

THE THREE FORMS OF UNITY

The Heidelberg Catechism

The Belgic Confession

**The Canons of the
Council of Dordrecht**

**along with the
Ecumenical Creeds**

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INTRODUCTION

Since the Bible teaches that Christians continue to sin, the church will be corrupted over time. Therefore, Christians should always be attempting to reform the church, to put it back in accordance with biblical teachings and practice.

During the sixteenth century, Roman Catholics chose to stop participating in this process and actually condemned those who attempted such reform. Reformers were forced outside of the Roman Catholic Church and participated in the Reformation in Protestant churches such as the Lutheran, Anglican, and Reformed.

From 1618 to 1619, the Reformed churches from dozens of countries throughout the world sent representatives to meet at the Synod, or Council, of Dordrecht. There, they collectively stated their faith and summarized biblical teachings with three documents, or forms, of unity: the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dort.

The United Reformed Churches in North America are the descendants of these international Reformed churches, and as participants in this Reformation here offer these statements of faith as summaries of biblical teaching.

The Church has always stated its faith for many reasons and these Three Forms of Unity perform

many roles. They summarize biblical teachings such as the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, Predestination, Justification, and the Church. They allow members to gather together around shared beliefs about fundamental teachings in the Bible, and thereby relegate non-essential doctrines (political positions, educational platforms, etc.) to personal opinion lest the church needlessly split. They also help others understand what we believe and thereby provide a basis upon which ecumenical unity can be built.

Different types of documents serve different purposes. Catechisms, such as the Heidelberg Catechism (written in Heidelberg, Germany) are documents written in a question-and-answer format that help explain biblical teaching to children and those new to the faith; the Heidelberg is divided into 52 Sundays, or Lord's Days, which allows it to be worked through in a year. Confessions, such as the Belgic Confession (written in Belgium) explain various biblical teachings. Finally, canons, such as the Canons of Dort (written at the Synod of Dordrecht), are series of technical responses to specific theological issues.

These documents were originally written in Greek, Latin, French and German. The English translations of the four ecumenical creeds (Apostles', Nicene, Athanasian and Chalcedonian) and the three forms of unity (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht) were created

and reviewed by various individuals, including pastors and elders in the URC.

The English translation of the three forms of unity offered here may look different than others. Many modern English editions are translations of translations or the products of various alterations and additions to the text of the documents including scriptural citations and dubious historical notes.

The Belgic Confession offered here is a new translation. Current English editions select specific versions of the confession, used only in limited locations for limited periods of time, as the sources of their translations. The international churches, however, gathered together at the Synod of Dort and collected these versions and edited them (added to them, subtracted from them, and re-wrote entire articles). The text that serves as the basis of this new translation represents the consensus of the international movement from which the URC traces its roots.

The sources of the Heidelberg Catechism and Canons of Dort used at Dort could not be precisely identified. For the Canons of Dort, the translation of the CRC's Psalter Hymnal is offered, and for the Heidelberg Catechism, we offer a typical amalgamation without textual pedigree but rendered in modern English and bearing bible verses.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	2
Apostles' Creed.....	6
Nicene Creed.....	7
Athanasian Creed.....	8
Chalcedonian Creed.....	11
The Heidelberg Catechism.....	12
The Belgic Confession.....	72
The Canons of Dordrecht.....	115

Apostles' Creed

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, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
On the third day he rose from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty;
from there he shall come again to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

AMEN.

Nicene Creed

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 of the Father before all worlds; 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 sitteth on the right hand of the Father and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord and Giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spake by the prophets. And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Athanasian Creed

Whosoever wants to be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith.

Which faith except everyone 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 Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is all One, the Glory Equal, the Majesty Co-Eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father Uncreated, the Son Uncreated, and the Holy Ghost Uncreated. The Father Incomprehensible, the Son Incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost Incomprehensible. The Father Eternal, the Son Eternal, and the Holy Ghost Eternal and yet they 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 Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not Three Almighties but One Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not Three Gods, but One God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord, and yet not Three

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Lords but One Lord. For, like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, there be 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 Ghost 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 Ghost, not Three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore or after Other, None is greater or less than Another, but the whole Three Persons are Co-eternal together, and Co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity is Trinity, and the Trinity is Unity is to be worshiped. He therefore that wants to 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 into 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 be 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 sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for 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 and firmly, he cannot be saved.

Chalcedonian Creed

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

The Heidelberg Catechism

~~Introduction (Q. 1-2)

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 blood[4] has fully satisfied for all my sins,[5] and redeemed me from all the power of the devil;[6] and so preserves me[7] that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head;[8] indeed, that all things must work together for my salvation.[9] Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life,[10] and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live unto Him.[11]

[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; [5] 1 Jn 1:7; 2:2; [6] Jn 8:34-36; Heb 2:14-15; 1 Jn 3:8; [7] Jn 6:39-40, 10:27-30; 2 Thes 3:3; 1 Pt 1:5; [8] Mt 10:29-31; Lk 21:16-18; [9] Rom 8:28; [10] Rom 8:15-16; 2 Cor 1:21-22, 5:5; Eph 1:13-14; [11] Rom 8:14

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

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Three things:[1] First, the greatness of my sin and misery.[2] Second, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery.[3] Third, how I am to be thankful to God for such redemption.[4]

[1] Lk 24:46-47; Rom 7:24-25; 1 Cor 6:11; Tit 3:3-7; [2] Jn 9:41, 15:22; Rom 3:9-10; 1 Jn 1:10; [3] Jn 17:3; Acts 4:12, 10:43; Gal 3:13; [4] Mt 5:16; Rom 6:13; Eph 5:8-11; Col 3:17; 1 Pt 2:9-12

~~First Part: Guilt (Q. 3-11)

Lord's Day 2

3. From where do you know your misery?

From the Law of God.[1]

[1] Rom 3:20, 7:7

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

Christ teaches us in sum, 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 unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.[2] On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." [3]

[1] Deut 6:5; [2] Lev 19:18; Gal 5:14; [3] Lk 10:27

5. Can you keep all this perfectly?

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

[1] Rom 3:10-12, 23; 1 Jn 1:8, 10; [2] Gen 6:5, 8:21; Jer 17:9; Rom 7:23, 8:7; Eph 2:3; Tit 2:3

Lord's Day 3

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

No, but God created man good[1] and after His own image,[2] that is, in 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; 2 Cor 3:18; [4] Col 3:10; [5] Ps 8

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

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 14:2-3, 51:5

8. But are we so depraved that we are completely incapable of 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; Jer 17:9; Jn 3:6; Rom 7:18; [2] Jn 3:3-5

Lord's Day 4

9. Does not God, then, do injustice to 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 disobedience[3] deprived himself and all his descendants of this power.[4]

[1] Gen 1:31; Eph 4:24; [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 allow such disobedience and apostasy to go unpunished?

Certainly not,[1] 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,[2] as He has declared: "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." [3]

[1] Heb 9:27; [2] Ex 34:7; Ps 5:4-6, 7:10; Nah 1:2; Mt 25:41; Rom 1:18, 5:12; Eph 5:6; [3] Deut 27:26; Gal 3:10

11. But is not God also merciful?

God is indeed merciful,[1] but He is likewise just;[2] His justice therefore requires that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God, be 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; 2 Cor 6:14-16; Heb 10:30-31; Rev 14:11; [3] Mt 25:45-46

~~Second Part: Grace (Q. 12-87)

Lord's Day 5

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

God wills that His justice be satisfied;[1] therefore, we must make full satisfaction to that justice, 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?

Certainly not; on the contrary, we daily increase our guilt.[1]

[1] Job 9:2-3, 15:15-16; Ps 130:3; Mt 6:12, 16:26; Rom 2:4-5

14. Can any mere creature make satisfaction for us?

None; for first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man committed;[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 kind of mediator and redeemer, then, must we seek?

One who is a true[1] and righteous man,[2] and yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.[3]

[1] 1 Cor 15:21-22, 25-26; Heb 2:17; [2] Isa 53:11; Jer 13:16; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 7:26; [3] Isa 7:14, 9:6; Jer 23:6; Jn 1:1; Rom 8:3-4; Heb 7:15-16

Lord's Day 6

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

Because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should make

satisfaction for sin;[1] but one who is himself a sinner cannot satisfy for others.[2]

[1] Rom 5:12, 15; 1 Cor 15:21; Heb 2:14-16; [2] Isa 53:3-5; Heb 7:26-27; 1 Pt 3:18

17. Why must He also be true God?

That by the power of His Godhead[1] He might bear in His manhood the burden of God's wrath,[2] and so obtain for[3] and restore to us righteousness and life.[4]

[1] Isa 9:5; [2] Dt 4:24; Isa 53:8; Ps 130:3; Nah 1:6; Acts 2:24; [3] Jn 3:16; Acts 20:28; [4] Isa 53:5, 11; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Jn 1:2

18. But who now is that Mediator, who in one person is true God and also a true and righteous 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] Acts 4:12; 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 patriarchs[2] 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, 49:10-11; [3] Isa 53; Jer 23:5-6; Mic 7:18-20; Acts 3:22-24, 10:43; Rom 1:2; 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; Heb 10:1

Lord's Day 7

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

No, only those who by true faith are ingrafted into Him and receive all His benefits.[1]

[1] Ps 2:12; Mt 7:14; Jn 1:12-13, 3:16, 18, 36; Rom. 11:16-21; 1 Cor 15:22; Heb 4:2-3, 10:39

21. What is true faith?

True faith is not only a sure 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[3] works in me by the Gospel,[4] that not only to others, but to me also,[5] forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation are freely given by God,[6] merely of grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.[7]

[1] Jn 17:3, 17; Heb 11:1-3; Jas 1:6, 2:19; [2] Rom 4:16-21, 5:1, 10:10; Heb 4:16; [3] 2 Cor 4:13; Php 1:19, 29; [4] Acts 16:4; Rom 1:16, 10:17; 1 Cor 1:21; [5] Gal 2:20; [6]

Rom. 1:17; Heb 10:10, 11:1-2; [7] Acts 10:43; Rom 3:20-26; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:7-10

22. What, then, is 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 summary.

[1] Mt 28:19-20; Jn 20:30-31; 2 Tim 3:15; 2 Pt 1:21

~~The Apostles' Creed

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 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.

~~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.[1]

[1] 1 Pt 1:2

25. Since there is but one Divine Being,[1] why do you speak of three persons: 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; Ps 110:1; Isa 61:1, 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

~~Of God the Father and our Creation Creation

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 in

them is,[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 troubled life, 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; Col 1:16; Heb 11:3; [2] Ps 104:2-5, 27-30, 115:3; Mt 6:30, 10:29-30; Acts 17:24-25; Eph 1:11; Heb 1:3; [3] Mt 6:8; Jn 1:12-13; Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:4-7; Eph 1:5, 3:14-16; [4] Ps 55:22, 90:1-2; Mt 6:25-26; Lk 12:22-31; [5] Acts 17:27-28; Rom 8:28; [6] Gen 18:14; Rom 8:31-39, 10:12; [7] Num 23:19; Mt 6:32-33, 7:9-11

~~Providence

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,[3] fruitful and barren years, meat and drink,[4] health and sickness,[5] riches and

poverty,[6] indeed, all things come not by chance,[7] but by His fatherly hand.[8]

[1] Jer 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-28; [2] Heb 1:3; [3] Jer 5:24; [4] Acts 14:15-17; [5] Jn 9:3; [6] Job 1:21; Ps 103:19; Prov 22:2; Rom 5:3-5; [7] Prov 16:33; [8] Mt 10:29; Eph 1:1

28. What does it profit us to know that God created, and by His providence 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; Rom 5:3; Jas 1:3; [2] Deut 8:10; 1 Thes 5:18; [3] Ps 55:22; Rom 5:3-5, 8:35, 38-39; [4] Job 1:12, 2:6; Ps 71:7; Prov 21:1; Acts 17:24-28; 2 Cor 1:10

~~Of God the Son and our Redemption His Name

Lord's Day 11

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

Because He saves us from all our sins,[1] and because salvation is not to be sought or found in any other.[2]

[1] Mt 1:21; Heb 7:25; [2] Isa 43:11; Lk 2:10-11; Jn 15:4-5; Acts 4:11-12; 1 Tim 2:5

30. Do those also believe in the only Savior Jesus, who seek their salvation and welfare from “saints,” themselves, or anywhere else?

No; although they make their boast of Him, yet in their deeds 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, 30-31; Gal 5:4; [2] Isa 9:7; Mt. 23:28; Jn 1:16; Col 1:19-20, 2:10; 1 Jn 1:7

~~His Title

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 has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption;[3] and 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, 21]; [5] Heb 9:12, 10:11-14; [6] Rom 5:9-10, 8:34; Heb 9:24; 1 Jn 2:1; [7] Zech 9:9 [Mt 21:5]; Lk 1:33; [8] Ps 2:6; Isa.61:1-2; Mt 28:18-20; Jn 10:28; 1 Pt 2:24; Rev 12:10-11, 19:16

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 with a free conscience may fight against sin and the devil in this life,[5] and hereafter in eternity reign with Him over all creatures.[6]

[1] Acts 11:26; 1 Cor 12:12-27; 1 Jn 2:20, 27; [2] Joel 2:28 [Acts 2:17]; 1 Jn 2:27; [3] Mk 8:38, 10:32; Rom 10:9-10; Heb 13:15; [4] Rom 12:1; 1 Pt 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6, 5:8, 10; [5] Gal 5:16-17; Eph 6:11; 1 Tim 1:18-19; [6] Mt 25:34; Eph 6:12; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 3:21

~~His Deity

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 children of God by adoption, through grace, for His sake.[2]

[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; 1 Jn 3:1

34. Why do you call Him “our Lord?”

Because not with silver or 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] Acts 2:36; 1 Cor 6:20, 7:23; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Tit 2:14; 1 Pt 2:9; [3] Col 1:13-14; Heb 2:14-15

~~His Incarnation

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 Himself 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 might also be the true seed of David,[4] like unto His brethren in all things,[5] except for sin.[6]

[1] Jn 1:1-4, 10:30-36; Rom 1:3-4, 9:5; Col 1:15-17; 1 Jn 5:20; [2] Mt 1:18-23; Jn 1:14; Gal 4:4; Heb 2:14; [3] Mt

1:18-20; 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 holiness[2] covers, in the sight of God,
my sin,[3] wherein I was conceived.[4]

[1] 1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb 2:16-17, 9:13-15; [2] Rom 8:3-4; 2
Cor 5:21; Gal 4:4-5; 1 Pt 1:18-19; [3] Ps 32:1; 1 Jn 1:9;
[4] Ps 51:5

~~His Death

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 suffering, as the only
atoning 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, 24, 3:18; [2] Ps 22:14-
16; Mt 26:38; Rom 3:25-26, 5:6; 1 Cor 5:7; Eph 5:2; Heb
10:14; 1 Jn 2:2, 4:10; [3] Rm 8:1-4; Gal 3:13; Col 1:13;

Heb 9:12; 1Pt 1:18-19; [4] Jn 3:16; Rom 3:24-26; 2Cor 5:21; Heb 9:11

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 were exposed.[2]

[1] Lk 23:13-24; Jn 19:4, 12-16; Acts 4:27-28; [2] Ps 69:4; Isa 53:4-5; Mt 27:24; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13

39. Is there anything more in His having been “crucified” than if He had suffered some other death?

Yes, for thereby I am assured that He took upon Himself the curse which lay upon me,[1] because the death of the cross was accursed of God.[2]

[1] Gal 3:13-14; [2] Deut 21:22-23; Php 2:8

Lord’s Day 16

40. Why was it necessary for Christ to suffer “death?” Because the justice and truth [1] of God required that satisfaction for our sins could be made in no other way than by the death of the Son of God.[2]

[1] Gen 2:17; [2] Rom 6:23, 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; Mt 27:59-60; 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 sin and an entering into eternal life.[1]

[1] Jn 5:24; Rom 7:24-25; 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] so that 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; 2 Cor 5:15; 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, has redeemed me from the anguish and torment of hell.[1]

[1] Ps 18:5; 116:3; Isa 53; Mt 26:36-46, 27:46; Heb 5:7-10

~~His Resurrection

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 He has obtained for us by His death.[1]

Second, by His power we are also now raised up to a new life.[2] Third, the resurrection of Christ is to us a sure pledge of our blessed resurrection.[3]

[1] Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 15:15-20, 54-55; 1 Pt 1:3-5, 21; [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

~~His Ascension

Lord's Day 18

46. What do you understand by the words "He ascended into heaven?"

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

[1] Mt 26:64; Lk 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11; [2] Rom 8:34; Eph 4:10; Heb 4:14, 7:23-25, 9:11, 24; [3] Mt 24:30; Acts 1:11, 3:20-21

47. But is not Christ with us even unto the end of the world,[1] as He has promised?

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; Eph 4:8; Heb 8:4

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

Not at all, 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] Mt 28:6; Jn 1:14, 48, 3:13, 11:15; 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] Second, 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] Third, that He sends us His Spirit as an earnest,[3] by whose power we seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and not things on the earth.[4]

