The wicked will be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences and will become immortal, but only to be tormented in the eternal fire¹⁴ prepared for the devil and his angels (Mt 25:41).¹⁵ On the other hand, the faithful and elect will be crowned with glory and honor. The Son of God will acknowledge their names before God His Father (Mt 10:32) and His elect angels.¹⁶ God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Rev 21:4),¹⁷ and their cause, at present condemned as heretical and evil by many judges and civil authorities, will be recognized as the cause of the Son of God. As a gracious reward, the Lord will cause them to possess such a glory as the heart of man could never conceive.¹⁸ Therefore we look forward to that great day with a great longing to enjoy to the full the promises of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:20).

¹ Mt 24:36, 25:13; 1 Thes 5:1-2; ² Heb 11:39-40; Rev 6:11; ³ Rev 1:7; ⁴ Mt 24:30, 25:31; ⁵ Mt 25:31-46; 2 Tim 4:1; 1 Pt 4:5; ⁶ 2 Pt 3:10-13; ⁷ Deut 7:9-11; Rev 20:12-13; ⁸ Dan 12:2; Jn 5:28-29; ⁹ 1 Cor 15:51-52; Php 3:20-21; ¹⁰ Heb 9:27; Rev 22:12; ¹¹ Mt 11:22, 23:33; Rom 2:5-6; Heb 10:27; 2 Pt 2:9; Jude 15; Rev 14:7; ¹² Lk 14:14; 2 Thes 1:3-10; 1 Jn 4:17; ¹³ Rev 15:4, 18:20; ¹⁴ Mt 13:41-42; Mk 9:48; Lk 16:22-28; Rev 21:8; ¹⁵ Rev 20:10; ¹⁶ Rev 3:5; ¹⁷ Isa 25:8; Rev 7:17; ¹⁸ Dan 12:3; Mt 5:12, 13:43; 1 Cor 2:9; Rev 21:9-22:5

The Canons of the Synod of Dort (1618-1619)

Held from November 13, 1618-May 9, 1619 in Dordrecht, Holland, the Synod of Dort was occasioned by the need to respond to the emerging error commonly called "Arminianism," which had sprung up in the Reformed Churches of Holland. This error was being perpetuated by the followers of Jacob van Hermans, known in English as James Arminius (1560-1609). Arminius was a very learned and pious Christian who studied under Calvin's successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza. After his studies he became a minister in the Reformed Church in Amsterdam in 1588, and then became professor of theology at the University of Leyden in 1603. His departure from Reformed Protestantism came about as he was attempting to defend the Reformed faith against the proto-Arminian Dirik Volckaerts zoon Koornhert. Koornhert was influenced by the great Dutch Rationalist and humanist Desiderius Erasmus, who argued for and defended the Rationalistic idea of free will against the great Martin Luther just as Pelagius did against St. Augustine. Thus this ancient and condemned heresy was revived, and once again was infecting Christ's Church.

Upon giving up on Reformed Christianity, Arminius and his followers developed the implications of their theology, teaching that God's election of sinners was not grounded in His will and love alone but was conditioned by, and based upon, the foreseen faith of sinful men. They taught that Christ died "universally" for the sins of every man without limit. They taught that man was only partially depraved and sinful. They taught that man, by the act of his free will, could resist the grace of the Holy Spirit. And they taught that no man in this life could have the assurance that he was a child of God, because there was always the possibility of losing one's salvation. The followers of Arminius then drafted a set of beliefs called the "Remonstrance" in 1610. The Reformed responded with the Counter-Remonstrance and two meetings between the sides ensued, but with no avail. Thus a National, and in fact, International, Synod was called and the results are the "Five Points of Calvinism."

* Scripture abbreviated as normal; HC = Heidelberg Catechism; BC = Belgic Confession

First Head of Doctrine: Divine Election and Reprobation

Article 1

All Mankind Condemned Before God

As all men have sinned in Adam¹, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death,² God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin,³ according to the words of the apostle: "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God" (Rom 3:19). And: "for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). And: "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

¹ Rom 5:12; ² Rom 6:23; ³ Eph 2:1-3

Article 2

The Sending of the Son of God

But in this the love of God was manifested, that He "sent His only begotten Son into the world, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (1 Jn 4:9; Jn 3:16).

Article 3

The Preaching of the Gospel

And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings¹ to whom He will and at what time He pleases; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified.² "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 are sent?" (Rom 10:14-15).

¹ Isa 52:7; Rom 10:14-17; ² 1 Cor 1:23-24

Article 4

A Twofold Outcome

The wrath of God abides upon those who believe not this gospel.¹ But such as receive it² and embrace Jesus the Savior by a true and living faith³ are by Him delivered from the wrath of God and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them.⁴

¹ Jn 3:36; Rom 1:18, 2:5; ² Jn 1:12-13; ³ HC 21 ⁴ Rom 10:9

Article 5

The Causes of Unbelief and Faith

The cause or guilt of this unbelief as well as of all other sins is no way in God,¹ but in man himself;² whereas faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through Him is the free gift of God, as it is written: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). Likewise: "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him..." (Php 1:29).

¹ Jas 1:13, 17; 1 Jn 1:5; ² Heb 4:6

Article 6

God's Eternal Decree

That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree.¹ "Known to God from eternity are all His works" (Acts 15:18). "Who works all things according to the counsel of His 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 obstinacy.² 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 it to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

¹ Rom 9:10-15; ² 1 Pt 2:8

Article 7

Election Defined

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world,¹ He has out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will,² chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of uprightness 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 has decreed to give to Christ to be saved by Him,³ and effectually to call⁴ and draw them⁵ 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,⁶ finally to glorify them⁷ for the demonstration of His mercy, and for the praise of the riches of His glorious grace; as it is written: "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him, in love having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He bestowed grace upon us in the Beloved" (Eph 1:4-6). And elsewhere: "Whom He predestined, these He also called, and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Rom 8:30).

¹ Eph 1:4; ² Eph 1:11; ³ Jn 17:2; ⁴ 1 Cor 1:9; ⁵ Jn 6:37, 44; ⁶ Jn 17:12; ⁷ Jn 17:24

Article 8

One Decree of Election

There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved,¹ both under the Old² and New Testament;³ since the Scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose, and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which He has chosen us from eternity, both to grace and to glory, to salvation and to the way of salvation, which He has ordained that we should walk therein.

¹ Rom 8:28-30; ² Deut 7:7, 9:6; ³ Eph 1:4-5, 2:10

Article 9

Election Not Based on Foreseen Faith

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.¹ Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good, from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to the testimony of the apostle: "He chose us [not because we were, but]... that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph 1:4).

¹ Rom 8:29-30; Eph 2:9-10, 5:25-29

Article 10

Election Based on God's Good Pleasure

The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which does 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 persons¹ as a peculiar people to Himself, as it is written: "For the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil... it was said to her [namely, to Rebekah], 'the elder shall serve the younger.' Even as it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated'" (Rom 9:11-13).² "And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

¹ Eph 1:4-11; ² Gen 25:23; Mal 1:2-3

Article 11

Election Unchangeable

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;¹ neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.²

¹ Rom 8:29-30; ² Jn 6:37, 10:28

Article 12

The Assurance of Election

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,¹ but by observing in themselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure² the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God, such as, a true faith in Christ,³ filial fear of God,⁴ a godly sorrow for sin,⁵ a hungering and thirsting after righteousness,⁶ etc.

¹ Deut 29:29; ² Rom 4:18-5:2, 5; ³ 1 Cor 2:10-11; ⁴ 2 Cor 13:5; ⁵ 2 Cor 7:10; ⁶ Mt 5:6

Article 13

The Value of This Assurance

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,¹ and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to Him who first manifested so great love towards them.² 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 carelessness with the grace of election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

¹ 1 Jn 3:3, 7-10; ² 1 Jn 4:19

Article 14

How Election is to be Taught

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 the New Testament, so it is still to be published in due time and place in the Church of God,¹ for which it was peculiarly designed, provided it be done with reverence, in the spirit of discretion and piety,² for the glory of God's most holy Name,³ and for enlivening and comforting His people,⁴ without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High.⁵

¹ Acts 20:27; ² Rom 12:3; ³ Rom 11:33-36; ⁴ Heb 6:17-18; ⁵ Deut 29:29; Job 36:23-26; 1 Cor 4:6

Article 15

Reprobation Defined

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,¹ while others are passed by in the eternal decree; whom God, out of His sovereign,² most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure, has decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves,³ 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,² at last, for the declaration of His justice, to condemn and punish 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.

¹ Rom 9:6; ² Rom 9:10-23; ³ Rom 9:22; 1 Pt 2:8; ² Acts 14:16

Article 16

Responses to the Doctrine of Reprobation

Those in whom a living faith in Christ,¹ and assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience,² a glorying in God through Christ,³ is not as yet strongly felt, and who nevertheless make use of the means which God has 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 to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation have they who, though they seriously desire to be turned to God, to please Him only, and to be delivered from the body of death,⁴ cannot yet reach that measure of holiness and faith to which they aspire;⁵ since a merciful God has promised that He will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed.⁶ But this doctrine is justly terrible⁷ to those who, regardless of God and of the Savior Jesus Christ, have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world⁸ and the pleasures of the flesh, so long as they are not seriously converted to God.