[1] Rom 8:34; 1 Jn 2:1; [2] Jn 14:2, 17:24, 20:17; Eph 2:4-6; [3] Jn 14:16; Acts 2:33; 2 Cor 1:21-22, 5:5; [4] Jn 14:3; Col 3:1-4; Heb 9:24

~~His Reign

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 the Head of His Church,[1] by whom the Father governs all things.[2]

[1] Eph 1:20-23; Col 1:18; [2] Ps 110:1; Mt 28:18; Jn 5:22-23; 1 Pt 3:22

51. What does this glory of Christ, our Head, profit us?

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First, that by His Holy Spirit He pours out heavenly gifts upon 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; Acts 2:33; 1 Cor 15:25-26; Rev 19:11-16

52. What comfort is it to you that Christ “shall come to judge the living and the dead?”

That in all my sorrows and persecutions, I, with uplifted head, look for the very One, who offered Himself for me to the judgment of God, and removed all curse from me,[1] to come as Judge from heaven,[2] who shall cast all His and my enemies into everlasting condemnation,[3] but shall take me with all His chosen ones to Himself into heavenly joy and glory.[4]

[1] Lk 21:28; Rom 8:22-25; Php 3:20-21; Tit 2:13-14; [2] Lk 21:28; Rom 8:23-24; Php 3:20-21; Tit 2:13; [3] Mt 25:41; 1 Thes 4:16-18; 2 Thes 1:6, 10; [4] Mt 25:31-46; Acts 1:10-11; 1 Thes 4:16-17; 2 Thes 1:6-10; Heb 9:28

~~Of God the Holy Spirit and our Sanctification

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] Second, that He is also given unto me:[2] by true faith makes me a partaker of Christ and all His benefits,[3] comforts me,[4] and shall abide with me forever.[5]

[1] Gen 1:1-2; Isa 48:16; Mt 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19; [2] 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 1:21-22; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:13; [3] 1 Cor 6:17; Gal 3:14; 1 Pt 1:2; [4] Jn 15:26; Acts 9:31; [5] Jn 14:16-17; Rom 15:13; 1 Pt 4:14; 1 Jn 4:13

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 Himself[5] unto everlasting life a chosen communion[6] in the unity of the true faith;[7] and that I am and forever shall remain a living member of this communion.[8]

[1] Gen 26:4; Rev 5:9; [2] Isa 59:21; Jn 10:10; 1 Cor 11:26; [3] Jn 10:11; Acts 20:28; Eph 1:10-13, 4:11-13; Col 1:18; [4] Isa 59:21; Rom 1:16, 10:14-17; Eph 5:26; [5] Ps 129:1-5; Mt 16:18; Jn 10:28-30; [6] Rom 8:29-30; Eph 1:3-14, 4:3-6; [7] Ps 71:18; Jn 10:28-30; Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor 1:8-9, 11:26; [8] Ps 23:6; Jn 10:27-28; 1 Cor 1:4-9; Gal 3:28; 1 Pt 1:3-5; 1 Jn 2:19, 3:14, 19-21

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

First, that believers, one and all, as members of the Lord Jesus Christ, are partakers with Him in all His treasures and gifts;[1] second, 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 12:12-13, 20-27, 13:1-7; Php 2:4-8; Heb 3:14

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

That God, for the sake of Christ’s satisfaction,[1] will no more remember my sins, nor 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] 1 Jn 2:2; [2] Ps 103:3, 10-12; Jer 31:34; Mic 7:18-19; Rom 7:21-25, 8:1-4; 2 Cor 5:18-21; 1 Jn 1:7, 2:2; [3] Jn 3:17-18, 5:24; Rom 4:7-8, 7:18, 8:1-2; Eph 1:7

Lord’s Day 22

57. What comfort do you receive from the “resurrection of the body?”

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 be reunited with my soul, and made like the glorious body of Christ.[2]

[1] Lk 16:21, 23:43; Php 1:21-23; [2] Job 19:25-27; 1 Cor 15:20, 42-46, 53-54; Php 3:21; 1 Jn 3:2

58. What comfort do you receive from the article "life everlasting?"

That, inasmuch as I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy,[1] I shall after this life possess complete blessedness, such as eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man,[2] therein to praise God forever.[3]

[1] Jn 17:3; Rom 14:17; 2 Cor 5:2-3; [2] 1 Cor 2:9; [3] Jn 17:24; Rom 8:23; 1 Pt 1:8

~~Justification

Lord's Day 23

59. What 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, 8:16; Tit 3:7

60. How are you righteous before God?

.....

Only by true faith in Jesus Christ:[1] that is, although my conscience accuses me, that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have never kept any of them,[2] and 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,[6] righteousness, and holiness of Christ,[7] as if I had never committed nor had any sins, and had myself accomplished all the obedience which Christ has fulfilled for me:[8] if only I accept such benefit with a believing heart.[9]

[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] Dt 9:6; Ezek 36:22; Tit 3:4-5; [5] Rom 3:24; Eph 2:8; [6] 1 Jn 2:2; [7] Rom 4:3-5; 2 Cor 5:17-19; 1 Jn 2:1; [8] Rom 4:24-25; 2 Cor 5:21; [9] Jn 3:18; Acts 16:30-31; Rom 3:22, 28, 10:10

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

Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, but because only the satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God:[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] Isa 53:5; Rom 4:16, 10:10; Gal 3:22; 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 entirely conformable to the divine law,[1] but 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; Php 3:12; Jas 2:10

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

The reward comes not of merit, but of grace.[1]

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

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; Rom 6:1-2

~~The Sacraments

Lord's Day 25

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

The Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts[1] by the preaching of the Holy Gospel,[2] and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments.[3]

[1] Jn 3:5; Rom 10:17; 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; Rom 4:11;
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 their use He may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the Gospel,[1] namely, that of free grace He grants us 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; Ezek 20:12; Rom 4:11; Heb 9:8-9; [2] Mt 26:27-28; Acts 2:38; Heb 10:10

67. Are both the Word and the sacraments designed to direct our faith to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

Yes, truly, for the Holy Spirit teaches in the Gospel and assures us by the holy sacraments, that our

whole salvation stands in the one sacrifice of Christ made for us on the cross.[1]

[1] Acts 2:41-42; Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 11:26; Gal 3:27; Heb 9:12

68. How many sacraments has Christ instituted in the New Testament?

Two: Holy Baptism[1] and the Holy Supper.[2] [1] Mt 28:19-20; [2] 1 Cor 11:23-26

~~Baptism

Lord's Day 26

69. How is it signified and sealed to you in Holy Baptism that you have part in the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross?

Thus: that Christ instituted this outward washing with water [1] and joined to it 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 28:19-20; Acts 2:38; [2] Mt 3:11; Mk 1:4; 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, so that we may more and more die unto sin and lead holy and unblamable lives.[2]

[1] Ezek 36:25-27; Zech 13:1; Eph 1:7; Heb 12:24; 1 Pt 1:2; Rev 1:5, 7:14; [2] Jn 1:33, 3:5-8; Rom 6:4; 1 Cor 6:11, 12:13; Col 2:11-12; Heb 9:14

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 says: "Go therefore, and teach 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 shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." [2] This promise is also repeated where Scripture calls Baptism the washing of regeneration[3] and the washing away of sins.[4]

[1] Mt 28:19; [2] Mk 16:16; [3] Tit 3:5; [4] Acts 22:16

Lord's Day 27

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

No,[1] for only the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sin.[2]

[1] Eph 5:26; 1 Pt 3:21; [2] Mt 3:11; 1 Cor 6:11; 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 with 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 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] 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 through the blood of Christ[2] both redemption from sin and the Holy Spirit, who works faith, are promised to them no less than to their parents,[3] 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,[4] as was done in the Old

Testament by circumcision,[5] in place of which in the New Testament Baptism is appointed.[6]

[1] Gen 17:7; [2] Mt 19:14; [3] Ps 22:10; Isa 44:1-3; Lk 1:14-15; Acts 2:38-39, 16:31; [4] Acts 10:47; 1 Cor 7:14;

[5] Gen 17:9-14; [6] Col 2:11-13

~~The Holy Supper

Lord's Day 28

75. How is it signified and sealed to 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 in remembrance of Him, 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 10:16-17, 11:23-25, 12:13

76. What does it mean to eat the crucified body and drink the shed blood of Christ? It means not only to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and death of Christ, and thereby to obtain the forgiveness of sins and life eternal;[1] but moreover, also, to be so united more and more to His sacred body by the Holy Spirit,[2] who dwells both in Christ and in us, that, although He is in heaven[3] and we on earth, we are nevertheless flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone,[4] and live and are governed forever by one Spirit, as members of the same body are governed by one soul.[5]

[1] Jn 6:35, 40, 47-48, 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, 19; Eph 3:16-19, 5:29-30, 32; 1 Jn 4:13; [5] Jn 6:56-58, 63, 14:23, 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 says: "The Lord Jesus 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, when He had eaten, 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 come." [1] And this promise is also repeated by the Apostle Paul, where he says: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, so we being many are one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." [2]

[1] 1 Cor 11:23-25; [2] 1 Cor 10:16-17

Lord's Day 29

78. Do, then, the bread and the 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 [2] does not become the body of Christ itself, though agreeably to the nature and usage of sacraments it is called the body of Christ. [3]

[1] Mt 26:29; Eph 5:26; Tit 3:5; [2] Mt 26:26-29; 1 Cor 11:26-28; [3] Gen 17:10-11; Ex 12:11, 13, 26-27, 43, 48; 1 Cor 10:1-4, 16-17, 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 the apostle Paul, the communion of the body and the blood of Christ?

Christ speaks thus with great cause, namely, not only to teach us thereby, that like as the 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 by 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 ourselves had suffered and done all in our own person.[3]

[1] Jn 6:51-55; [2] 1 Cor 5:16-17, 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 Pope's 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 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 there to be worshipped.[4] But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have 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 worshipped in them. And thus the Mass at bottom is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ,[5] and an accursed idolatry.

[1] Mt 26:28; Jn 19:30; Heb 7:27, 9:12, 25-28, 10:10-12, 14; [2] 1 Cor 6:17, 10:16-17; [3] Jn 20:17; Acts 7:55-56; Heb 1:3, 8:1; [4] Lk 24:52; Jn 4:21-24, 20:17; Acts 7:55; Php 3:20-21; Col 3:1; 1 Thes 1:9-10; [5] Mt 4:10; Heb 9, 10

81. Who are to come to 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 suffering and death of Christ; who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to amend their life. But the impenitent and hypocrites eat and drink judgment to themselves.[1]

[1] Ps 51:3, 103:1-4; Mt 5:6; Jn 7:37-38; 1 Cor 10:19-22, 11:26-32

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

No, for thereby the covenant of God is profaned and His wrath provoked against the whole

congregation;[1] therefore, the Christian Church is bound, according to the order of Christ and His Apostles, to exclude such persons by the Office of the Keys until they amend their lives.

[1] Ps 50:16-17; Isa 1:11-17, 66:3; Jer 7:21-23; Mt 7:6; 1 Cor 11:17-34; 2 Thes 3:6; Tit 3:10-11

~~Preaching & Discipline

Lord's Day 31

83. What is the Office of the Keys?

The preaching of the Holy Gospel and Christian discipline; by these two the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and shut against unbelievers.[1]

[1] Mt 16:18-19, 18:18; Lk 24:46-47; Jn 20:21-23; 1 Cor 1:23-24

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.[1] According to this testimony of the Gospel, God will judge men both in this life and in that which is to come.

[1] Isa 58:1; Mt 16:19; Jn 3:31-36, 8:24, 20:21-23; Acts 10:43; 2 Cor 2:15-16

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

In this way: that, according to the command of Christ, if any under the Christian name show themselves unsound either in doctrine or in life, and after several brotherly admonitions do not turn from their errors or 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 denied the holy sacraments and thereby excluded from the Christian communion, and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ; and if they promise and show real amendment, they are again received as members of Christ and His Church.[1]

[1] Mt 18:15-20; Lk 15:20-24; 1 Cor 5:3-5, 11-13; 2 Cor 2:6-11; 2 Thes 3:14-15; 2 Jn 10-11

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

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

87. Can they, then, not be saved who do not turn to God from their unthankful, impenitent life? By no means, for, as Scripture says, no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, covetous man, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like shall inherit the kingdom of God.[1]

[1] 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph 5:5-6; 1 Jn 3:14-15

Lord's Day 33

88. In how many things does true repentance or conversion consist?

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In two things: the dying of the old man, and the making alive of the new.[1]

[1] Rom 6:4-6; 1 Cor 5:7; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:22-24; Col 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 making alive 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, 7:22, 8:10-11; Gal 2:20

91. What are good works?

Those only which proceed from true faith,[1] and are done according to the Law of God,[2] unto His glory,[3] and not such as rest on our own opinion[4] or the commandments of men.[5]

[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; Isa 29:13; Ezek 20:18, 20; [5] Num 15:39; Mt 15:7-9

The Ten Commandments

92. What is the Law of God?

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 covenant faithfulness 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.

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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 neighbors." [1]

[1] Ex 20; Deut 5; Ps 119:9; Mt 5:17-19; Rom 3:31, 10:5

Lord's Day 34

93. How are these Commandments divided?

Into two tables:[1] 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.[2]

[1] Ex 34:28; Deut 4:13; [2] Mt 22:37-40

~~**First Commandment**

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

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alone,[5] with all humility[6] and patience[7] expect all good from Him only,[8] and love,[9] fear,[10] and honor [11] Him with my whole heart; so as rather to renounce all creatures than to 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 1:10-11; Heb 10:36; [8] Ps 104:27-30; Isa 45:6-7; 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; 1Pt 1:7; [11] Deut 6:13 [Mt 4:10], 10:20; [12] Mt 5:29-30, 10:37-39; Acts 5:29

95. What is idolatry?

Idolatry is to conceive or have something else in which to place our trust instead of, or besides, the one true God who has revealed Himself in His Word.[1]

[1] 1 Chron 16:26; Ps 62:5-7, 73:25-26, 81:8-9; Mt 6:24; Jn 2:23, 5:23; Gal 4:8-9; Eph 2:12, 5:5; Php 3:19; 2 Jn 9

~~Second Commandment

Lord's Day 35

96. What does God require in the second Commandment?

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

[1] Deut 4:15-19; Isa 40:18-25; Acts 17:29; Rom 1:22-24;

[2] Lev 10:1-7; Deut 4:23-24, 12:30-32; 1 Sam 15:22-23; Mt 15:9; Jn 4:23-24

97. May we 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 of any likeness of them, either to worship them or to serve God by them.[1]

[1] Ex 23:24-25, 34:13-14, 17; Num 33:52; Deut 7:5, 12:3, 16:22; 2 Kgs 18:4-5; Isa 40:25; Jn 1:18

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

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] Ps 135:15-18; Jer 10:8; Hab 2:18-20; [2] Rom 10:14-17; 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pt 1:19

~~Third Commandment

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 silence[4] and connivance be partakers of these horrible sins in others; and in summary, that we use the holy name of God in no other way than with fear and reverence,[5] so that He may be rightly confessed[6] and worshiped[7] by us, 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; Isa 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 3:16-17; 1 Tim 6:1; 1 Pt 3:15

100. Is the profaning of God's name, by swearing and cursing, so grievous a sin that His wrath is kindled against those also who do not help as much as they can to hinder and forbid it?

Yes, truly,[1] for no sin is greater and 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 19:12, 24:15-16; Prov 29:24-25

Lord's Day 37

101. But may we swear reverently by the name of God?

Yes, when the magistrate requires it, or when it may be needful otherwise, to maintain and promote fidelity and truth to the glory of God and our neighbor's good; for such an oath 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; Isa 48:1; Jer 4:1-2; Heb 6:16; [2] Gen 21:24, 31:53-54; Josh 9:15, 19; 1 Sam 24:22; 1 Kgs 1:29-30; Rom 1:9; 2 Cor 1:23

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

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

[1] Rom 9:1; 2 Cor 1:23; [2] Jer 5:7; Isa 65:16; Mt 5:34-37, 23:16-22; Jas 5:12

~~Fourth Commandment

Lord's Day 38

103. What does God require in the fourth Commandment?

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In the first place, God wills that the ministry of the Gospel and schools be maintained,[1] and that I, especially on the day of rest, diligently attend church[2] 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] Dt 6:4-9, 20-25; 1 Cor 9:13-14; 1 Tim 2:2, 3:13-17, 4:13-14, 5:17; Tit 1:5; [2] Dt 12:5-12; Ps 40:9-11, 68:26; Acts 2:42-47; 2 Tim 2:2, 15; Heb 10:23-25; [3] Rom 10:14-17; 1 Cor 14:19-33; 1 Tim 4:13; [4] 1 Cor 11:23-24, 33; [5] 1 Cor 14:16; Col 3:16; 1 Tim 2:1-2, 8-10; [6] Ps 50:14; 1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8-9; [7] Isa 66:23; Acts 20:7; Gal 6:6; Heb 4:9-11

~~Fifth Commandment

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,[1] and to all in authority over me,[2] submit myself with due obedience to all their good instruction and correction, and also bear patiently with their infirmities, since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.[3]

[1] Gen 9:24-25; Ex 21:17; Prov 1:8-9, 4:1, 15:20, 20:20; Eph 6:1-6, 22; Col 3:18, 20-24; [2] Mt 22:21; Rom 13:1, 2-7; 1 Pt 2:18; [3] Deut 27:16, 32:24; Prov 13:24, 30:17; Eph 6:4, 9; Col 3:19, 21; 1 Tim 2:1-2, 5:17; Heb 13:17-18

~~**Sixth Commandment**

Lord's Day 40

105. What does God require in the sixth Commandment?

That I do not revile, hate, insult, or kill my neighbor either in thought, word, or gesture, much less in deed, whether by myself or by another,[1] but lay aside all desire of revenge;[2] moreover, that I do not harm myself, nor willfully run into any danger.[3] 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 5:25, 18:35; Rom 1:19, 12:19; Eph 4:26; [3] Mt 4:7, 26:52; Rom 13:11-14; Col 2:23; [4] Gen 9:6; Ex 21:14; Mt 18:6-7; Rom 13:4

106. Does this Commandment speak only of killing?

No, but in forbidding murder God teaches us that He abhors its very root, namely, envy,[1] hatred,[2] anger,[3] and desire of revenge; and that in His sight all these are hidden murder.[4]

[1] Rom 1:28-32; [2] 1 Jn 2:9-11; [3] Gal 5:19-21; Jas 2:13; [4] 1 Jn 3:15; Jas 1:19, 3:16

107. But is this all that is required: that we do not kill our neighbor? No, for in condemning envy, hatred, and anger, God requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves,[1] to show patience, peace, meekness,[2] mercy,[3] and kindness[4] toward him, and to prevent his hurt as much as possible;[5] also, to do good even unto our enemies.[6]

[1] Mt 7:12, 22:39; Rom 12:10; [2] Rom 12:18; Gal 6:1-2; Eph 4:2; [3] Mt 5:7; Lk 6:36; [4] Rom 12:10; [5] Ex 23:5; [6] Mt Mt. 5:9, 44-45; Rom 12:20-21; Col 3:12-14.