¹ Jas 2:26; HC 21; ² 2 Cor 1:12; ³ Rom 5:11; Php 3:3; ⁴ Rom 7:24; ⁵ Rom 7:13-23; ⁶ Isa 42:3; Mt 12:20; ⁷ Heb 12:29; ⁸ Mt 13:22

Article 17

Children of Believers Who Die in Infancy

Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy,¹ not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with the parents are comprehended, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom it pleases God to call out of this life in their infancy.²

¹ 1 Cor 7:14; ² Gen 17:7; Acts 2:39

Article 18

Not Protest but Adoration

To those who murmur at the free grace of election and the just severity of reprobation we answer with the apostle: "But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?" (Rom 9:20),¹ and quote the language of our Savior: "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I wish with My own things?" (Mt 20:15). And therefore, with holy adoration of these mysteries, we exclaim in the words of the apostle: "Oh, 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 has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid unto him again?' For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever! Amen." (Rom 11:33-36).

¹ Job 34:34-37

Rejection of Errors

The true doctrine concerning election and reprobation having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

Paragraph 1

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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, 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 will grant in time, both faith in Christ and perseverance; as it is written "I have revealed Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world" (Jn 17:6), and "as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). And "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him" (Eph 1:4).

Paragraph 2

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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, non-decisive, 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: "Whom He predestined, these He also called, and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Rom 8:30).

Paragraph 3

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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, that 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 has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began" (2 Tim 1:9).

Paragraph 4

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: That in the election unto faith this condition is beforehand demanded 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 once conducted ourselves in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph 2:3-9).

Paragraph 5

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 of works but of Him who calls" (Rom 9:11). "And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him" (Eph 1:4). "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit shall remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (Jn 15:16). "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works" (Rom 11:6). "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4:10).

Paragraph 6

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 this gross error they make God 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 can not be led astray (Mt 24:24), that Christ does not lose those whom the Father gave him (Jn 6:39), and that God also glorified those whom he foreordained, called, and justified (Rom 8:30).

Paragraph 7

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: That there is in this life no fruit and no consciousness of the unchangeable elect 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; who according to Christ's admonition rejoice with his disciples that their names are written in heaven (Lk 10:20); who also place the consciousness of their election over against the fiery darts of the devil, asking: "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?" (Rom 8:33).

Paragraph 8

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 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: "He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens" (Rom 9:18). And also this: "It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given" (Mt 13:11). Likewise: "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight" (Mt 11:25-26).

Paragraph 9

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 which the gospel is not communicated.

For this Moses denies, addressing the people of Israel as follows: "Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it. The LORD delighted only in your fathers to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day" (Deut 10:14-15). And Christ said: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, 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" (Mt 11:21).

Second Head of Doctrine: The Death of Christ, and the Redemption of Men Thereby

Article 1

The Punishment Which God's Justice Requires

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just.¹ And His justice requires (as He has revealed Himself in His Word) that our sins committed against His infinite majesty should be punished,² not only with temporal but with eternal punishments, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape, unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.

¹ Ex 34:6-7; HC 11; BC 16; ² Rom 5:16; Gal 3:10

Article 2

The Satisfaction Made by Christ

Since, therefore, we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons, or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, He has been pleased of His infinite mercy to give His only begotten Son for our Surety,¹ who was made sin,² and became a curse for us and in our stead,³ that He might make satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf.⁴

¹ Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8; ² 2 Cor 5:21 ³ Gal 3:13; ⁴ HC 12-14

Article 3

The Infinite Value of Christ's Death

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.²

¹ Heb 9:26, 28, 10:14; ² Jn 1:29, 4:42; 1 Jn 2:2

Article 4

Why His Death Has Infinite Value

This death is of such infinite value and dignity because the person who submitted to it was not only truly and perfectly a holy man,¹ but also, the only begotten Son of God,² 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, moreover, because it was attended with a sense of the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin.³

¹ Mt 1:23; Heb 4:15, 7:26; ² Jn 1:18; 1 Jn 4:9; ³ Mt 27:46

Article 5

The Universal Proclamation of the Gospel

Moreover, the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life.¹ This promise, together with the command to repent and believe,² ought to be declared and published to all nations,² and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel.

¹ Jn 3:16; 1 Cor 1:23; ² Acts 2:38, 16:31; ³ Mt 28:19

Article 6

Why Some Do Not Believe

And, whereas many who are called by the gospel¹ 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.²

¹ Mt 22:14; ² Ps 95:8-11; Mt 23:27; Heb 4:6

Article 7

Why Others do Believe

But as many as truly believe, and are delivered and saved from sin and destruction through the death of Christ,¹ are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God² given them in Christ from everlasting,³ and not to any merit of their own.⁴

¹ 2 Cor 5:18; Col 2:13-14; ² Eph 2:8; ³ 2 Tim 1:9; ⁴ Eph 2:9; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 3:5

Article 8

The Efficacy of the Death of Christ

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,¹ 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,² should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language,³ 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,⁴ both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end,⁵ should at last bring them, free from every spot and blemish,⁶ to the enjoyment of glory in His own presence forever.