~~Seventh Commandment

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 with our whole heart,[2] and live chastely and modestly,[3] whether in holy wedlock or single life.[4] [1] Lev 18:27-30; Eph 5:3-5;

[2] Jude 22-23; [3] 1 Thes 4:3-8; [4] 1 Cor 7:1-9; Heb 13:4

109. Does God forbid nothing more in this

Commandment than adultery and such gross sins?

Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Spirit, it is His will that we keep both pure and holy; therefore, He forbids all unchaste actions, gestures,

words,[1] thoughts, desires,[2] and whatever may entice thereto.[3]

[1] 1 Cor 6:18-20; Eph 5:3-4; [2] Mt 5:27-30; [3] 1 Cor 15:33; Eph 5:18-19

~~**Eight Commandment**

Lord's Day 42

110. What does God forbid in the eighth Commandment?

God forbids not only such theft[1] and robbery[2] as are punished by the government, but God views as theft also all wicked tricks and devices, whereby we seek to get our neighbor's goods, whether by force or by deceit,[3] such as unjust weights,[4] lengths, measures,[5] goods, coins, usury,[6] or by any means forbidden of God; also all covetousness[7] and the misuse and waste of His gifts.[8]

[1] 1 Cor 6:10; [2] Ex 22:1; 1 Cor 5:9-10, 6:9-10; [3] Mic 6:9-11; Mk 3:14; Lk 3:14; Jas 1:5-6; 1 Thes 4:6; [4] Prov 11:1, 16:11; [5] Deut 25:13-15; Ezek 45:9-10; [6] Ps 15:5; Lk 6:35; [7] Lk 12:15; 1 Cor 6:10; Eph 5:5; [8] Prov 5:10, 21:20, 23:20-21; Lk 16:10-13; Jn 6:12; 1 Tim 6:10

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

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That I further my neighbor's good where I can and may, deal with him as I would have others deal with me,[1] and labor faithfully, so that I may be able to help the poor in their need.[2]

[1] Mt 7:12; [2] Gen 3:19; Isa 58:5-10; Gal 6:9-10; Eph 4:28; Php 2:4; 1 Tim 6:6-7

~~Ninth Commandment

Lord's Day 43

112. What does the ninth Commandment require?

That I bear false witness against no one,[1] twist no one's words,[2] be no backbiter or slanderer,[3] join in condemning no one unheard or rashly;[4] but that on pain of God's heavy wrath, I avoid all lying and deceit[5] as the very works of the devil;[6] and that in matters of judgment and justice and in all other affairs, I love, speak honestly, and confess the truth;[7] also, insofar as I can, defend and promote my neighbor's good name.[8]

[1] Prov 19:5, 9; [2] Ps 15:3; [3] Rom 1:28-30; [4] Mt 7:1-2; Lk 6:37; [5] Jn 8:44; [6] Prov 12:22, 13:5; [7] 1 Cor 13:6; Eph 4:25; [8] Jn 7:24, 51; Col 4:6; 1 Pt 2:21, 23, 3:9, 4:8

~~Tenth Commandment

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Lord's Day 44

113. What does the tenth Commandment require?

That not even the least inclination or thought against any commandment of God ever enter 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; Prov 4:23; Mt 15:11, 19-20; Rom 7:7-8; Jas 1:14-15

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 such 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 1:8-10; [2] Job 9:2-3; Ps 1:1-2, 19:13; Rom 7:22-25; Php 3:12-16; Jas 2:10-11

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

First, that as long as we live we may learn more and more to know our sinful nature,[1] and so the more earnestly seek forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ;[2] second, that without ceasing we diligently ask God for the grace of the Holy Spirit,

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that we be renewed more and more after the image of God, until we attain the goal of perfection after this life.[3]

[1] Ps 32:5; 1 Jn 1:9; [2] Rom 3:19-26, 7:7, 24-25; [3] Ps 51:12; Mt 5:6; 1 Cor 9:24-25; 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 thankfulness which God requires of us,[1] and because God will give His grace and Holy Spirit only to those who earnestly and without ceasing ask them of 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, 13:12; Lk 11:9-13; Eph 6:18

117. What belongs to such prayer which is acceptable to God and which He will hear? First, that with our whole heart[1] we call only upon the one true God, who has revealed Himself to us in His Word,[2] for all that He has commanded us to ask of Him;[3] second, that we thoroughly know our need and misery,[4] so as to humble ourselves in the presence of His divine majesty;[5] third, that we be firmly assured[6] that notwithstanding our unworthiness He will, for the sake of Christ our Lord, certainly

hear our prayer,[7] as He has promised us in His Word.[8]

[1] Jn 4:22-24; [2] Rom 8:26; 1 Jn 5:14; [3] Ps 27:8; [4] 2 Chron 20:12; [5] Ps 2:10, 34:18; Isa 66:2; [6] Rom 10:14; Jas 1:6; [7] Dan 9:17-18; Jn 14:13-16; [8] Ps 143:1; Mt 7:8; Lk 18:13

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

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

[1] Mt 6:33; Php 4:6; Jas 1:17; 1 Pt 5:7

119. What is the Lord's Prayer?

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be 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 did Christ command us to address God thus: "Our Father?"

To awaken in us at the very beginning of our prayer that childlike reverence for and trust in 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] Isa 63:16; Mt 7:9-11; Lk 11:11-13; 1 Pt 1:17

121. Why is it added: "Who art in heaven?"

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

[1] Jer 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-27; [2] 1 Kgs 8:28; Ps 115:3; Mt 6:25-34; Rom 8:10:12, 31-32

Lord's Day 47

122. What is the first petition?

"Hallowed be Thy name;" that is, grant us, first, rightly to know You, [1] and to hallow, magnify, and praise You in all Your works, in which Your power, goodness, justice, mercy, and truth shine forth;[2] and further, that we so order our whole life, our thoughts, words, and deeds, that Your name may not be blasphemed, but honored and praised on our account.[3]

[1] Ps 119:105; Jer 9:23-24, 31:33-34; Mt 16:17; Jn 17:3; Jas 1:5; [2] Ex 34:5-8; Ps 119:137, Ps 145; Jer 32:16-20;

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Lk 1:46-55, 68-75; Rom 11:33-36; [3] Ps 71:8, 16, 92:1-2, 100:3-4, 115:1; Mt 5:16; Eph 1:16-17

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 to 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 fullness of Your kingdom come,[4] wherein You shall be all in all.[5]

[1] Ps 119:5, 105, 143:10; Mt 6:33; [2] Ps 51:18, 122:6-7; Mt 16:18; Acts 2:42-47; [3] Rom 16:20; 1 Jn 3:8; [4] Rom 8:22-23; Rev 22:17, 20; [5] Ps 102:12-13; 1 Cor 15:24, 28; Heb 12:28; Rev 11:15

Lord's Day 49

124. What is the third petition?

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven;” that is, grant that we and all men renounce our own will,[1] and without gainsaying obey Your will, which alone is good;[2] so that every one may fulfill his office and calling as willingly and faithfully [3] as the angels do in heaven.[4]

[1] Mt 16:24; [2] Mt 7:21, 16:24-26; Lk 22:42; Rom 12:1-2; Tit 2:11-12; [3] 1 Cor 7:17-24; Eph 6:5-9; [4] Ps 103:20-21; Rom 12:2; Heb 13:21

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] so that we may thereby acknowledge 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] that we 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, 17:25-28; Jas 1:17; [3] Deut 8:3; Ps 37:3-7, 16-17, 127:1-2; 1 Cor 15:58; [4] Ps 55:22, Ps 62, Ps 146; Jer 17:1-8; 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 always cleaves to us;[1] as we also 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] Ps 51:5-7; Mt 6:14-15, 18:21-35; Eph 1:7

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] and besides, 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 be overcome in this spiritual warfare,[5] until finally complete victory is ours.[6]

[1] Ps 103:14-16; Jn 15:1-5; [2] 2 Cor 11:14; Eph 6:10-13; 1 Pt 5:8-9; [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; 2 Cor 12:7; 1 Thes 3:13, 5:23-24

128. How do you close this prayer?

“For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever;” that is, all this we ask of You, because as our King, having power over all things, You are willing and able to give us all good;[1] and that thereby not we, but Your holy name may be glorified for ever.[2]

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

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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] Ps 145:18-19; Isa 65:24; 2 Cor 1:20; 2 Tim 2:13

The Belgic Confession

Truly the Christian Confession of the Belgic Reformed Churches, containing the Summary of Doctrine about God and about the Eternal Salvation of Souls

Article 1: About the Nature of God

We believe in the heart and confess with the mouth that there is a unique and simple spiritual Being, Who we call God, eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, unchangeable, and infinite, Who is wise and the overflowing source of all good things. Eph. 4:8; 2 Deuter. 6:4; 1 Tim 2:5; 2 Cor. 8:6; John 4:24; Isa. 40:28, 44:6.

Article 2: About the Knowledge of God

Moreover, we know God by two means, first, by the creation, preservation, and government of this whole world. For it is before our eyes as a most beautiful Book in which all creatures, from the least to the greatest, are as certain letters and marks through which the invisible things of God can be examined and understood, certainly His eternal power and His divinity as the Apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20. This knowledge is sufficient for convicting any given people and rendering them inexcusable. But He also bears His very self to us, much more clearly and

openly, in His holy and divine Word; indeed, as much as is expedient in this life for His glory and for the salvation of His own people. Psalm 19; Ephes. 4:6; 2 Cor. 2:6.

Article 3: About Holy Scripture

We confess that this Word of God has neither been sent or delivered by any human will, but that holy men of God, having been filled up by the Spirit, have spoken it forth, as blessed Peter witnesses. 2 Pet. 1:21. Afterwards, however, God Himself, according to that great care and concern that He bears for His own people and their salvation, commanded His servants, the Apostles and Prophets, to commit His oracles to writings, to the point that He Himself scratched out the two tables of the Law with His own finger, which is the reason why we call writings of this sort holy and divine Writings.

Article 4: About the Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments

Moreover, we hold that Sacred Scripture is encompassed in these two volumes of the Old and New Testaments, the books of which are called canonical; about these there was never a controversy. And this is not only their number but also their order, having been received in the Church of God: The Five Books of Moses, the book of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the two books of Samuel, two of Kings the two

books of Chronicles, which is called Paralipomenon, the first of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, likewise the Psalms of David, the three books of Solomon, certainly Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, the Four Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and to these twelve other Minor Prophets. Again, there are canonical books of the New Testament: the Four Gospels, obviously blessed Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Acts of the Apostles, the Fourteen Letters of Blessed Paul, and the Seven Letters of the Remaining Apostles, the Apocalypse of the Blessed Apostle John.

Article 5: About the Authority of Holy Scripture

We receive all these books, alone, as holy and canonical, by which our faith can be supported, confirmed, and established. And so, without any doubt, we believe all these things that are contained in them, and not so much because the Church receives and endorses them as Canon as because the Holy Spirit testifies to our consciences that they have arisen from God, and, about this, mostly because they also witness and prove themselves by this sacred authority and holiness of theirs, since even the blind themselves can clearly observe, just as if they could perceive with their senses, the fulfillment and occurrence of the things that had been predicted.

Article 6: About the Difference Between Canonical and Apocryphal Books

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We then establish a distinction between these Holy Books and those that are called Apocrypha, namely that the Apocrypha certainly can be in the Church, and it is also lawful even to select lessons from them, insofar as they echo the Canonical books. But, by no means is their authority or stability such that any dogma concerning the Faith and the Christian Religion could be definitely established from their testimony. Far from that, they cannot infringe upon, or lessen, the authority of the others.

Article 7: About the Perfection of Scripture

Moreover, we believe that this Holy Scripture most perfectly contains the whole will of God and that all things are taught in it abundantly, whatsoever is necessary to be believed by people in order to grasp salvation. And so, since the entire account of divine worship is there exactly and profusely established, no one, however much gifted with apostolic dignity, nor likewise any Angel cast down from heaven, as blessed Paul says, is lawfully allowed to teach otherwise than what we have already thoroughly learned long ago in the Holy Scriptures. For since it is forbidden, lest anyone either add to or subtract from the Word of God, it is sufficiently made known that this holy doctrine is perfect and absolute in all its numbers and parts. Therefore, no other Writings of humans, however much gifted with sanctity, nor custom, nor any majority, nor antiquities, neither rules of the times nor succession of persons, nor any

councils, nor finally any human decrees or statutes ought to be pitted against or held on par with these divine Scriptures and this naked truth of God, because the truth of God surpasses all things. For all human beings are liars, themselves vainer than vanity. For this reason, we reject, with our whole soul, whatsoever does not agree with this most certain rule, as we have been taught by the Apostles when they say, "Test the spirits whether they are from God," and also, "If anyone comes to you, and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house," etc. 2 Tim. 3:14, 17; 1 Pet. 1:1; Prov. 30:5; Gal. 3:15; Apoc. 22:18; John 15:15; Act 20:27; 1 Tim 1:3; 2 John 1:10; Gal. 1:8; 1 Cor. 15:2; Act. 26:22; Rom. 15:4; 1 Pet. 4:11; John 4:25; Es. 1:12; 1 Cor. 2:4; Rom. 3:4; 1 Cor. 3:11; Deut 12:32; Matth. 15:3, 17:5; Mark. 7:7; 1 Thess. 2:2; 1 John 4:1.

Article 8: About the Holy Trinity of Persons in a Single Divine Essence

Joined to this truth and the Word of God, we believe in one God alone (Who is one essence, with incommunicable properties in three persons, having had a real distinction of affairs from eternity), certainly in accordance with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. 1 John 2:10; Esa. 43:11; John 1:12, 1; 1 John 1:1; Apoc. 19:13; Prov. 8: 22; John 1:14. For the Father is the cause, origin, and beginning of all visible and invisible things. The Son is the Word, the Wisdom, and the Image of the Father. The Holy

Spirit is the true power and strength that emanates from the Father and the Son. Nevertheless, this distinction does not make it that God is divided, as if into three parts, seeing that Scripture teaches us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each has a hypostasis, or a subsistence, distinguished by their properties. Thus these three persons are nevertheless one God alone. Therefore, it is certain then that the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit either the Father or the Son. At the same time, however, these persons, so distinct, are neither divided, nor confused, nor mingled together. For the Father did not take on human flesh, nor the Holy Spirit, but only the Son. The Father never was without His Son, nor without His Holy Spirit, since these same persons are of the same eternal essence. Far from these, there is neither a first nor a last, for all three are one, in truth and power, in goodness and mercy.