¹ Mt 20:28; Jn 10:15, 17:9; Eph 5:25-27; ² Lk 22:20; Heb 8:6; ³ Jn 11:51-52; Rev 5:9; ⁴ 1 Jn 1:7; ⁵ Jn 10:28; ⁶ Eph 5:27

Article 9

The Fulfillment of God's Counsel

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;¹ so that the elect in due time may be gathered together into one,² and that there may always be a church composed of believers,³ the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ; which may steadfastly love and faithfully serve Him as its Savior (who, as a bridegroom for his bride, laid down His life for them upon the cross);⁴ and which may celebrate His praises here and through all eternity.

¹ Mt 16:18; ² Jn 11:52; ³ 1 Kgs 19:18; ⁴ Eph 5:25

Rejection of Errors

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

Paragraph 1

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 says our Savior: "I lay down my life for the sheep... and I know them" (Jn 10:15, 27). And the prophet Isaiah says concerning the Savior: "Yet it pleased the LORD to crush Him; He has put Him to grief. When You 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" (Isa 53:10). Finally, this contradicts the article of faith according to which we believe that there is a church of God.

Paragraph 2

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 "Jesus has become a guarantee of a better covenant... the new covenant" and that "it has no power at all while the testator lives" (Heb 7:22, 9:15, 17).

Paragraph 3

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: That Christ by His satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for any one, 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 the death of Christ, in no way acknowledge that most important fruit or benefit thereby gained, and bring again out of hell the Pelagian error.

Paragraph 4

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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, in as much 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 set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith" (Rom 3:24-25). And these proclaim, as did the wicked Socinius, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole church.

Paragraph 5

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 opposes Scripture which teaches that we are by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:3).

Paragraph 6

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who use the difference between meriting and appropriating, to the end that they may instill into the minds of the careless and inexperienced this teaching that God, as far as He is concerned, has willed to apply to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; and 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 pretend that they present this distinction in a sound sense, seek to instill into the people the destructive poison of Pelagianism.

Paragraph 7

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: That Christ neither could die, nor needed to die, and also did not die, for those whom God loved in the highest degree and elected to eternal life, since these do not need the death of Christ.

For they contradict the apostle, who declares, Christ "loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20). Likewise: "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died" (Rom 8:33-34), namely, for them; and the Savior who says: "I lay down my life for the sheep" (Jn 10:15). And: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (Jn 15:12-13).

Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine The Corruption of Man, His Conversion to God, and the Manner Thereof

Article 1

The Effect of the Fall

Man was originally formed after the image of God.¹ 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.² But, revolting from God by the instigation of the devil and by his own free will,³ he forfeited these excellent gifts; and in the place thereof became involved in blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity, and perverseness of judgment; became wicked, rebellious, and obstinate in heart and will, and impure in his affections.⁴

¹ Gen 1:26-27; ² HC 6; ³ Gen 3:1-7; HC 9; ⁴ Rom 3:9-18; Eph 4:17-19

Article 2

The Spread of Corruption

Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness.¹ A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring.² Hence all the posterity of Adam, Christ only excepted,³ have derived corruption from their original parent,⁴ not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature, in consequence of the just judgment of God.

¹ Gen 5:3; ² Job 14:4; Ps 51:7; ³ Heb 4:15; ⁴ Rom 5:12-19

Article 3

Man's Total Inability

Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil,¹ dead in sin,² and in bondage thereto;³ and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit,⁴ they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, or to dispose themselves to reformation.

¹ Gen 6:5; ² Eph 2:1; ³ Jn 8:34; Rom 6:16-17; ⁴ Jn 3:3-6; Titus 3:5

Article 4

The Inadequacy of the Light of Nature

There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, and natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and shows some regard for virtue and for good outward behavior. 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. By no means, further, this light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted and hinders in unrighteousness, which by doing he becomes inexcusable before God.¹

¹ Rom 1:18-25

Article 5

The Inadequacy of the Law

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 reveals the greatness of sin,¹ and more and more convinces man thereof, yet, as it neither points out a remedy nor imparts strength to extricate him from his misery,² but, being weak through the flesh,³ leaves the transgressor under the curse,⁴ and man cannot by this law obtain saving grace.