Article 9: About the Holy Trinity

We certainly know all these things to such an extent according to the testimonies of Holy Scripture as much from their own effects, especially from those we feel within our very selves. And indeed, the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures that teach us to believe in this sacred Trinity run throughout in the Old Testament need not be enumerated so much as selected with reliable judgment. These are of such a sort: God first says in Genesis, “Let Us make

humanity according to Our image and likeness.” And then, “He created them male and female.” Likewise, “Behold, Adam has been made, as it were, one of Us.” Gen. 3:5. From this, namely because it is said, “Let Us make humanity according to Our image,” it appears that there is a plurality of Persons in the Deity. But since “God created, etc.” is said, a unity of Divinity is indicated. How many persons there are, although it is obscurely delivered in the Old Testament, is placed before us in the New with bright light. For when our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized in the Jordan, Matth. 3:16, the voice of the Father was heard proclaiming, “This is my dear Son;” the Son Himself was seen in the water; and, truly, the Holy Spirit appeared under the form of a dove. In the common baptism of all believers we are commanded to use this formula: “Baptize all peoples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” So also, in the Gospel of Luke 1:35 the Angel Gabriel addresses Mary, the mother of our Lord: “The Holy Spirit come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and for this reason the One who will be born from you, He will be called the Son of God.” Again, “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.” Again, “There are three who testify in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, which three are one” 1 John 5:7. In all of these, we are most amply taught that there are three Persons in one God. Moreover, although this doctrine surpasses the whole comprehension of human nature, we

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nevertheless firmly believe it now according to the Word of God, anticipating, until we may fully enjoy the knowledge of this in heaven. Furthermore, we must note the office and effect of these three Persons Who stretch out towards us. For the Father is called our Creator on account of His power. The Son is called our true Savior and Redeemer because He has redeemed us by his blood. The Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier because He dwells in our hearts. Mal. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 John 4:14; Gal. 4:6; Tit. 3:5; Rom. 8:9; Rom. 14:16. Moreover, the Church has always held this doctrine of the Holy Trinity from the age of the Apostles all the way up to this time now and has defended it against Jews, Muslims, and other psuedo-Christians and heretics, such as Marcion, Mani, Praxeas, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, and the like, who have been deservingly condemned by the blessed fathers. And so, in this matter, we willingly here receive the Three Symbols, the Apostles', Nicene, and the Athanasian, and whatever judgment, along with their Symbols, they established concerning this dogma.

Article 10: About the Eternal Deity of the Son of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ, with respect to His divine nature, is the only Son of God begotten from eternity not made or created John 1:18, 49, for He would be a creature but for the exact same essence of the Father and coeternal to Him, and Who is the true

image of the substance of the Father and the splendor of His glory, equal to Him in all things Col. 1:15; John 10:30; Phil. 2:6; Hebr. 1:3; John 8:23, 9:36; Act. 8:37; Rom. 9:5. Moreover, He is the Son of God, not only from the time He took on our human nature but from all eternity, as this collective testimony teaches us: Moses says "God created the world," and blessed John says, "All things had been made through the Word, Who is called God." Thus the Apostle asserts to the Hebrews that God created all things through the Son, Jesus Christ Colos. 1:16. And so it follows that He Who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ already then existed when He created all things. For this reason the prophet Micah says, in the fifth chapter, verse two, "His origin is without beginning, from eternal times." Again, "He is without beginning of days, and without end of life." He is therefore true God, eternal, omnipotent, Whom we honor and worship.

Article 11: About the Person and Eternal Deity of the Holy Spirit

We believe and confess that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, from eternity, and so, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but only from the Two proceeding, Who is the third of the Trinity of Persons in regards to order, of the same essence, glory, and majesty with the Father and the Son. And therefore He is true and eternal God, as the Holy Scriptures teach us. Heb. 7:3; John 14:6, 15:26.

Article 12: About the Creation of the World and about Angels

We believe that the Father, through His Word, that is through the Son, created heaven, earth, and all remaining nature from nothing when it seemed opportune to Him, and, that there is a form for each of them in turn, and that He has assigned various duties so that they might serve the interests of their Creator. Even now He maintains, sustains, and rules them by His eternal providence and immeasurable power. And this is so that they may also serve humanity, as humanity may serve the interests of its true God. Furthermore, He created the angels good in nature so that they might be His messengers and serve the interests of His elect. Nevertheless, several of them have fallen down from the excellent nature in which God created them into eternal perdition, and others, certainly by the grace of God alone, have stood firm in their original state. Indeed, the devils and the excrement-ridden demons are so corrupt and depraved that they conspire as enemies-of-the-State against both God and all good people. As thieves from a look out, they lie in ambush with all their strength for the Church and each of its members in order to ruin and destroy them all by their deceptions. For this reason, having been sentenced to eternal condemnation on account of their own evil, they daily await the dreadful punishment of their deeds. And therefore we reject the error of the Sadducees in this place, who deny that there are any Spirits or Angels. Likewise, the error of the

Manicheans, who assert that the Devils hold an origin from themselves and are evil on account of their nature, but not corrupted by willful disobedience. John 15:26; Gen. 1:1; Isai. 40:26; Heb. 3:4; Apo. 4:11; 1 Tim 4:3,1; Col. 1:16; Heb 3:14, 1:3; Psal. 103:21, 4:3,8; John 8:44; 2 Pet. 2:4; Luc. 8:31; 1 Pet. 5:8; Matt. 25:40; Act. 23:8.

Article 13: About the Providence of God

We believe that this Most High God, after He created all things, did not in the least hand them over to fate or the rule of fortune, but continually rules and governs them according to the precept of His sacrosanct will so that nothing may happen in this world apart from His decree and ordination. Neither is it possible to say that God is the author of or the guilty party in the evils that occur in this world. For both His power and goodness lie widely open as immeasurable and incomprehensible, and His work and proceedings are sacredly and justly determined and executed, although both the Devil and the wicked unjustly act. Truly, whatsoever He does, having exceeded human constraints, we do not wish to inquire about these things pryingly and beyond our constraints. In fact, on the contrary, we nevertheless humbly and reverently adore the hidden and just judgments of God. For it is enough for us, as disciples of Christ, to learn no more than that which He Himself teaches us in His Word, without transgressing the limits that we regard as

lawful. Truly, this doctrine brings immeasurable comfort to us. For from it we know that nothing happens to us by fortune, but only all things by the will of our heavenly Father, Who truly keeps watch for us with fatherly care, having subjugated all things unto Himself so that not even a hair our head (which have all been numbered down to the individual one) can be plucked out, nor can the smallest chick fall to the ground, apart from the will of our Father. And so we thoroughly rest in this, acknowledging that God restrains the devils and all our enemies, just as curbed with whips, so that no one is strong enough to hurt us apart from His will and good permission. And therefore in this place we reject the detestable opinion of the Epicureans, who create an idle god, doing nothing and forfeiting all things. Act. 23:8; John 5:17; Heb. 1:3; Prover. 16:4; Iacob. 4:15; Iacob. 4:15; Job 1:21; 2 Kings 22:20; Act. 4:28; 1 Sam. 8:25; Psal. 115:3; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6; Deut. 19:5; Prover. 21:1; Ps. 105:25; Isa. 10:5; 2 Thess. 2:11; Ezech. 41:9; Rom 1:28; 1 Kings 11:23; Gen. 45:8, 50:20; 2 Sam. 16:10; Matt. 8:31; 1 John 3:8.

Article 14: About the Creation, the Fall and Corruption of Humanity

We believe that God certainly created humanity from the mud of the earth and created them in His image, good, certainly just and also holy, who could by their own choice arrange their will and conform it to the will of God. In truth, when they were in honor they

were unaware and did not understand their excellence. But knowing and desiring, they subjected their very selves to sin and to the consequence of death and the curse. By bending the ear towards the words and allurements of the devil, they transgressed the commandment of life, which they had received from the LORD, and through this penalty they carried themselves away and alienated themselves from God (their true life), having wholly damaged and corrupted their own nature by sin. By this, it was accomplished that they handed themselves over as liable to the death of both the body and the soul. And so accomplished as wicked and perverse in all their ways and pursuits, they cast off all those splendid gifts with which God had adorned them, to the point that nothing remains except small sparks and tiny vestiges, which are sufficient for rendering people inexcusable, because whatever light in us has turned into blind shadows, so that Scripture itself teaches, saying: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it." For here John clearly calls people "darkness." Therefore whatever is drudged up concerning the free will of humanity, we deservedly reject it, since humanity is the "slave of sin, " and no good can come out of humanity, "unless it was given to it from heaven." For who dares to boast that he can perform anything that he desires, since Christ Himself says, "No one can come to me, unless my Father, Who sent me, draws him"? May he who hears "all flesh has been afflicted with hostility against God" glorify his own will? May he who

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knows “the human soul is not capable of the things that of the Spirit of God,” pride himself about his own knowledge? In short, may he who understands that we are not sufficient for any thought according to our very selves but that what we are sufficient for is entirely from God, even drag out any thought of his into the public gaze? Therefore, what the Apostle said ought to remain firm and fixed: “God is He Who works in us so that we both desire and work according to His gratuitous good will.” For no mind, no desire, in which Christ Himself has not first worked acquiesces to the will of God, which He Himself teaches us, saying, “Without me you are can do nothing.” Matt. 20:29, 30; Gen 1:26; Eccle. 7:30; Eph. 4:24; Psal. 49; Isa. 59:2; Gen. 8:17; Rom. 5:12; Rom. 3:10; Act. 4:16; 1 Kings 1:20, 21; Act. 17:27; Eph. 5:8; John 1:5; Isa. 26:12; Psal. 94:11; John 3:27; John 6:44; Rom 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 3:5; Philip. 2:13; John 15:5.

Article 15: About Original Sin

We believe that sin, which is called Original, has been sown into and poured throughout the whole human race by the disobedience of Adam. Moreover, original sin is a corruption of the entire nature and a hereditary crime, with which even infants themselves are polluted in the womb of their mother. And just as a toxic root, it sprouts forth every type of sin in humanity, and, in the presence of God, it is so filthy and detestable, that it is sufficient for the

condemnation of the entire human race. Truly, it is not thoroughly extinguished nor plucked out by the roots through Baptism, seeing that just as waves of a stream continually rise up and pour forth from a corrupt bubbling spring, so too from it. Although, to the children of God it is not handed over or imputed to condemnation, but for them it is remitted according to the pure grace and mercy of God, not so that they may fall asleep confident in this remission, but so that with the sense of this corruption it wakes up more frequent groans in the faithful, and so that by it they more passionately desire themselves to be free from this body of death. From this, we therefore damn the error of the Pelagians, who assert that this original sin is nothing other than imitation. Phil. 2:13; John 15:5; Psal. 51:7; Rom. 3:10; Gen. 6:3; John 3:6; Rom. 5:14; Eph. 1:5; Rom. 7:18, 24.

Article 16: About Divine Predestination

We believe that God, after all the offspring of Adam thus fell head over heels into perdition and destruction by the guilt of the first man, demonstrated and put forth His very self as such a kind as He is: both merciful and also just. Indeed, merciful in freeing and saving from damnation and ruin those whom in His eternal council He elected, out of gratuity apart from any work, according to His goodness through our Lord Jesus Christ. Truly just, in leaving behind others in their fall and ruin into which they threw their very selves head over heels.

Article 17: About the Restoration of the Human Race by the Son of God

We believe that our God Most High, (since He saw that humanity had thus cast itself into the damnation of death of both body and soul, and had made themselves utterly miserable and also cursed), having drawn together both His miraculous wisdom and goodness in order that He might both seek after and also kindly console them who had fled from Him on account of fear, with the promise that His Son shall be born from a woman, Who would crush the head of the serpent and render them blessed and happy.

Article 18: About the Incarnation of the Son of God

Truly we confess that God then finally fulfilled the promise (that He made to the Fathers, by the mouth of his holy Prophets), when, at the time He Himself established, He sent into this world this only and eternal Son of His, "Who received the form of a servant," "made similar to humanity," truly assuming a real human nature with all its weaknesses, except sin, when He was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, without the work of any man. Again, He not only assumed a human nature as far as the body but also unto the soul. For He had been endowed with a true human soul so that he would be a real human. Indeed, since the soul no less than the body itself is guilty of damnation, it was necessary that he

assume both body and soul in order that he might save them both together. For this reason, against the heresy of the Anabaptists who deny that Christ assumed human flesh from his mother, we confess that Christ “partook of the same flesh and blood just as His own brethren,” made “flesh from the loins of David,” “the same flesh from the seed of David,” “and fruit from the womb of the virgin Mary,” “born from a woman,” “seed of David,” “a flower from the root of Jesse,” “from the tribe of Judah,” “and having descended from the Jews themselves according to the flesh,” and, in short, “True seed of Abraham and of David” because “He had assumed the seed of Abraham, except for sin,” as it is said, “He was made similar to His brothers in all things, to a degree that He is truly Emmanuel, that is, God with us.”

Article 19: About the Hypostatic, or Personal, Union of the Two Natures in Christ

We believe that, through this conception, the Person of the Son has been inseparably joined and united with human nature, not so that there are two Sons of God or two Persons, but two natures joined in a single person, each of which retains its own properties to the point that just as the Divine nature has always remained uncreated without beginning of days or end of life, filling heaven and earth, so too the Human nature has not lost its properties but has remained as a creature, having a beginning of days and a finite nature. Although He gave immortality to

it through His resurrection, that nevertheless did not steal or change the truth of human nature for Him. For our salvation and resurrection hang upon the truth of His body. Moreover, these two natures are so united and joined together in one person that they cannot be separated even by His death. Therefore, what he commended to the Father at His dying was a real human spirit, going out from His own body. But meanwhile, the Divine nature always (even while lying in the grave) remained united to the Human, to the point that Deity itself was no less in Himself when He was still an infant, although it did not show itself for a little while. On account of this, we confess His self to be true God and true man: indeed, true God in order that He would conquer death, and true man in order that He would fall to death in the weakness of His flesh in our place.

Article 20: About the Manner of Redemption, through the Declaration of the Justice and Mercy of God in Christ

We believe that God, Who is consummately and perfectly both merciful and just, has sent His Son so that He would assume that nature in order that He should make satisfaction in that very nature that sinned through disobedience, and in order that concerning sin, He should endure the just penalties by His bitter suffering and death. Therefore, God displayed and stretched forth His justice upon His own Son, laden with our sins. He liberally poured

out and stretched forth His goodness and mercy upon us, worthily deserving condemnation, when He handed His Son over to death on account of our offenses, out of his immeasurable love for us, and in turn raised Him from death on account of our justification, so that we would obtain immortality and eternal life through Him.

Article 21: About the Satisfaction of Christ for Our Sins

We believe that Jesus Christ is that consummate High Priest, established in eternity with an oath according to the Melchizedekian order, and that He presented His very self in our name in the presence of the Father for the placation of His wrath with full satisfaction, placing His very self upon the altar of the cross and pouring out His blood for the purgation of our sins, just as the Prophets had predicted it would happen. For it is written, “the castigation of our peace was placed on the Son of God,” and “we are healed by his wounds.” Again, “He Himself was led to death as a lamb,” and He was “numbered among sinners” and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, even though he had previously declared Him innocent. Therefore, He paid, “for what He had not stolen,” and the just suffered for the unjust, both in His soul and body, so while sensing the awe-striking debt for our sins, He sweated blood and water and He even finally cried out, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken

me?" And He endured all these things for the remission of our sins. For this reason, we rightly say with blessed Paul "we know nothing whatsoever, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified," in fact, "we consider all things as excrement on account of the excellence of the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, " so that he who is in His wounds finds every kind of consolation. And so nothing is necessary lest we would hope for or think up for ourselves any other reckonings with which we can be reconciled to God besides this one and only complete oblation, by which all believers, who are sanctified, are consecrated and perfected unto eternity. And moreover this is the reason why He Himself was called by the Angel, "Jesus," that is, "Savior, because He is going to save His people from their sins."

Article 22: About Justifying Faith and about Justification in Faith

We believe that the Holy Spirit imparts true faith indwelling within our hearts so that we arrive at a true knowledge of such a great mystery; a faith that embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits and claims Him as made our own. For it is necessary that either all the things that are required for our salvation are not in Christ, or, that if all things are in Him, then he who possesses Christ by faith also has perfect salvation at the same time. And therefore it is a wholly horrendous blasphemy against God to assert that Christ is less than sufficient, but also that other

things likewise are needed. For it would follow from here, that Jesus Christ is only Savior in part. And therefore we deservedly say with blessed Paul, "We are justified by faith alone, or by faith apart from works of the Law." Otherwise, properly speaking, we by no means understand faith itself, through itself, or from itself, to justify us; it is as if it were no more than an instrument by which we lay hold of Christ our righteousness. Therefore our righteousness is Christ Himself, Who imputes all His own merits to us. Truly faith is the instrument by which we are bound to Him in fellowship and the communion of all His good works, and also preserved in the same, to the point that all those, having been made ours, are more than enough for the absolution from our sins.

Article 23: About Our Justification, by Which We Stand Fast in God's Presence

We believe that all our happiness is situated in the remission of our sins, which is in Jesus Christ, and that our whole justification before God is contained in it alone, as blessed Paul teaches us according to David, proclaiming Blessed, "those to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works." But also the same Apostle says, "We are justified through the redemption made in Jesus Christ." On account of this, as supported by solid ground, we present all glory to God, perceiving ourselves in extreme humility so that we may properly know of what sort

our selves really are. And so, we presume nothing whatsoever on account of ourselves or any of our merits, but having been supported only by the obedience of Christ crucified, we thoroughly acquiesce to it, so that when we believe in Him it becomes ours. Again, this alone is abundantly sufficient both for covering over all our iniquities and also for rendering us safe and secure against all temptation at the same time. And indeed this drives all fear, all trembling, and finally all dread far away from the conscience, where we approach near to God and we do not imitate the example of the first of our parents, who, fleeing because of fear, attempted to hide and cover themselves with fig leaves. Certainly it is proper that if we were to stand in the presence of God, relying ever so little upon ourselves or any other creature, it is certain that we would be instantly engulfed in wrath. For this reason, it is preferable for each of us, in turn, to call out with David: "Lord, do not enter into judgment with your servant, because any living thing will not be justified in your gaze."