¹ Rom 3:19-20; Gal 3:19; ² Rom 7:10, 13; 2 Cor 3:6-7; ³ Rom 8:3; ⁴ Gal 10; ⁵ Rom 3:20; Gal 3:11

Article 6

The Need for the Gospel

What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law could do, that God performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit¹ through the word or ministry of reconciliation;² which is the gospel concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it has pleased God to save such as believe,³ as well under the Old as under the New Testament.⁴

¹ Jn 3:1-8; ² 2 Cor 5:18-19; ³ 1 Cor 1:21; ⁴ Heb 4:2

Article 7

Why the Gospel is Sent to Some and Not to Others

This mystery of His will God reveals to but a small number under the Old Testament; under the New Testament (the distinction between various peoples having been removed¹) He reveals it to many. The cause of this dispensation is not to be ascribed to the superior worth of one nation above another, nor to their better use of the light of nature, but results wholly from the sovereign good pleasure² and unmerited love of God.³ Hence they to whom so great and so gracious a blessing is communicated,⁴ above their desert, or rather notwithstanding their demerits, are bound to acknowledge it with humble and grateful hearts, and with the apostle to adore, but in no wise curiously to pry into,⁵ the severity and justice of God's judgments displayed in others to whom this grace is not given.

¹ Rom 2:11; Gal 3:28; Eph 2:14; Col 3:11; ² Jer 9:23-24; Eph 1:9; ³ Dt 7:7-8; ⁴ Mt 11:26; ⁵ Deut 29:29; ⁶ Rom 11:22-23; Rev 16:7

Article 8

The Earnest Call by the Gospel

As many as are called by the gospel are sincerely called. For God has most earnestly and truly declared in His Word what is acceptable to Him, namely, that those who are called should come unto Him.¹ He also seriously promises rest of soul and eternal life to all who come to Him² and believe.³

¹ Isa 55:1; Mt 22:4; Jn 6:37; Rev 22:17; ² Mt 11:28-29; ³ Php 1:29

Article 9

Why Some Who are Called do Not Come

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 many who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come and be converted. The fault lies in themselves;¹ some of whom when called, regardless of their danger, reject the Word of life; others, though they receive it, do not allow it 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.²

¹ Mt 11:20-24, 22:1-8, 23:3; ² Mt 13:1-23

Article 10

Why Others Who Are Called do Come

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 conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains); but it must be wholly ascribed to God,¹ who, as He has chosen His own from eternity in Christ, so He calls them effectually in time,² confers upon them faith³ and repentance, rescues them from the power of darkness,⁴ and translates them into the kingdom of His own Son;⁵ that they may show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light,⁶ and may glory not in themselves but in the Lord,⁷ according to the testimony of the apostles in various places

¹ Rom 9:16; ² Rom 8:29-30; Titus 1:2-3; ³ Eph 2:8; ⁴ Gal 1:4; ⁵ Col 1:13; ⁶ 1 Pt 2:9; ⁷ 1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17

Article 11

How God Brings About Conversion

But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in his elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit,¹ that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God;² but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit He pervades the inmost recesses of man;³ He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart,⁴ and circumcises that which was uncircumcised;⁵ infuses new qualities into the will, which, though heretofore dead, He quickens;⁶ from being evil, disobedient, and obstinate, 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.⁷

¹ Heb 6:4-5; ² 1 Cor 2:10-14; ³ Heb 4:12; ⁴ Acts 16:14; ⁵ Deut 30:6; ⁶ Ezek 11:19, 36:26; ⁷ Mt 7:18; Gal 5:22-25

Article 12

Regeneration is the Work of God Alone

And this is that regeneration so highly extolled in Scripture, that renewal,¹ new creation,² resurrection from the dead,³ making alive,⁴ which God works in us without our aid.⁵ But this is in no way 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.⁶ 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 himself is rightly said to believe and repent by virtue of that grace received.

¹ Jn 3:3; ² 2 Cor 4:6, 5:17; ³ Jn 5:25; Rom 4:17; Eph 5:14; ⁴ Eph 2:5; ⁵ Php 2:13; ⁶ Jn 6:63-65

Article 13

Regeneration is Incomprehensible

Believers in this life cannot fully comprehend the manner of this operation.¹ Nevertheless, they are satisfied to know and experience that by this grace of God they are enabled to believe with the heart and to love their Savior.²

¹ Jn 3:8; ² Rom 10:9

Article 14

How Faith is a Gift of God

Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God,¹ 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 upon him, breathed and infused into him; nor 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,² works in man both to will and to believe, and indeed He works all in all.