Article 24: About Sanctification and about Good Works

We believe that this true faith, through the hearing of the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, on account of God, acts and works so that it enlivens us unto living a new life and renders us free from the slavery of sin. Therefore, this justifying faith is far from such a sort that it would call people away from,

or make them tepid towards, an upright and holy rule of living, but on the contrary, apart from it no one can ever act or work anything good on account of God (but all things either on account of Him or on account of fear of just condemnation). Therefore, it is not possible that this holy faith is idle in a person. For we do not speak of an vain faith or dead faith, but only of that which in Scripture is said "to be worked through charity," and which drives a person so that he practices these works themselves that God Himself prescribes in His own Word. Truly these good works, having sprouted forth from the sincere root of this faith, are therefore finally good and accepted by God because they are sanctified by His grace. Nevertheless, they are entirely of no importance for our justification. For we are justified in Christ, even before we had put forth any good works. For before faith, our works no more can be good than fruit of a tree can be good before the tree itself was good. Therefore, we certainly do good works, but not so that we merit anything by them. For what could we merit? But rather we are more and more bound to God for good works (if we do them), not God to us. For God is He Who "works in us both so that we desire, and also so that we work, according to His gratuitous goodness." According to which, it is necessary for us always to look back upon that which is written, "When you have done all the things that are commanded to you, say, 'We are useless servants, for we have done what we owed'." Again, we would not deny that God rewards good works in His own people, but we say that it occurs out of His own pure

grace so that He crowns His own gifts in us. Moreover, although we do good works, we nevertheless do not all place any hope of salvation in them, for we can do no work that is not polluted by the sin of the flesh and also worthy of punishment and penalty. But even if we could bring forth any work of ours, a single recollection of a sin is nevertheless sufficient for removing it from the gaze of God. And so, we would always be in doubt, wavering here and there, and our miserable consciences would always be disturbed unless they would lean upon the unique merit of the death and suffering of our Savior and, in that, repose.

Article 25: About the Abrogation of Ceremonies of the Law and about the Agreement between the Old and New Testaments

We believe that all the ceremonies and forms of the Law and all the shadows finally have ceased with the advent of Christ, to the point that, likewise, their uses among Christians ought also now be lifted and abolished. Meanwhile, their truth and substance remain with us, in Christ, in Whom they all have been fulfilled. And so, we continue to use the witnesses of the Law and Prophets, in order that they themselves would build us up in the doctrine of the Gospel and that we would place our whole life honorably unto the glory of God together next to His will.

Article 26: About the Intercession of Christ

Furthermore, we believe that we have no access to God except through this only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous, Who therefore was made man (uniting divine and human natures) in order that He would open up an entrance to the majesty of God for us miserable humans, which had otherwise been shut eternally to us. Nevertheless, the Majesty and power of this Mediator (Whom the Father had established between Himself and us) ought not terrify us in the least, lest for that reason we would think that we ought to seek after another for ourselves, according to our own judgment. For there is, neither among heaven nor among the terrestrial creatures, one who more lovingly embraces us than Christ Himself, Who, “although He was in the form of God, emptied His very self,” and, on account of us, “was made like His brethren in all things.” But if we had to contrive another Mediator for ourselves through seeking, who would deem us of some worth, who would love us more zealously than He Himself Who willingly abandoned His own life on our behalf when we were up to that point enemies? Again, if another had to be sought out by us, who excels in consummate authority and power, who has ever obtained so much as He Who is seated “at the right hand of the Father,” and to Whom “all power on heaven and earth has been given”? And finally, who shall have been heard by God more clearly than That Only-Begotten, the Elect Son of God? Therefore, unbelief alone has led to this custom

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by which we afflict the Saints (those we think in heaven) with dishonor, when we accomplish that which is so far removed from those things they ever did while living, but rather they constantly repelled this, in accordance with their duty, just as their writings testify. And our vileness here is not to be dragged out as an excuse for such sacrilege. For we do not in the least offer prayers propped up with our dignity, but with the dignity and excellence only of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose righteousness is ours by faith, according to which place the Apostle justly, since he would shake off this inane fear (or rather unbelief) from us, says, "Christ was made like His brethren in all things," so that he would be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in these things which were in accordance with the ritual for the expiation of the sins of the people in the presence of God. For according to this, He can aid those who are tested, because he had fully endured when He was tested. In addition, so that he would increase our spirits in which we may come near to this High Priest more confidentially, the same Apostle adds, "Therefore, having a great High Priest, Who has entered into heaven, Jesus Christ the Son of God, let us hold on to our profession. For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to be moved with a sense of our weaknesses, but One tested in all things, similar to us, except for sin. Therefore, let us proceed with faith up to the throne of grace so that we may pursue mercy and come upon grace unto favorable aid." The same apostle says, "We have freedom for entering into the sacristy through the blood of Jesus. Let us

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therefore approach with a firm persuasion of faith, etc." Likewise, "Christ has an eternal priesthood, from which He can also save those who approach through His blood unto God, always living, so that He may always intercede on their behalf." What need is there for other things? Since Christ Himself says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to my Father except through Me," why should we seek another advocate for ourselves? Most certainly, since it has pleased God Himself to give His Son to us as an advocate, let us not having abandoned Him, seek another, lest in always having to follow fate we may never come across any other. For when God gave That One to us, He knew, without a doubt, that we were miserable sinners. According to which, it happens that in remaining close to the commandment of Christ Himself, we only call upon the heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our only mediator Himself, as He Himself also taught us in the Lord's Prayer. For we are certain that we are going to receive all the things for which we ask in His name, from the Father.

Article 27: About the Catholic Church

We believe and confess a single Catholic or universal Church, which is the true congregation or assembly of all the faithful who await their entire salvation from Jesus Christ alone, obviously in so far as they have been absolved with His blood and sanctified and sealed through His Spirit. Furthermore, this

Church has existed from the beginning of the world and is going to endure until its end, even as it appears from this: the fact that Christ is an eternal King, Who cannot be without subjects. Moreover, God protects this Church from all the furor and assault of the world, although, from a human perspective, it may appear very small, as if it were extinguished, just as in that most dangerous time of Ahab, it was said that God reserved for Himself seven thousand men who had not bent the knee before Baal. And finally, this holy Church is neither situated in or circumscribed by a particular place, nor bound or tied down to any particular individual, but sown and poured forth throughout the whole world, although at the same time it is thoroughly bound together and also united in soul and will and a single same spirit and power of faith.

Article 28: About the Communion of the Saints with the True Church

We believe that since this holy assembly and congregation is of those who ought to be saved and that there is no salvation outside of it, no one (regardless of whatever status or name he may be) ought to withdraw or separate his very self from it, so that being content with such a habit, he would live alone and apart. But on the contrary, each and every one ought to attach and hold themselves to this assembly, and anxiously preserve the unity of the Church, and they ought to subjugate their very selves

to both its doctrine and its discipline, and finally, they ought to willingly place the neck under the yoke of Christ and serve the interests of the edification of the brethren, as communal members of a single body, just as God has lavishly given to each one his own gifts. Furthermore, so that this may be better observed, it is the duty of all believers, according to the word of God, to separate their very selves from those who are established outside the Church and to join their very selves to this assembly and congregation of the faithful, wherever God has established it, regardless of whether hostile decrees of princes and magistrates forbid it, even those who would do so indicting with a punishment of beheading and death of the body. And so, whosoever withdraws from this true Church, or refuses to join their selves to it, openly fights against the command of God.

Article 29: About the Marks of the True Church

We believe that we ought to seek and discern according to the word of God, with consummate diligence and prudence, what then this true Church may be, since all of the sects, however many flourish in the world today, seize upon and cloak themselves with the title of "Church." We are certainly not now speaking of the assembly of hypocrites, who are mixed among the good in the Church although they do not rightly extend into the Church in which they are bodily present, but of having to distinguish the

congregation of the true Church from all sects, which falsely glorify themselves as members of the Church. Therefore the true Church will be distinguished from the false by these marks; if the pure preaching of the Gospel and the legitimate administration of the sacraments, according to the prescription of Christ, flourishes, likewise if the right ecclesiastical discipline is used for the restraint of sin. And finally, (so that we embrace the whole Word alone), it measures all things according to the standard of the Word of God and repudiates whatever things are hostile to it and acknowledges Christ as the only head. It is certain that by these marks it is possible to distinguish the true Church, from which it is not lawful for anyone to be separated. Moreover, those who are true members of this Church can be judged by marks according to the communion of all Christians, of such a sort is Faith, by which, once apprehending Christ as their Savior, they flee from sin and seek after righteousness; likewise, they love their neighbors, and, not turning to the left or right, they crucify their flesh with its works, even though it is too little, as if a greater weakness is in them, but regarding that, they fight against it by the power of the Spirit throughout the whole course of life, and, constantly fleeing to the blood, death, suffering, and obedience of our Lord Christ, as to the most safe protection, since they know that in Him alone they have forgiveness of sins, through faith in Him. Truly the False Church, on the contrary, always assigns more authority to its very self, and its institutions and traditions, than to the word of God. It does not

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suffer to subject itself to the yoke of Christ, nor does it administer the sacraments according to the prescription of Christ, but it adds something to them in this way, and subtracts from them in that way, according to it's judgment. Furthermore, it always relies more upon humans than on Christ, and, in a hostile manner, it persecutes those who piously desire to conform their lives according to the prescription of the word of God or who indict and repudiate its sins as greed and idolatry. Therefore, from this, in turn, it is easy to discern and recognize either Church from one another.

Article 30: About Control of the Church

We believe that this true Church ought to be ruled and governed according to the spiritual order that God has instructed us His Word, so that there would be Pastors and Ministers in it who purely preach and administer the Sacraments. Likewise, there should be Elders and Deacons who compose the Senate of the Church, so that just as by these means true Religion can be preserved, true doctrine retained and propagated, and people given over to sin censored and corrected, and also, just as they can be restrained with the same bridle of discipline, so also are the poor and afflicted can be assisted with help and comfort according to their particular need. For then all things will be done duly and in good order, when faithful and pious men are elected to its government

according to the prescription of blessed Paul, which is held in Tim. 3 and Tit. 1.

Article 31: About the Calling of Ministers of the Church

We believe that Ministers, Elders, and Deacons ought to be called and put forward to their offices by a legitimate election of the Church, having been invited to it by the grave invocation of God, in the order and manner that is prescribed to us in the word of God.

Moreover, above all else, each person ought to take care lest he carry his very self into these duties by forbidden means. For everyone must wait until they are called by God Himself, so that they may have sure testimony about their calling, and so that they may know it to be from the Lord. Moreover, all of the Ministers of the word of God, in whatsoever place they may be, all have similar and equal power and also authority, so that they are all equally Ministers of Christ, of this only universal Bishop and head of the Church. Again, lest this holy order of God be either violated or departed from in contempt, all of the Ministers and Elders of the Church ought to be honorably esteemed on account of the work incumbent upon them and peace ought to be cultivated with them, and, in turn, quarrels and contentions ought to be refrained from as much as is possible.

Article 32: About the Power of the Church in Composing Ecclesiastical Laws and in Administering Discipline

At the same time, we believe that it is certainly useful that Elders, who control the Church, set up an order among themselves for the conservation of the body of the Church. Let them earnestly take precautions in this way, lest by this arrangement they contort or turn aside from these that Christ Himself, our only Teacher, once established.

And so we reject all human inventions and laws that have been drug into the worship of God, lest our consciences are bound to or strung up by them in any way. And so, we receive those alone that are either for the fostering and nourishing of concord, or for keeping us in the obedience of God. And truly for this, excommunication is especially necessary, according to the command that seizes upon the word of God and those other supplements of attached ecclesiastical discipline.

Article 33: About the Sacraments

We believe that God, mindful of our sluggishness and weakness in reason, established sacraments for us, so that He would imprint His promises upon us and thus be most certain pledges for us, of divine goodness and of His gifts, having been instituted for the fostering and sustaining of our faith. He truly attached these to the word of the Gospel so that He would put forth before our external senses both the

very thing itself that He proclaims to us in His word and also even that which He Himself internally works in our hearts, and finally, so that He would confirm in us, more and more, the salvation that He deemed worthy to communicate to us. For the sacraments are signs and visible symbols of internal and invisible things, through which, as through means, God Himself works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. And therefore these signs are not in the least empty, or vacuous, or established for our deception or frustration. For their truth is Jesus Christ Himself, without Whom they would certainly be nothing of importance. Moreover, the number of the remaining sacraments that Christ Himself, our true and only Teacher, has instituted is sufficient for us. Truly there are only two, obviously the sacrament of baptism and of the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Article 34: About Baptism

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, (Who is the end of the Law), has now, by the pouring out of His own blood, put in place the end of having to use the pouring out of all other bloods for the propitiation of sin. And, having abolished Circumcision, which was occurring in Blood, He instituted Baptism in its place, by which we are received into the Church of God and separated from all other peoples and foreign religions, since we have been consecrated to Him alone, Whose signet and insignia we bear. And

finally, Baptism is a testimony to us that That One Himself, Who is the favorably inclined Father towards us, will be God to us throughout eternity. Therefore, the Lord commanded all His own to be baptized, by pure water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in order that, through the same Holy Spirit, He would indicate the blood of Christ to work and act internally in the soul, in the same way that water operates externally upon bodies. For just as water, having been poured out upon us, and residing upon of the body to be baptized, and itself clearly seen, washes filth away from the body, so too the Blood of Christ also cleans that one from sins, washes the soul and thoroughly cleanses it from iniquities, and regenerates us children of wrath as children of God. But this does not happen because of this material of the water, but by the very sprinkling of the most precious Blood of the Son of God, Who is for us as the Red Sea through which it is necessary to cross, so that we can escape from the tyranny of the Pharaoh, that is, of the Devil, and to enter into the spiritual land Canaan. And so, Ministers certainly offer sacraments and the visible thing to us, but the Lord Himself produces what is signified in the Sacrament, certainly the invisible gifts and graces, washing, purifying, and cleansing our souls from all their filth and sins; likewise, renewing and filling up our hearts with all consolation, and finally, granting assurance of His fatherly goodness to us, and clothing us with the new man and stripping off the old with all of its deeds. On account of these reasons, we believe that every

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person who seeks to obtain eternal life ought to be baptized with one (and once is enough) baptism, which it is never to be repeated afterwards, since we certainly cannot be born twice. Nevertheless, this baptism not only benefits us only in that moment at which water settles down upon us or at which we are moistened by it, but also throughout the whole span of our life. And so we call down a solemn curse upon this error of the Anabaptists, who not only have not been content in receiving Baptism once and for all, but who also damn the Baptism of the children from the faithful. We believe that, for the same reason, they ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant in which little children were once circumcised in Israel, certainly because the same promises have been made to our infants. And in fact Christ has poured out His blood so that He would wash adults no less than infants. And therefore, it is fitting for them to receive the sign or the Sacrament of the thing that Christ has done for their sake, just as in the Law, the Lord commanded the Sacrament of the death and suffering of Christ to be communicated to recently born children by offering a lamb in their place, which was the future Sacrament of Christ. In addition, the things that Circumcision fulfilled for the Jewish people are the same things that Baptism fulfills for the children of the faithful. And this is the reason why Paul calls Baptism the Circumcision of Christ.

Article 35: About the Supper of the Lord

We believe and confess that our Blessed Savior Jesus Christ has established the sacred Sacrament of His Supper, so that He would nourish in it and sustain those whom He has already regenerated and planted into His family, namely, the Church. Truly those who have been regenerated have two lives inside themselves: one that is carnal and transitory that they have carried with them from their first birth, and this one is common to all people; the other is holy and heavenly, which is given to them in that second birth, which comes from the word of the Gospel in union with the body of Christ, and this life is particular to the elect of God alone. Just as God certainly instituted earthly and material bread, suitable for the preservation of this carnal and terrestrial life, which is as common to all as life itself, so too has God sent life-giving bread, which has descended from heaven, which is particular to the faithful, namely, Jesus Christ. He nourishes and sustains the spiritual life of the faithful when He is eaten, that is, applied and received by the Spirit through faith. Moreover, so that that Christ would form or depict this holy and celestial bread for us, He has established terrestrial and visible bread and wine in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood. He truly witnesses to us in these things. As we truly accept and hold of this Sacrament in our hands and eat it with our mouths (from where this life of ours is afterwards sustained), so also truly for the maintaining of spiritual life in us, we receive the true body and blood of Christ our only Savior in

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our souls, by faith, which is the counterpart to the hand and mouth of our soul. Truly, it is most certain that Christ did not so anxiously entrust His Sacrament to us without reason, as He actually accomplishes in us whatever He Himself represents to us in His sacred signs, although the manner itself exceeds our natural capacity, nor can it be perceived in any of this, because clearly all the operations of the Holy Spirit are hidden and incomprehensible. Moreover, we certainly do not error in saying that that which is eaten is the very most natural body of Christ, and that that which is drunk is His true blood, but the instrument or medium through which we eat and drink these is not the mouth of the body but our Spirit Himself, and that through faith. And so Christ always resides at the right hand of the Father in heaven, but this does not therefore in the least keep Him from communicating Himself to us through faith. Again, this Supper is a meal of the Spirit, in the midst of Whom Christ brings His self forth to us for partaking with all of His works, and makes it so that, in this, just as which we enjoy His very self, so too do we enjoy the merits of His suffering and death. For He nourishes, reinforces, and consoles our miserable afflicted souls that are destitute of all consolation by the eating of His very own flesh; likewise He sustains and recreates them by the drinking of His blood. In addition, although the Sacraments are joined to the signified things themselves, both of those things, nevertheless, are not received by all. Indeed, the evil person certainly receives the Sacrament to his own damnation, but he does not receive the thing or truth

of the Sacrament. For example, Judas and Simon Magus indeed both received the Sacrament, but truly not in the least Christ Himself Who was signified in it, for He is communicated to believers alone. Finally, we communicate with this sacred Sacrament in the meeting of the people of God, with consummate humility and reverence, piously celebrating the memory of the death of Christ our Savior with acts of gratitude, and there publicly declaring the confession of faith and of the Christian Religion. And so, no one who has not first examined his very self ought to bring himself to this table, lest eating from this bread or drinking from this cup, he eats and drinks judgment and damnation upon his very self. Again, by the use of this Sacrament, the most passionate love towards both God Himself and towards neighbor is inflamed in us. And so, indeed we rightly reject as true profanity all the mockery and damnable fabrications of people, (which they have added to and mixed among the Sacraments), and we affirm that we ought to be content only with that entire pious order and rite that Christ and the Apostles have handed over to us, and we ought to speak of the same mysteries in the way in which they have also spoken of them.

Article 36: About the Magistracy

We believe that the Most High God has established Kings, Princes, and Magistrates, because of the corruption and depravity of the human race, and that

He desires that this World be governed by these laws and firm polity for the punishment of human evils and that all things be conducted among people in a right order. For this reason He has armed the magistrates themselves with the sword, so that they would inflict evil people with punishment, and truly protect good people. Again, it is the duty of these, not only to anxiously preserve civil polity, but also to give true effort that the holy ministry would be preserved, and that all idolatry and adultery of the worship of God would be removed from the public square, that the Kingdom of Antichrist would be destroyed, that the Kingdom of Christ would be truly extended. Finally, it is of their duty to bring it about that the sacred word of the Gospel would be preached from everywhere so that everyone, in turn, can freely worship purely and venerate God according to the prescription of His word. Moreover, all people, of whatsoever status, or state, or respect they may be, ought to be subject to the lawful Magistrates, to pay tax and tribute to them, and to follow and obey them in all things that are not opposed to the word of God, and also to pour out prayers on their behalf so that God would deem it worthy to lead them in all of their actions, and so that we could truly lead, with all piety and honesty, a tranquil and quiet life under their very selves. For this reason we detest all Anabaptists and anarchists, who reject their Superiors and Magistrates and subvert right and law, who make all goods common, and finally, who efface and disfigure the honest

order and hierarchy that God has established among people.

Article 37: About the Final Judgment, the Resurrection of the Flesh and Eternal Life

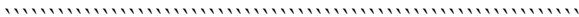
Finally, we believe, according to the word of God, that when the time predestined by God and unknown to all creatures arrives, and the number of the Elect will be completed, our Lord Jesus Christ is going to return from heaven, bodily and visibly, just as He once ascended there, decorated with consummate Majesty, and He Himself will declare judgment upon the living and of the dead and in order, having set this old world ablaze with fire and flame so that He would purify it. Then truly all creatures, so as with men also with women and infants, as many as have thereupon lived, back from the beginning up unto the end of the world, will appear in the presence of this consummate Judge, certainly called forth by the sound of both the Archangel and by the trumpet of God. For all of the previously dead will then rise up from the ground and, by the Spirit, the soul of every one of them, in turn, will be united and joined together with their own body in which they had lived. Again, those who will be living up unto that ultimate day will be transformed in but a moment and a blink of the eye, clearly from corruption into an incorruptible nature. Then the books, certainly the consciences, will be opened up and the dead will be judged according to

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the things that they did in this world, whether good or bad. In fact, people are then even going to render an account of every idle word that they have spoken, which the world now regards as sport and joke. In short, then all the hypocrisies, and secrets of people, and the things of their hearts, will be openly uncovered in presence of all people, so that, with singular merit, the thought of this is rightly horrible and terrifying to the wicked and reprobate, and truly both most greatly hoped for and also an enormous consolation for the elect. For then their redemption will be made thoroughly obvious, and they will obtain the most pleasant fruits of their labor and pain that have endured in this life; then their innocence will be openly acknowledged by everyone, and they themselves, in turn, will see the terrifying vengeance that the Lord will take upon those whom have tyrannically afflicted them with various torments and molestations in this world. Again, evil people will be convicted by the own testimony of their consciences, and indeed rendered immortal, but in that state so that they will always be tortured eternally in the never-ending fire that has been prepared for the Devil. But on the contrary, the faithful and Elect will truly be given crowns of honor and glory, and the Son of God will confess their name in the presence of God the Father and of the Angels, and every tear will be wiped from their eyes. And so, their cause, which is damned as heresy and wickedness by Magistrates and judges, will then be acknowledged to be the cause of the Son of God. And the Lord will freely reward them with such glory as

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no person ever can imagine with the mind.
Therefore, we wait upon that great day of the Lord
with consummate eagerness so that, as happy
people, we will most fully acquire and will
thoroughly enjoy throughout eternity all of those
things promised by God in Jesus Christ the Lord.
Apoc. 22:20. Come again Lord Jesus.



The Canons of Dordrecht

The Decision of the Synod of Dort on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in the Netherlands

The First Main Point of Doctrine: Divine Election and Reprobation

The Judgment Concerning Divine Predestination Which the Synod Declares to Be in Agreement with the Word of God and Accepted Till Now in the Reformed Churches, Set Forth in Several Articles

Article 1: God's Right to Condemn All People

Since all people have sinned in Adam and have come under the sentence of the curse and eternal death, God would have done no one an injustice if it had been his will to leave the entire human race in sin and under the curse, and to condemn them on account of their sin. As the apostle says: The whole world is liable to the condemnation of God (Rom. 3:19), All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), and The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

Article 2: The Manifestation of God’s Love

But this is how God showed his love: he sent his only begotten Son into the world, so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Article 3: The Preaching of the Gospel

In order that people may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends proclaimers of this very joyful message to the people he wishes and at the time he wishes. By this ministry people are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. For how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without someone preaching? And how shall they preach unless they have been sent? (Rom. 10:14-15).

Article 4: A Twofold Response to the Gospel

God’s anger remains on those who do not believe this gospel. But those who do accept it and embrace Jesus the Savior with a true and living faith are delivered through him from God’s anger and from destruction, and receive the gift of eternal life.

Article 5: The Sources of Unbelief and of Faith

The cause or blame for this unbelief, as well as for all other sins, is not at all in God, but in man. Faith in Jesus Christ, however, and salvation through him is a

free gift of God. As Scripture says, It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8). Likewise: It has been freely given to you to believe in Christ (Phil. 1:29).

Article 6: God's Eternal Decision

The fact that some receive from God the gift of faith within time, and that others do not, stems from his eternal decision. For all his works are known to God from eternity (Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:11). In accordance with this decision he graciously softens the hearts, however hard, of his chosen ones and inclines them to believe, but by his just judgment he leaves in their wickedness and hardness of heart those who have not been chosen. And in this especially is disclosed to us his act—unfathomable, and as merciful as it is just—of distinguishing between people equally lost. This is the well-known decision of election and reprobation revealed in God's Word. This decision the wicked, impure, and unstable distort to their own ruin, but it provides holy and godly souls with comfort beyond words.

Article 7: Election

Election [or choosing] is God's unchangeable purpose by which he did the following:

Before the foundation of the world, by sheer grace, according to the free good pleasure of his will, he

chose in Christ to salvation a definite number of particular people out of the entire human race, which had fallen by its own fault from its original innocence into sin and ruin. Those chosen were neither better nor more deserving than the others, but lay with them in the common misery. He did this in Christ, whom he also appointed from eternity to be the mediator, the head of all those chosen, and the foundation of their salvation. And so he decided to give the chosen ones to Christ to be saved, and to call and draw them effectively into Christ's fellowship through his Word and Spirit. In other words, he decided to grant them true faith in Christ, to justify them, to sanctify them, and finally, after powerfully preserving them in the fellowship of his Son, to glorify them.

God did all this in order to demonstrate his mercy, to the praise of the riches of his glorious grace.

As Scripture says, God chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, so that we should be holy and blameless before him with love; he predestined us whom he adopted as his children through Jesus Christ, in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, by which he freely made us pleasing to himself in his beloved (Eph. 1:4-6). And elsewhere, Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified (Rom. 8:30).

Article 8: A Single Decision of Election

This election is not of many kinds; it is one and the same election for all who were to be saved in the Old and the New Testament. For Scripture declares that there is a single good pleasure, purpose, and plan of God's will, by which he chose us from eternity both to grace and to glory, both to salvation and to the way of salvation, which he prepared in advance for us to walk in.

Article 9: Election Not Based on Foreseen Faith

This same election took place, not on the basis of foreseen faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, or of any other good quality and disposition, as though it were based on a prerequisite cause or condition in the person to be chosen, but rather for the purpose of faith, of the obedience of faith, of holiness, and so on. Accordingly, election is the source of each of the benefits of salvation. Faith, holiness, and the other saving gifts, and at last eternal life itself, flow forth from election as its fruits and effects. As the apostle says, He chose us (not because we were, but) so that we should be holy and blameless before him in love (Eph. 1:4).

Article 10: Election Based on God's Good Pleasure

But the cause of this undeserved election is exclusively the good pleasure of God. This does not involve his choosing certain human qualities or

actions from among all those possible as a condition of salvation, but rather involves his adopting certain particular persons from among the common mass of sinners as his own possession. As Scripture says, When the children were not yet born, and had done nothing either good or bad..., she (Rebecca) was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Rom. 9:11-13). Also, All who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48).

Article 11: Election Unchangeable

Just as God himself is most wise, unchangeable, all-knowing, and almighty, so the election made by him can neither be suspended nor altered, revoked, or annulled; neither can his chosen ones be cast off, nor their number reduced.

Article 12: The Assurance of Election

Assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election to salvation is given to the chosen in due time, though by various stages and in differing measure. Such assurance comes not by inquisitive searching into the hidden and deep things of God, but by noticing within themselves, with spiritual joy and holy delight, the unmistakable fruits of election pointed out in God's Word— such as a true faith in Christ, a childlike fear of God, a godly sorrow for

their sins, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, and so on.

Article 13: The Fruit of This Assurance

In their awareness and assurance of this election God's children daily find greater cause to humble themselves before God, to adore the fathomless depth of his mercies, to cleanse themselves, and to give fervent love in return to him who first so greatly loved them. This is far from saying that this teaching concerning election, and reflection upon it, make God's children lax in observing his commandments or carnally self-assured. By God's just judgment this does usually happen to those who casually take for granted the grace of election or engage in idle and brazen talk about it but are unwilling to walk in the ways of the chosen.

Article 14: Teaching Election Properly

Just as, by God's wise plan, this teaching concerning divine election has been proclaimed through the prophets, Christ himself, and the apostles, in Old and New Testament times, and has subsequently been committed to writing in the Holy Scriptures, so also today in God's church, for which it was specifically intended, this teaching must be set forth—with a spirit of discretion, in a godly and holy manner, at the appropriate time and place, without inquisitive searching into the ways of the Most High. This must

be done for the glory of God’s most holy name, and for the lively comfort of his people.

Article 15: Reprobation

Moreover, Holy Scripture most especially highlights this eternal and undeserved grace of our election and brings it out more clearly for us, in that it further bears witness that not all people have been chosen but that some have not been chosen or have been passed by in God’s eternal election– those, that is, concerning whom God, on the basis of his entirely free, most just, irreproachable, and unchangeable good pleasure, made the following decision: to leave them in the common misery into which, by their own fault, they have plunged themselves; not to grant them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but finally to condemn and eternally punish them (having been left in their own ways and under his just judgment), not only for their unbelief but also for all their other sins, in order to display his justice.

And this is the decision of reprobation, which does not at all make God the author of sin (a blasphemous thought!) but rather its fearful, irreproachable, just judge and avenger.

Article 16: Responses to the Teaching of Reprobation

Those who do not yet actively experience within themselves a living faith in Christ or an assured

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confidence of heart, peace of conscience, a zeal for childlike obedience, and a glorying in God through Christ, but who nevertheless use the means by which God has promised to work these things in us—such people ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to count themselves among the reprobate; rather they ought to continue diligently in the use of the means, to desire fervently a time of more abundant grace, and to wait for it in reverence and humility. On the other hand, those who seriously desire to turn to God, to be pleasing to him alone, and to be delivered from the body of death, but are not yet able to make such progress along the way of godliness and faith as they would like—such people ought much less to stand in fear of the teaching concerning reprobation, since our merciful God has promised that he will not snuff out a smoldering wick and that he will not break a bruised reed. However, those who have forgotten God and their Savior Jesus Christ and have abandoned themselves wholly to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh—such people have every reason to stand in fear of this teaching, as long as they do not seriously turn to God.

Article 17: The Salvation of the Infants of Believers

Since we must make judgments about God's will from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their

parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy.

Article 18: The Proper Attitude Toward Election and Reprobation

To those who complain about this grace of an undeserved election and about the severity of a just reprobation, we reply with the words of the apostle, Who are you, O man, to talk back to God? (Rom. 9:20), and with the words of our Savior, Have I no right to do what I want with my own? (Matt. 20:15). We, however, with reverent adoration of these secret things, cry out with the apostle: Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond tracing out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has first given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen (Rom. 11:33-36).

Rejection of the Errors:

by Which the Dutch Churches Have for Some Time Been Disturbed

Having set forth the orthodox teaching concerning election and reprobation, the Synod rejects the errors of those

I

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

For they deceive the simple and plainly contradict Holy Scripture in its testimony that God does not only wish to save those who would believe, but that he has also from eternity chosen certain particular people to whom, rather than to others, he would within time grant faith in Christ and perseverance. As Scripture says, I have revealed your name to those whom you gave me (John 17:6). Likewise, All who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48), and He chose us before the foundation of the world so that we should be holy... (Eph. 1:4).

II

Who teach that God's election to eternal life is of many kinds: one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and the latter in turn either incomplete, revocable, nonperemptory (or conditional), or else complete, irrevocable, and peremptory (or absolute). Likewise, who teach that there is one election to faith and another to salvation, so that there can be an election to justifying faith apart from a peremptory election to salvation.

For this is an invention of the human brain, devised apart from the Scriptures, which distorts the teaching concerning election and breaks up this golden chain of salvation: Those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified (Rom. 8:30).

III

Who teach that God’s good pleasure and purpose, which Scripture mentions in its teaching of election, does not involve God’s choosing certain particular people rather than others, but involves God’s choosing, out of all possible conditions (including the works of the law) or out of the whole order of things, the intrinsically unworthy act of faith, as well as the imperfect obedience of faith, to be a condition of salvation; and it involves his graciously wishing to count this as perfect obedience and to look upon it as worthy of the reward of eternal life.

For by this pernicious error the good pleasure of God and the merit of Christ are robbed of their effectiveness and people are drawn away, by unprofitable inquiries, from the truth of undeserved justification and from the simplicity of the Scriptures. It also gives the lie to these words of the apostle: God called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of works, but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Tim. 1:9).

IV

Who teach that in election to faith a prerequisite condition is that man should rightly use the light of nature, be upright, unassuming, humble, and disposed to eternal life, as though election depended to some extent on these factors.

For this smacks of Pelagius, and it clearly calls into question the words of the apostle: We lived at one time in the passions of our flesh, following the will of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in transgressions, made us alive with Christ, by whose grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with him and seated us with him in heaven in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages we might show the surpassing riches of his grace, according to his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith (and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God) not by works, so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:3-9).

V

Who teach that the incomplete and nonperemptory election of particular persons to salvation occurred on the basis of a foreseen faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness, which has just begun or continued for some time; but that complete and peremptory election occurred on the basis of a foreseen

perseverance to the end in faith, repentance, holiness, and godliness. And that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, on account of which the one who is chosen is more worthy than the one who is not chosen. And therefore that faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits or effects of an unchangeable election to glory, but indispensable conditions and causes, which are prerequisite in those who are to be chosen in the complete election, and which are foreseen as achieved in them.

This runs counter to the entire Scripture, which throughout impresses upon our ears and hearts these sayings among others: Election is not by works, but by him who calls (Rom. 9:11-12); All who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48); He chose us in himself so that we should be holy (Eph. 1:4); You did not choose me, but I chose you (John 15:16); If by grace, not by works (Rom. 11:6); In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son (1 John 4:10).

VI

Who teach that not every election to salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the chosen can perish and do in fact perish eternally, with no decision of God to prevent it.

By this gross error they make God changeable, destroy the comfort of the godly concerning the steadfastness of their election, and contradict the

Holy Scriptures, which teach that the elect cannot be led astray (Matt. 24:24), that Christ does not lose those given to him by the Father (John 6:39), and that those whom God predestined, called, and justified, he also glorifies (Rom. 8:30).