¹ Eph 2:8; ² Php 2:13

Article 15

The Proper Attitude With Respect to God's Undeserved Grace

God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any; for how can He be indebted to one who had no previous gifts to bestow as a foundation for such recompense?¹ By no means, how can He be indebted to one who has nothing of his own but sin and falsehood?² He, therefore, who becomes the subject of this grace owes eternal gratitude to God,³ 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. Further, with respect to those who outwardly profess their faith and amend their 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.⁴ But we are in no way to conduct ourselves towards them with haughtiness, as if we had made ourselves to differ.⁵

¹ Rom 11:35; ² Jer 7:4; Amos 6:1; Rom 14:10; ³ Lk 17:12-19; ⁴ Rom 4:17; ⁵ 1 Cor 4:7

Article 16

Man's Will Not Taken Away But Made Alive

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;¹ so also this grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks, nor take away their will and its properties, or do violence thereto; but it 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;² in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist.³ Wherefore, unless the admirable Author of every good work so deal with us,⁴ man can have no hope of being able to rise from his fall by his own free will, by which, in a state of innocence, he plunged himself into ruin.

¹ Gen 2:17; Eph 2:1; ² Acts 2:46-47; Rom 8:2; ³ Ps 51:12; ⁴ Php 2:13

Article 17

The Use of Means

As the almighty operation of God whereby He brings forth and supports this our natural life does not exclude but requires the use of means by which God in His infinite mercy and goodness has chosen to exert His influence, so also the aforementioned supernatural operation of God by which we are regenerated in no way excludes or subverts the use of the gospel,¹ which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration² and food of the soul.³ Wherefore, as the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God,⁴ to His glory and to the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them, by the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the influence of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline,⁵ so even now it should be far from those who give or receive instruction in the Church to presume to tempt God by separating what He of His good pleasure has most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more clearly this favor of God, working in us, usually manifests itself, and the more directly His work is advanced; to whom alone all the glory, both for the means and for their saving fruit and efficacy, is forever due. Amen.⁶

¹ Isa 55:10-11; 1 Cor 1:21; ² Jas 1:18; 1 Pt 1:23, 25; ³ 1 Pt 2:2; ⁴ Acts 2:42; Rom 10:14-17; 2 Cor 5:11-21, 6:1; 2 Tim 4:2; ⁵ BC 29; ⁶ Jude 24-25

Rejection of Errors

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

Paragraph 1

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom 5:12). And: "For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation" (Rom 5:16). And "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).

Paragraph 2

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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, cannot 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.

Paragraph 3

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 affection; and that, these hindrances having been removed, the will can then bring into operation its natural 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 beyond cure" (Jer 17:9); and of the apostle: "Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others" (Eph 2:3).

Paragraph 4

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 things are contrary to the express testimony of Scripture: "you who were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1,5). And: "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5, 8:21). Moreover, to hunger and thirst for deliverance from misery and for life, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit, is peculiar to the regenerate and those that are called blessed (Ps 51:17; Mt 5:6).

Paragraph 5

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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, that is, 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 both the experience of all ages and the Scriptures testify that this is untrue. "He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes His judgments to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Ps 147:19-20). "Who in past generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16). And: "Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them" (Acts 16:6-7).

Paragraph 6

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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: "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts" (Jer 31:33). And: "For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring" (Isa 44:3). And: "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom 5:5). This is also repugnant to the constant practice of the Church, which prays by the mouth of the prophet thus: "Restore me, and I will return" (Jer 31:18).

Paragraph 7

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: That the grace whereby we are converted to God is only a gentle persuasion, 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 benefits, while Satan promises only temporal good.

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: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ez 36:26).

Paragraph 8

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: That God in the regeneration of man does not use His omnipotence to potently and infallibly bend man's will to faith and conversion; but that all the works of grace having been employed which God uses 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 man often 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 that efficiency of God's grace in our conversion, and the subjecting of the working of Almighty God to the will of man, which is contrary to the apostles, who teach that we believe according to the working of the strength of his might (Eph 1:19); and that God fulfills every desire of goodness and every work of faith with power (2 Thes 1:11); and that "His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pt 1:3).

Paragraph 9

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Rom 9:16). Likewise: "For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it" (1 Cor 4:7). And: "for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Php 2:13).

Fifth Head of Doctrine: The Perseverance of the Saints

Article 1

The Regenerate Not Free From Indwelling Sin

Those whom God, according to His purpose, calls to the communion of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, He also delivers from the dominion and slavery of sin,¹ though in this life He does not deliver them altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh.²

¹ Jn 8:34-36; Rom 6:17; ² Rom 7:21-24, 8:17-25

Article 2

Daily Sins of Weakness

Hence spring forth the daily sins of infirmity,¹ and blemishes cleave even to the best works of the saints.² These are to them a perpetual reason to humiliate themselves before God and to flee for refuge to Christ crucified; to mortify the flesh³ more and more by the spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of piety;⁴ and to press forward to the goal of perfection,⁵ until at length, delivered from this body of death, they shall reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.⁶