VII

Who teach that in this life there is no fruit, no awareness, and no assurance of one's unchangeable election to glory, except as conditional upon something changeable and contingent.

For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain assurance, but these things also militate against the experience of the saints, who with the apostle rejoice from an awareness of their election and sing the praises of this gift of God; who, as Christ urged, rejoice with his disciples that their names have been written in heaven (Luke 10:20); and finally who hold up against the flaming arrows of the devil's temptations the awareness of their election, with the question Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? (Rom. 8:33).

VIII

Who teach that it was not on the basis of his just will alone that God decided to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation or to pass anyone by in the imparting of grace necessary for faith and conversion.

For these words stand fast: He has mercy on whom he wishes, and he hardens whom he wishes (Rom. 9:18). And also: To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given (Matt. 13:11). Likewise: I give glory to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and have revealed them to little children; yes, Father, because that was your pleasure (Matt. 11:25-26).

IX

Who teach that the cause for God’s sending the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely God’s good pleasure, but rather that one people is better and worthier than the other to whom the gospel is not communicated.

For Moses contradicts this when he addresses the people of Israel as follows: Behold, to Jehovah your God belong the heavens and the highest heavens, the earth and whatever is in it. But Jehovah was inclined in his affection to love your ancestors alone, and chose out their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as at this day (Deut. 10:14-15). And also Christ: Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! for if those mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Matt. 11:21).

The Second Main Point of Doctrine: Christ's Death and Human Redemption Through It

Article 1: The Punishment Which God's Justice Requires

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. His justice requires (as he has revealed himself in the Word) that the sins we have committed against his infinite majesty be punished with both temporal and eternal punishments, of soul as well as body. We cannot escape these punishments unless satisfaction is given to God's justice.

Article 2: The Satisfaction Made by Christ

Since, however, we ourselves cannot give this satisfaction or deliver ourselves from God's anger, God in his boundless mercy has given us as a guarantee his only begotten Son, who was made to be sin and a curse for us, in our place, on the cross, in order that he might give satisfaction for us.

Article 3: The Infinite Value of Christ's Death

This death of God's Son is the only and entirely complete sacrifice and satisfaction for sins; it is of infinite value and worth, more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world.

Article 4: Reasons for This Infinite Value

This death is of such great value and worth for the reason that the person who suffered it is—as was necessary to be our Savior—not only a true and perfectly holy man, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Another reason is that this death was accompanied by the experience of God’s anger and curse, which we by our sins had fully deserved.

Article 5: The Mandate to Proclaim the Gospel to All

Moreover, it is the promise of the gospel that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be announced and declared without differentiation or discrimination to all nations and people, to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel.

Article 6: Unbelief Man’s Responsibility

However, that many who have been called through the gospel do not repent or believe in Christ but perish in unbelief is not because the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross is deficient or insufficient, but because they themselves are at fault.

Article 7: Faith God's Gift

But all who genuinely believe and are delivered and saved by Christ's death from their sins and from destruction receive this favor solely from God's grace - which he owes to no one - given to them in Christ from eternity.

Article 8: The Saving Effectiveness of Christ's Death

For it was the entirely free plan and very gracious will and intention of God the Father that the enlivening and saving effectiveness of his Son's costly death should work itself out in all his chosen ones, in order that he might grant justifying faith to them only and thereby lead them without fail to salvation. In other words, it was God's will that Christ through the blood of the cross (by which he confirmed the new covenant) should effectively redeem from every people, tribe, nation, and language all those and only those who were chosen from eternity to salvation and given to him by the Father; that he should grant them faith (which, like the Holy Spirit's other saving gifts, he acquired for them by his death); that he should cleanse them by his blood from all their sins, both original and actual, whether committed before or after their coming to faith; that he should faithfully preserve them to the very end; and that he should finally present them to himself, a glorious people, without spot or wrinkle.

Article 9: The Fulfillment of God’s Plan

This plan, arising out of God’s eternal love for his chosen ones, from the beginning of the world to the present time has been powerfully carried out and will also be carried out in the future, the gates of hell seeking vainly to prevail against it. As a result the chosen are gathered into one, all in their own time, and there is always a church of believers founded on Christ’s blood, a church which steadfastly loves, persistently worships, and—here and in all eternity—praises him as her Savior who laid down his life for her on the cross, as a bridegroom for his bride.

Rejection of the Errors:

Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those

I

Who teach that God the Father appointed his Son to death on the cross without a fixed and definite plan to save anyone by name, so that the necessity, usefulness, and worth of what Christ’s death obtained could have stood intact and altogether perfect, complete and whole, even if the redemption that was obtained had never in actual fact been applied to any individual.

For this assertion is an insult to the wisdom of God the Father and to the merit of Jesus Christ, and it is contrary to Scripture. For the Savior speaks as

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follows: I lay down my life for the sheep, and I know them (John 10:15, 27). And Isaiah the prophet says concerning the Savior: When he shall make himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days, and the will of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand (Isa. 53:10). Finally, this undermines the article of the creed in which we confess what we believe concerning the Church.

II

Who teach that the purpose of Christ's death was not to establish in actual fact a new covenant of grace by his blood, but only to acquire for the Father the mere right to enter once more into a covenant with men, whether of grace or of works.

For this conflicts with Scripture, which teaches that Christ has become the guarantee and mediator of a better - that is, a new-covenant (Heb. 7:22; 9:15), and that a will is in force only when someone has died (Heb. 9:17).

III

Who teach that Christ, by the satisfaction which he gave, did not certainly merit for anyone salvation itself and the faith by which this satisfaction of Christ is effectively applied to salvation, but only acquired for the Father the authority or plenary will to relate in a new way with men and to impose such new conditions as he chose, and that the satisfying of these conditions depends on the free choice of man;

consequently, that it was possible that either all or none would fulfill them.

For they have too low an opinion of the death of Christ, do not at all acknowledge the foremost fruit or benefit which it brings forth, and summon back from hell the Pelagian error.

IV

Who teach that what is involved in the new covenant of grace which God the Father made with men through the intervening of Christ's death is not that we are justified before God and saved through faith, insofar as it accepts Christ's merit, but rather that God, having withdrawn his demand for perfect obedience to the law, counts faith itself, and the imperfect obedience of faith, as perfect obedience to the law, and graciously looks upon this as worthy of the reward of eternal life.

For they contradict Scripture: They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ, whom God presented as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood (Rom. 3:24-25). And along with the ungodly Socinus, they introduce a new and foreign justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole church.

V

Who teach that all people have been received into the state of reconciliation and into the grace of the

covenant, so that no one on account of original sin is liable to condemnation, or is to be condemned, but that all are free from the guilt of this sin.

For this opinion conflicts with Scripture which asserts that we are by nature children of wrath.

VI

Who make use of the distinction between obtaining and applying in order to instill in the unwary and inexperienced the opinion that God, as far as he is concerned, wished to bestow equally upon all people the benefits which are gained by Christ's death; but that the distinction by which some rather than others come to share in the forgiveness of sins and eternal life depends on their own free choice (which applies itself to the grace offered indiscriminately) but does not depend on the unique gift of mercy which effectively works in them, so that they, rather than others, apply that grace to themselves.

For, while pretending to set forth this distinction in an acceptable sense, they attempt to give the people the deadly poison of Pelagianism.

VII

Who teach that Christ neither could die, nor had to die, nor did die for those whom God so dearly loved and chose to eternal life, since such people do not need the death of Christ.

For they contradict the apostle, who says: Christ loved me and gave himself up for me (Gal. 2:20), and likewise: Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, that is, for them (Rom. 8:33-34). They also contradict the Savior, who asserts: I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:15), and My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends (John 15:12-13).

*The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine:
Human Corruption, Conversion to God, and the Way
It Occurs*

Article 1: The Effect of the Fall on Human Nature

Man was originally created in the image of God and was furnished in his mind with a true and salutary knowledge of his Creator and things spiritual, in his will and heart with righteousness, and in all his emotions with purity; indeed, the whole man was holy. However, rebelling against God at the devil's instigation and by his own free will, he deprived himself of these outstanding gifts. Rather, in their place he brought upon himself blindness, terrible darkness, futility, and distortion of judgment in his mind; perversity, defiance, and hardness in his heart and will; and finally impurity in all his emotions.

Article 2: The Spread of Corruption

Man brought forth children of the same nature as himself after the fall. That is to say, being corrupt he brought forth corrupt children. The corruption spread, by God's just judgment, from Adam to all his descendants— except for Christ alone—not by way of imitation (as in former times the Pelagians would have it) but by way of the propagation of his perverted nature.

Article 3: Total Inability

Therefore, all people are conceived in sin and are born children of wrath, unfit for any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in their sins, and slaves to sin; without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they are neither willing nor able to return to God, to reform their distorted nature, or even to dispose themselves to such reform.

Article 4: The Inadequacy of the Light of Nature

There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in man after the fall, by virtue of which he retains some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrates a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling man to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him—so far, in fact, that man does not use it rightly even in matters

of nature and society. Instead, in various ways he completely distorts this light, whatever its precise character, and suppresses it in unrighteousness. In doing so he renders himself without excuse before God.

Article 5: The Inadequacy of the Law

In this respect, what is true of the light of nature is true also of the Ten Commandments given by God through Moses specifically to the Jews. For man cannot obtain saving grace through the Decalogue, because, although it does expose the magnitude of his sin and increasingly convict him of his guilt, yet it does not offer a remedy or enable him to escape from his misery, and, indeed, weakened as it is by the flesh, leaves the offender under the curse.

Article 6: The Saving Power of the Gospel

What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law can do, God accomplishes by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word or the ministry of reconciliation. This is the gospel about the Messiah, through which it has pleased God to save believers, in both the Old and the New Testament.

Article 7: God’s Freedom in Revealing the Gospel

In the Old Testament, God revealed this secret of his will to a small number; in the New Testament (now

without any distinction between peoples) he discloses it to a large number. The reason for this difference must not be ascribed to the greater worth of one nation over another, or to a better use of the light of nature, but to the free good pleasure and undeserved love of God. Therefore, those who receive so much grace, beyond and in spite of all they deserve, ought to acknowledge it with humble and thankful hearts; on the other hand, with the apostle they ought to adore (but certainly not inquisitively search into) the severity and justice of God's judgments on the others, who do not receive this grace.

Article 8: The Serious Call of the Gospel

Nevertheless, all who are called through the gospel are called seriously. For seriously and most genuinely God makes known in his Word what is pleasing to him: that those who are called should come to him. Seriously he also promises rest for their souls and eternal life to all who come to him and believe.

Article 9: Human Responsibility for Rejecting the Gospel

The fact that many who are called through the ministry of the gospel do not come and are not brought to conversion must not be blamed on the gospel, nor on Christ, who is offered through the

gospel, nor on God, who calls them through the gospel and even bestows various gifts on them, but on the people themselves who are called. Some in self-assurance do not even entertain the Word of life; others do entertain it but do not take it to heart, and for that reason, after the fleeting joy of a temporary faith, they relapse; others choke the seed of the Word with the thorns of life's cares and with the pleasures of the world and bring forth no fruits. This our Savior teaches in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13).

Article 10: Conversion as the Work of God

The fact that others who are called through the ministry of the gospel do come and are brought to conversion must not be credited to man, as though one distinguishes himself by free choice from others who are furnished with equal or sufficient grace for faith and conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains). No, it must be credited to God: just as from eternity he chose his own in Christ, so within time he effectively calls them, grants them faith and repentance, and, having rescued them from the dominion of darkness, brings them into the kingdom of his Son, in order that they may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called them out of darkness into this marvelous light, and may boast not in themselves, but in the Lord, as apostolic words frequently testify in Scripture.

Article 11: The Holy Spirit's Work in Conversion

Moreover, when God carries out this good pleasure in his chosen ones, or works true conversion in them, he not only sees to it that the gospel is proclaimed to them outwardly, and enlightens their minds powerfully by the Holy Spirit so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but, by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit, he also penetrates into the inmost being of man, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant; he activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds.

Article 12: Regeneration a Supernatural Work

And this is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, and the making alive so clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures, which God works in us without our help. But this certainly does not happen only by outward teaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a way of working that, after God has done his work, it remains in man's power whether or not to be reborn or converted. Rather, it is an entirely supernatural work, one that is at the same time most powerful and most pleasing, a marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible work, which is not lesser

than or inferior in power to that of creation or of raising the dead, as Scripture (inspired by the author of this work) teaches. As a result, all those in whose hearts God works in this marvelous way are certainly, unfailingly, and effectively reborn and do actually believe. And then the will, now renewed, is not only activated and motivated by God but in being activated by God is also itself active. For this reason, man himself, by that grace which he has received, is also rightly said to believe and to repent.

Article 13: The Incomprehensible Way of Regeneration

In this life believers cannot fully understand the way this work occurs; meanwhile, they rest content with knowing and experiencing that by this grace of God they do believe with the heart and love their Savior.

Article 14: The Way God Gives Faith

In this way, therefore, faith is a gift of God, not in the sense that it is offered by God for man to choose, but that it is in actual fact bestowed on man, breathed and infused into him. Nor is it a gift in the sense that God bestows only the potential to believe, but then awaits assent—the act of believing—from man’s choice; rather, it is a gift in the sense that he who works both willing and acting and, indeed, works all things in all people produces in man both the will to believe and the belief itself.

Article 15: Responses to God's Grace

God does not owe this grace to anyone. For what could God owe to one who has nothing to give that can be paid back? Indeed, what could God owe to one who has nothing of his own to give but sin and falsehood? Therefore the person who receives this grace owes and gives eternal thanks to God alone; the person who does not receive it either does not care at all about these spiritual things and is satisfied with himself in his condition, or else in self-assurance foolishly boasts about having something which he lacks. Furthermore, following the example of the apostles, we are to think and to speak in the most favorable way about those who outwardly profess their faith and better their lives, for the inner chambers of the heart are unknown to us. But for others who have not yet been called, we are to pray to the God who calls things that do not exist as though they did. In no way, however, are we to pride ourselves as better than they, as though we had distinguished ourselves from them.

Article 16: Regeneration's Effect

However, just as by the fall man did not cease to be man, endowed with intellect and will, and just as sin, which has spread through the whole human race, did not abolish the nature of the human race but distorted and spiritually killed it, so also this divine grace of regeneration does not act in people as if they were blocks and stones; nor does it abolish the will

and its properties or coerce a reluctant will by force, but spiritually revives, heals, reforms, and—in a manner at once pleasing and powerful—bends it back. As a result, a ready and sincere obedience of the Spirit now begins to prevail where before the rebellion and resistance of the flesh were completely dominant. It is in this that the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consists. Thus, if the marvelous Maker of every good thing were not dealing with us, man would have no hope of getting up from his fall by his free choice, by which he plunged himself into ruin when still standing upright.

Article 17: God’s Use of Means in Regeneration

Just as the almighty work of God by which he brings forth and sustains our natural life does not rule out but requires the use of means, by which God, according to his infinite wisdom and goodness, has wished to exercise his power, so also the aforementioned supernatural work of God by which he regenerates us in no way rules out or cancels the use of the gospel, which God in his great wisdom has appointed to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. For this reason, the apostles and the teachers who followed them taught the people in a godly manner about this grace of God, to give him the glory and to humble all pride, and yet did not neglect meanwhile to keep the people, by means of the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the

administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline. So even today it is out of the question that the teachers or those taught in the church should presume to test God by separating what he in his good pleasure has wished to be closely joined together. For grace is bestowed through admonitions, and the more readily we perform our duty, the more lustrous the benefit of God working in us usually is and the better his work advances. To him alone, both for the means and for their saving fruit and effectiveness, all glory is owed forever. Amen.

Rejection of the Errors:

Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those

I

Who teach that, properly speaking, it cannot be said that original sin in itself is enough to condemn the whole human race or to warrant temporal and eternal punishments.

For they contradict the apostle when he says: Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death passed on to all men because all sinned (Rom. 5:12); also: The guilt followed one sin and brought condemnation (Rom. 5:16); likewise: The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

II

Who teach that the spiritual gifts or the good dispositions and virtues such as goodness, holiness, and righteousness could not have resided in man's will when he was first created, and therefore could not have been separated from the will at the fall.

For this conflicts with the apostle's description of the image of God in Ephesians 4:24, where he portrays the image in terms of righteousness and holiness, which definitely reside in the will.

III

Who teach that in spiritual death the spiritual gifts have not been separated from man's will, since the will in itself has never been corrupted but only hindered by the darkness of the mind and the unruliness of the emotions, and since the will is able to exercise its innate free capacity once these hindrances are removed, which is to say, it is able of itself to will or choose whatever good is set before it—or else not to will or choose it.

This is a novel idea and an error and has the effect of elevating the power of free choice, contrary to the words of Jeremiah the prophet: The heart itself is deceitful above all things and wicked (Jer. 17:9); and of the words of the apostle: All of us also lived among them (the sons of disobedience) at one time in the passions of our flesh, following the will of our flesh and thoughts (Eph. 2:3).

IV

Who teach that unregenerate man is not strictly or totally dead in his sins or deprived of all capacity for spiritual good but is able to hunger and thirst for righteousness or life and to offer the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit which is pleasing to God.

For these views are opposed to the plain testimonies of Scripture: You were dead in your transgressions and sins (Eph. 2:1, 5); The imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil all the time (Gen. 6:5; 8:21). Besides, to hunger and thirst for deliverance from misery and for life, and to offer God the sacrifice of a broken spirit is characteristic only of the regenerate and of those called blessed (Ps. 51:17; Matt. 5:6).

V

Who teach that corrupt and natural man can make such good use of common grace (by which they mean the light of nature) or of the gifts remaining after the fall that he is able thereby gradually to obtain a greater grace—evangelical or saving grace—as well as salvation itself; and that in this way God, for his part, shows himself ready to reveal Christ to all people, since he provides to all, to a sufficient extent and in an effective manner, the means necessary for the revealing of Christ, for faith, and for repentance.

For Scripture, not to mention the experience of all ages, testifies that this is false: He makes known his words to Jacob, his statutes and his laws to Israel; he

has done this for no other nation, and they do not know his laws (Ps. 147:19-20); In the past God let all nations go their own way (Acts 14:16); They (Paul and his companions) were kept by the Holy Spirit from speaking God's word in Asia; and When they had come to Mysia, they tried to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit would not allow them to (Acts 16:6-7).

VI

Who teach that in the true conversion of man new qualities, dispositions, or gifts cannot be infused or poured into his will by God, and indeed that the faith [or believing] by which we first come to conversion and from which we receive the name "believers" is not a quality or gift infused by God, but only an act of man, and that it cannot be called a gift except in respect to the power of attaining faith.

For these views contradict the Holy Scriptures, which testify that God does infuse or pour into our hearts the new qualities of faith, obedience, and the experiencing of his love: I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts (Jer. 31:33); I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring (Isa. 44:3); The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (Rom. 5:5). They also conflict with the continuous practice of the Church, which prays with the prophet: Convert me, Lord, and I shall be converted (Jer. 31:18).

VII

Who teach that the grace by which we are converted to God is nothing but a gentle persuasion, or (as others explain it) that the way of God's acting in man's conversion that is most noble and suited to human nature is that which happens by persuasion, and that nothing prevents this grace of moral suasion even by itself from making natural men spiritual; indeed, that God does not produce the assent of the will except in this manner of moral suasion, and that the effectiveness of God's work by which it surpasses the work of Satan consists in the fact that God promises eternal benefits while Satan promises temporal ones.

For this teaching is entirely Pelagian and contrary to the whole of Scripture, which recognizes besides this persuasion also another, far more effective and divine way in which the Holy Spirit acts in man's conversion. As Ezekiel 36:26 puts it: I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; and I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh....

VIII

Who teach that God in regenerating man does not bring to bear that power of his omnipotence whereby he may powerfully and unfailingly bend man's will to faith and conversion, but that even when God has accomplished all the works of grace which he uses for man's conversion, man nevertheless can, and in

actual fact often does, so resist God and the Spirit in their intent and will to regenerate him, that man completely thwarts his own rebirth; and, indeed, that it remains in his own power whether or not to be reborn.

For this does away with all effective functioning of God's grace in our conversion and subjects the activity of Almighty God to the will of man; it is contrary to the apostles, who teach that we believe by virtue of the effective working of God's mighty strength (Eph. 1:19), and that God fulfills the undeserved good will of his kindness and the work of faith in us with power (2 Thess. 1:11), and likewise that his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

IX

Who teach that grace and free choice are concurrent partial causes which cooperate to initiate conversion, and that grace does not precede—in the order of causality—the effective influence of the will; that is to say, that God does not effectively help man's will to come to conversion before man's will itself motivates and determines itself.

For the early church already condemned this doctrine long ago in the Pelagians, on the basis of the words of the apostle: It does not depend on man's willing or running but on God's mercy (Rom. 9:16); also: Who makes you different from anyone else? and What do you have that you did not receive? (1

Cor. 4:7); likewise: It is God who works in you to will and act according to his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13).

The Fifth Main Point of Doctrine: The Perseverance of the Saints

Article 1: The Regenerate Not Entirely Free from Sin

Those people whom God according to his purpose calls into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, he also sets free from the reign and slavery of sin, though in this life not entirely from the flesh and from the body of sin.

Article 2: The Believer's Reaction to Sins of Weakness

Hence daily sins of weakness arise, and blemishes cling to even the best works of God's people, giving them continual cause to humble themselves before God, to flee for refuge to Christ crucified, to put the flesh to death more and more by the Spirit of supplication and by holy exercises of godliness, and to strain toward the goal of perfection, until they are freed from this body of death and reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

Article 3: God's Preservation of the Converted

Because of these remnants of sin dwelling in them and also because of the temptations of the world and Satan, those who have been converted could not remain standing in this grace if left to their own resources. But God is faithful, mercifully strengthening them in the grace once conferred on them and powerfully preserving them in it to the end.

Article 4: The Danger of True Believers' Falling into Serious Sins

Although that power of God strengthening and preserving true believers in grace is more than a match for the flesh, yet those converted are not always so activated and motivated by God that in certain specific actions they cannot by their own fault depart from the leading of grace, be led astray by the desires of the flesh, and give in to them. For this reason they must constantly watch and pray that they may not be led into temptations. When they fail to do this, not only can they be carried away by the flesh, the world, and Satan into sins, even serious and outrageous ones, but also by God's just permission they sometimes are so carried away—witness the sad cases, described in Scripture, of David, Peter, and other saints falling into sins.

Article 5: The Effects of Such Serious Sins

By such monstrous sins, however, they greatly offend God, deserve the sentence of death, grieve the Holy Spirit, suspend the exercise of faith, severely wound the conscience, and sometimes lose the awareness of grace for a time—until, after they have returned to the way by genuine repentance, God’s fatherly face again shines upon them.

Article 6: God’s Saving Intervention

For God, who is rich in mercy, according to his unchangeable purpose of election does not take his Holy Spirit from his own completely, even when they fall grievously. Neither does he let them fall down so far that they forfeit the grace of adoption and the state of justification, or commit the sin which leads to death (the sin against the Holy Spirit), and plunge themselves, entirely forsaken by him, into eternal ruin.

Article 7: Renewal to Repentance

For, in the first place, God preserves in those saints when they fall his imperishable seed from which they have been born again, lest it perish or be dislodged. Secondly, by his Word and Spirit he certainly and effectively renews them to repentance so that they have a heartfelt and godly sorrow for the sins they have committed; seek and obtain, through faith and with a contrite heart, forgiveness in the

blood of the Mediator; experience again the grace of a reconciled God; through faith adore his mercies; and from then on more eagerly work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Article 8: The Certainty of This Preservation

So it is not by their own merits or strength but by God’s undeserved mercy that they neither forfeit faith and grace totally nor remain in their downfalls to the end and are lost. With respect to themselves this not only easily could happen, but also undoubtedly would happen; but with respect to God it cannot possibly happen, since his plan cannot be changed, his promise cannot fail, the calling according to his purpose cannot be revoked, the merit of Christ as well as his interceding and preserving cannot be nullified, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit can neither be invalidated nor wiped out.

Article 9: The Assurance of This Preservation

Concerning this preservation of those chosen to salvation and concerning the perseverance of true believers in faith, believers themselves can and do become assured in accordance with the measure of their faith, by which they firmly believe that they are and always will remain true and living members of the church, and that they have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Article 10: The Ground of This Assurance

Accordingly, this assurance does not derive from some private revelation beyond or outside the Word, but from faith in the promises of God which he has very plentifully revealed in his Word for our comfort, from the testimony of the Holy Spirit testifying with our spirit that we are God's children and heirs (Rom. 8:16-17), and finally from a serious and holy pursuit of a clear conscience and of good works. And if God's chosen ones in this world did not have this well-founded comfort that the victory will be theirs and this reliable guarantee of eternal glory, they would be of all people most miserable.

Article 11: Doubts Concerning This Assurance

Meanwhile, Scripture testifies that believers have to contend in this life with various doubts of the flesh and that under severe temptation they do not always experience this full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance. But God, the Father of all comfort, does not let them be tempted beyond what they can bear, but with the temptation he also provides a way out (1 Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit revives in them the assurance of their perseverance.

Article 12: This Assurance as an Incentive to Godliness

This assurance of perseverance, however, so far from making true believers proud and carnally self-

assured, is rather the true root of humility, of childlike respect, of genuine godliness, of endurance in every conflict, of fervent prayers, of steadfastness in crossbearing and in confessing the truth, and of well-founded joy in God. Reflecting on this benefit provides an incentive to a serious and continual practice of thanksgiving and good works, as is evident from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

Article 13: Assurance No Inducement to Carelessness

Neither does the renewed confidence of perseverance produce immorality or lack of concern for godliness in those put back on their feet after a fall, but it produces a much greater concern to observe carefully the ways of the Lord which he prepared in advance. They observe these ways in order that by walking in them they may maintain the assurance of their perseverance, lest, by their abuse of his fatherly goodness, the face of the gracious God (for the godly, looking upon his face is sweeter than life, but its withdrawal is more bitter than death) turn away from them again, with the result that they fall into greater anguish of spirit.

Article 14: God's Use of Means in Perseverance

And, just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the proclamation of the gospel, so he

preserves, continues, and completes his work by the hearing and reading of the gospel, by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises, and also by the use of the sacraments.

Article 15: Contrasting Reactions to the Teaching of Perseverance

This teaching about the perseverance of true believers and saints, and about their assurance of it—a teaching which God has very richly revealed in his Word for the glory of his name and for the comfort of the godly and which he impresses on the hearts of believers—is something which the flesh does not understand, Satan hates, the world ridicules, the ignorant and the hypocrites abuse, and the spirits of error attack. The bride of Christ, on the other hand, has always loved this teaching very tenderly and defended it steadfastly as a priceless treasure; and God, against whom no plan can avail and no strength can prevail, will ensure that she will continue to do this. To this God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

Rejection of the Errors:

Concerning the Teaching of the Perseverance of the Saints

Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those

I

Who teach that the perseverance of true believers is not an effect of election or a gift of God produced by Christ's death, but a condition of the new covenant which man, before what they call his "peremptory" election and justification, must fulfill by his free will.

For Holy Scripture testifies that perseverance follows from election and is granted to the chosen by virtue of Christ's death, resurrection, and intercession: The chosen obtained it; the others were hardened (Rom. 11:7); likewise, He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not, along with him, grant us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised—who also sits at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Rom. 8:32-35).

II

Who teach that God does provide the believer with sufficient strength to persevere and is ready to preserve this strength in him if he performs his duty, but that even with all those things in place which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God is pleased to use to preserve faith, it still always depends on the choice of man's will whether or not he perseveres.

For this view is obviously Pelagian; and though it intends to make men free it makes them sacrilegious. It is against the enduring consensus of evangelical teaching which takes from man all cause for boasting and ascribes the praise for this benefit only to God's grace. It is also against the testimony of the apostle: It is God who keeps us strong to the end, so that we will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:8).

III

Who teach that those who truly believe and have been born again not only can forfeit justifying faith as well as grace and salvation totally and to the end, but also in actual fact do often forfeit them and are lost forever.

For this opinion nullifies the very grace of justification and regeneration as well as the continual preservation by Christ, contrary to the plain words of the apostle Paul: If Christ died for us while we were still sinners, we will therefore much more be saved from God's wrath through him, since we have now been justified by his blood (Rom. 5:8-9); and contrary to the apostle John: No one who is born of God is intent on sin, because God's seed remains in him, nor can he sin, because he has been born of God (1 John 3:9); also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: I give eternal life to my sheep, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one

can snatch them out of my Father's hand (John 10: 28-29).

IV

Who teach that those who truly believe and have been born again can commit the sin that leads to death (the sin against the Holy Spirit).

For the same apostle John, after making mention of those who commit the sin that leads to death and forbidding prayer for them (1 John 5: 16-17), immediately adds: We know that anyone born of God does not commit sin (that is, that kind of sin), but the one who was born of God keeps himself safe, and the evil one does not touch him (v. 18).

V

Who teach that apart from a special revelation no one can have the assurance of future perseverance in this life.

For by this teaching the well-founded consolation of true believers in this life is taken away and the doubting of the Romanists is reintroduced into the church. Holy Scripture, however, in many places derives the assurance not from a special and extraordinary revelation but from the marks peculiar to God's children and from God's completely reliable promises. So especially the apostle Paul: Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39); and John:

.....

They who obey his commands remain in him and he in them. And this is how we know that he remains in us: by the Spirit he gave us (1 John 3:24).

VI

Who teach that the teaching of the assurance of perseverance and of salvation is by its very nature and character an opiate of the flesh and is harmful to godliness, good morals, prayer, and other holy exercises, but that, on the contrary, to have doubt about this is praiseworthy.

For these people show that they do not know the effective operation of God's grace and the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and they contradict the apostle John, who asserts the opposite in plain words: Dear friends, now we are children of God, but what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he is made known, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3). Moreover, they are refuted by the examples of the saints in both the Old and the New Testament, who though assured of their perseverance and salvation yet were constant in prayer and other exercises of godliness.

VII

Who teach that the faith of those who believe only temporarily does not differ from justifying and saving faith except in duration alone.

For Christ himself in Matthew 13:20ff. and Luke 8:13ff. clearly defines these further differences between temporary and true believers: he says that the former receive the seed on rocky ground, and the latter receive it in good ground, or a good heart; the former have no root, and the latter are firmly rooted; the former have no fruit, and the latter produce fruit in varying measure, with steadfastness, or perseverance.

VIII

Who teach that it is not absurd that a person, after losing his former regeneration, should once again, indeed quite often, be reborn.

For by this teaching they deny the imperishable nature of God's seed by which we are born again, contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: Born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable (1 Pet. 1:23).

IX

Who teach that Christ nowhere prayed for an unfailling perseverance of believers in faith.

For they contradict Christ himself when he says: I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith may not fail (Luke 22:32); and John the gospel writer when he testifies in John 17 that it was not only for the apostles, but also for all those who were to believe by their message that Christ prayed: Holy Father,

.....

preserve them in your name (v. 11); and My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you preserve them from the evil one (v. 15).

Conclusion: Rejection of False Accusations

And so this is the clear, simple, and straightforward explanation of the orthodox teaching on the five articles in dispute in the Netherlands, as well as the rejection of the errors by which the Dutch churches have for some time been disturbed. This explanation and rejection the Synod declares to be derived from God's Word and in agreement with the confessions of the Reformed churches. Hence it clearly appears that those of whom one could hardly expect it have shown no truth, equity, and charity at all in wishing to make the public believe:

–that the teaching of the Reformed churches on predestination and on the points associated with it by its very nature and tendency draws the minds of people away from all godliness and religion, is an opiate of the flesh and the devil, and is a stronghold of Satan where he lies in wait for all people, wounds most of them, and fatally pierces many of them with the arrows of both despair and self-assurance;

–that this teaching makes God the author of sin, unjust, a tyrant, and a hypocrite; and is nothing but a refurbished Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, and Mohammedanism;

–that this teaching makes people carnally self-assured, since it persuades them that nothing endangers the salvation of the chosen, no matter how they live, so that they may commit the most outrageous crimes with self-assurance; and that on the other hand nothing is of use to the reprobate for salvation even if they have truly performed all the works of the saints;

–that this teaching means that God predestined and created, by the bare and unqualified choice of his will, without the least regard or consideration of any sin, the greatest part of the world to eternal condemnation; that in the same manner in which election is the source and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and ungodliness; that many infant children of believers are snatched in their innocence from their mothers’ breasts and cruelly cast into hell so that neither the blood of Christ nor their baptism nor the prayers of the church at their baptism can be of any use to them; and very many other slanderous accusations of this kind which the Reformed churches not only disavow but even denounce with their whole heart.

Therefore this Synod of Dort in the name of the Lord pleads with all who devoutly call on the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to form their judgment about the faith of the Reformed churches, not on the basis of false accusations gathered from here or there, or even on the basis of the personal statements of a number of ancient and modern authorities—statements which are also often either quoted out of context or

misquoted and twisted to convey a different meaning—but on the basis of the churches’ own official confessions and of the present explanation of the orthodox teaching which has been endorsed by the unanimous consent of the members of the whole Synod, one and all.

Moreover, the Synod earnestly warns the false accusers themselves to consider how heavy a judgment of God awaits those who give false testimony against so many churches and their confessions, trouble the consciences of the weak, and seek to prejudice the minds of many against the fellowship of true believers.

Finally, this Synod urges all fellow ministers in the gospel of Christ to deal with this teaching in a godly and reverent manner, in the academic institutions as well as in the churches; to do so, both in their speaking and writing, with a view to the glory of God’s name, holiness of life, and the comfort of anxious souls; to think and also speak with Scripture according to the analogy of faith; and, finally, to refrain from all those ways of speaking which go beyond the bounds set for us by the genuine sense of the Holy Scriptures and which could give impertinent sophists a just occasion to scoff at the teaching of the Reformed churches or even to bring false accusations against it.

May God’s Son Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of God and gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth, lead to the truth those who err, silence the

mouths of those who lay false accusations against sound teaching, and equip faithful ministers of his Word with a spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all they say may be to the glory of God and the building up of their hearers. Amen