¹ 1 Jn 1:8; ² HC 62, 114; ³ Col 3:5; ⁴ 1 Tim 4:7; ⁵ Php 3:12, 14; ⁶ Rev 5:6, 10

Article 3

God Preserves His Own

By reason of these remains of indwelling sin,¹ and also because the temptations of the world and of Satan,² those who are converted could not persevere in that grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful,³ who, having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves⁴ them therein, even to the end.⁵

¹ Rom 7:20; ² Eph 6:12, 16; ³ Cor 10:13; ⁴ Jn 10:28-30; Php 1:6; 1 Pt 1:5; Jude 24 ⁵ 1 Pt 1:9

Article 4

Saints May Fall Into Serious Sins

Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God,¹ who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and moved by God that they cannot depart in some particular instances from the guidance of divine grace, and be seduced by the lusts of the flesh and obey them. Wherefore they must continually watch and pray,² lest they should be led into temptation.³ Which when they do not, they may be not only carried away by the flesh, the world, and Satan⁴ into great and heinous sins; but they are sometimes drawn into these evils by the righteous permission of God. This, the lamentable fall of David,⁵ Peter,⁶ and other saints described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates.

¹ Eph 1:19; ² 1 Thes 5:6, 17; ³ Mt 26:41; ⁴ HC 127; ⁵ 2 Sam 11; ⁶ Mt 26

Article 5

The Effects of Such Serious Sins

By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God,¹ incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit,² interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences,³ and sometimes for a while lose the sense of God's favor, until, when they change their course by serious repentance,⁴ the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them.⁵

¹ 2 Sam 12; ² Eph 4:30; ³ Mt 26:69-75; ⁴ Ps 32:3-5, Ps 51 ⁵ Num 6:25; Jn 21:15-19

Article 6

God Will Not Permit His Elect to be Lost

But God,¹ who is rich in mercy,² according to His unchangeable purpose of election,³ does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people even in their grievous falls;⁴ nor does He allow them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption⁵ and forfeit the state of justification,⁶ or to commit the sin unto death⁷ or against the Holy Spirit;⁸ nor does He permit them to be totally deserted and plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.⁹

¹ Eph 2:4; ² Eph 2:4; ³ Rom 9:11; Eph 1:11; ⁴ Ps 51:10-13; ⁵ Gal 4:5; ⁶ Rom 5:1, 8:1; ⁷ 1 J 5:16-18; ⁸ Mt 12:31-32; ⁹ 1 Pt 1:1-5

Article 7

God Will Again Renew His Elect to Repentance

For in the first place, in these falls He preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration¹ from perishing or being totally lost; and again, by His Word and Spirit He certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins,² that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator,³ 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.⁴

¹ 1 Pt 1:23; 1 Jn 3:9; ² Ps 32:5; 2 Cor 7:10; ³ Ps 51:19; ⁴ Php 2:12

Article 8

The Grace of the Triune God Preserves

Thus it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy, that they neither totally fall from faith and grace nor continue and perish finally in their backslidings;¹ 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 changed¹ nor His promise fail; neither can the call according to His purpose be revoked,² nor the merit, intercession,³ and preservation of Christ⁴ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit⁵ be frustrated or obliterated.

¹ Ps 32: 6-7, 10; ² Ps 33:11; Rom 9:11; Heb 6:17; ³ Rom 8:28, 30; ⁴ Lk 22:32; Rom 8:34; ⁵ Jn 10:28; ⁶ Eph 1:13

Article 9

The Assurance of This Preservation

Of this preservation of the elect to salvation and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they surely believe that they are and ever will continue true and living members of the Church,¹ and that they have the forgiveness of sins and life eternal.²

¹ Heb 10:19-23; HC 54; ² Rom 8:31-39; 2 Tim 4:8, 18

Article 10

The Source of This Assurance

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;¹ and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience² and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort that they shall finally obtain the victory,³ and of this infallible pledge of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.⁴

¹ Rom 8:16-17; 1 Jn 3:1-2; ² Acts 24:16; ³ Rom 8:37; ⁴ 1 Cor 15:19

Article 11

This Assurance is Not Always Felt

The Scripture moreover testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation,¹ does not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that they may be able to endure it,² and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.³

¹ 2 Cor 1:3; ² 1 Co 10:13; ³ Rom 7-8

Article 12

This Assurance is an Incentive to Godliness

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,¹ filial reverence,² true piety,³ patience in every tribulation,⁴ fervent prayers,⁵ constancy in suffering⁶ and in confessing the truth,⁷ and of solid rejoicing in God;⁸ so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works,⁹ as appears from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.¹⁰

¹ Rom 12:16; ² Ps 89:7, 114:7; Hab 2:20; Heb 12:28-29; ³ Ps 56:12-13; Ps 116:12; ⁴ Rom 12:12; ⁵ Rom 12:11; Php 4:6; ⁶ Acts 14:22; 2 Tim 2:3; ⁷ 1 Tim 6:11-14; ⁸ Rom 12:12; Php 4:4; ⁹ Rom 12:1; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Jn 3:3; ¹⁰ Eph 5:8-18

Article 13

This Assurance Does Not Lead to Carelessness

Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness or a disregard of piety in those who are recovered from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and concerned to continue in the ways of the Lord,¹ which He has ordained that they who walk therein² may keep the assurance of persevering; lest, on account of their abuse of His fatherly kindness, God should turn away His gracious countenance from them³ (which is to the godly dearer than life,⁴ and the withdrawal of which is more bitter than death) and they in consequence thereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience.

¹ Ps 51:12-19; ² Cor 7:10; ³ Eph 2:10; ⁴ Isa 64:7; ⁵ Ps 63:3; Jer 33:5

Article 14

The Use of Means in Perseverance

And as it has 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,¹ by meditation thereon,² and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof,³ and by the use of the sacraments.⁴

¹ Deut 6:20-25; Acts 2:42; 1 Tim 4:13; ² Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2, 37:31, 119:11; ³ 2 Tim 3:16-17; ⁴ Lk 22:14-20; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 10:16-17, 11:23-26

Article 15

This Doctrine is Hated by Satan But Loved by the Church

The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and the certainty thereof, which God has 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 believers. Satan abhors it, the world ridicules it, the ignorant and hypocritical abuse it, and the heretics oppose it. But the bride of Christ¹ has 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 so to continue to the end. Now to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.²

¹ Eph 5:32; ² 1 Pt 5:10-11

Rejection of Errors

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

Paragraph 1

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 the intercession of Christ: "What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded" (Rom 11:7). Likewise: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ" (Rom 8:32-35)?

Paragraph 2

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 furnished to us, even then it ever depends on the pleasure of the will whether it will persevere or not.

For this idea contains outspoken Pelagianism, and while it would make men free, it make 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 "will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:8).

Paragraph 3

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 of justification and regeneration, and the continued preservation by Christ, contrary to the expressed words of the apostle Paul: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom 5:8-9). And contrary to the apostle John: "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God" (1 Jn 3:9). And also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (Jn 10:28-29).

Paragraph 4

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 16-17, of those who sin unto death and having forbidden to pray for them, immediately adds to this in verse 18: "We know that whoever is born of God does not sin [meaning a sin of that character]; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him" (1 Jn 5:18).

Paragraph 5

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 very constant promises of God. So especially the apostle Paul: "nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:39). And John declares: "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us" (1 Jn 3:24).

Paragraph 6

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: That the doctrine of perseverance and the assurance 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 we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 Jn 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.

Paragraph 7

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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, beside 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 on 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.

Paragraph 8

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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: For you have “been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible” (1 Pt 1:23).

Paragraph 9

(The Synod rejects the errors of those) who teach: 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 you, that your faith should not fail” (Lk 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 Your Name those whom You have given Me,” and “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (Jn 17:11, 15, 20).

Conclusion

This is the clear, simple, and sincere declaration of the orthodox doctrine concerning the five articles which have been disputed in the Belgic Churches, and a rejection of the errors by which they have for some time been troubled. The Synod judges this doctrine to be drawn from the Word of God, and to be agreeable to the confession of the Reformed Churches. Whence it clearly appears that some, whom it by no means became, have violated all truth, equity, and charity, in wishing to persuade the public of the following perversion:

Namely, "That the doctrine of the Reformed Churches concerning predestination, with its associated points, by its own genius and necessary tendency, leads the minds of men away from all piety and religion; that it is an opiate administered by the flesh and the devil; the stronghold of Satan, where he lies in wait for all, and from which he wounds multitudes, and mortally pierces many with darts both of despair and security; that this same doctrine 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 conversely that, in this Reformed doctrine of predestination, 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 this same doctrine teaches that God, by a mere arbitrary act of his will, without the least respect or view to any sin, has predestined 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 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 them." And they go on to suggest many other things of the same kind which the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge but detest with their whole soul.

Wherefore, this Synod of Dort, in the name of the Lord, entreats as many as reverently call upon the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to judge the faith of the Reformed Churches, not from the slander which on every side is heaped upon it, nor from the private expressions of a few among ancient and modern teachers, often dishonestly quoted, or corrupted and taken to a meaning quite foreign to their intention; but from the public confessions of the Churches themselves, and from this 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 slanderers 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 slanderers of sound doctrine, and endow the faithful ministers 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.