
THE CREEDS, CONFESSIONS AND LITURGICAL FORMS

OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

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Preface

Work on this publication began in 2002 when the Reformed Churches of New Zealand appointed a committee to update the language of our liturgical forms and assess any available language-updated versions of the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort. Subsequently the mandate was broadened to include updating the range of liturgical forms available for use in worship services and searching out and evaluating updated versions of the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF).

After investigation the committee recommended new translations of the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort produced by the Canadian Reformed Churches, with minor revisions made by the committee, and incorporating Scripture quotations from the New International Version (1984). These were approved by the synod of 2011.

The committee also recommended the Modern English Study Version (MESV) produced by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The synod of 2011 decided to retain the WCF as our confessional standard, to which all office bearers must subscribe, and to permit the MESV in the preaching and teaching of our churches. The synod also decided that both the Westminster Confession of Faith and the MESV should be printed in this publication in parallel columns.

After years of committee work, feedback from the sessions, numerous revisions and final proof-reading, the synod of 2014 approved the liturgical forms as presented by the committee.

As convenor for the past twelve years, I want to thank the other committee members who have assisted with this work. Reverends Paul Archbald and Peter Kloosterman and I began the initial work of revision. Dr Sally Davey has served faithfully and capably for the entire twelve years, and Mr Ed Havelaar, Rev Andrew Nugteren and Rev Robert van Wichen for the past six years, with Ed Havelaar preparing the final layout. Rev Leo de Vos came onto this committee in the last inter-synodical period to assist with the baptism forms. Rev Bruce Hoyt, while not a committee member, has provided much helpful feedback on the liturgical forms, assisted with the proof-reading and given us advice on layout. My sincere thanks to all of you.

This has not only been a long project but also one that has required much careful and detailed attention to theology, words, syntax and grammar. All members of this committee have contributed significantly to this project and have brought their unique gifts and contributions to the task. We have enjoyed the work and have benefited personally from this close study of our confessions and liturgical forms. It has been a pleasure for me to serve on this committee with the other members.

It is fitting that I am writing this preface on the 31st of October 2014, the day our Reformed Churches remember the Reformation, which began in 1517 after Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the Wittenburg church door. This book contains two confessions written at the height of the Reformation, that is, the Belgic Confession (1561) and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563). It also contains the Canons of Dort (1618 and 1619) written during the debate between the Calvinists and the Remonstrants, and the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), a product of the mature fruit of further years of study of the Scriptures and theological reflection.

It is our desire and prayer that this book will serve our churches well for many decades to come, in aiding our worship and in enabling us to hold fast to the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints, for the building up of the church to the glory of God.

John A Haverland (convenor), 31st October 2014

Introduction to the Ecumenical Creeds

The Apostles' Creed

This creed is called the Apostles' Creed, not because it was written by the apostles themselves, but because it contains a brief summary of their teachings. It sets forth their doctrine, as has been said, "in sublime simplicity, in unsurpassable brevity, in beautiful order, and with liturgical solemnity." The present text of the Apostles' Creed is similar to the baptismal creed used in the church in Rome in the third and fourth centuries. It reached its final form in southwestern France in the late sixth or early seventh century. More than any other creed in Christendom, it may justly be called an ecumenical symbol of faith.

The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed is a statement of the orthodox faith of the early Christian church, in opposition to certain heresies, especially Arianism. These heresies concerned the doctrine of the Trinity and of the person of Christ and were refuted at the Council of Nicea (AD 325). What we now call the Nicene Creed is not the one formulated by the Council of Nicea but rather one modified by the Council of Constantinople (AD 381) and finally ratified by the church at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451). Both the Eastern and the Western church confess the truth of the Nicene Creed, although with one important difference. The Western church included the phrase "and the Son" (known as the *Filioque*) in the article on the procession of the Holy Spirit, a phrase which to this day is repudiated by the Eastern church.

The Athanasian Creed

This creed is named after Athanasius (AD 293–373), the champion of orthodoxy over against Arian attacks on the doctrine of the Trinity. Although Athanasius did not write this creed, the name persists because until the seventeenth century it was commonly ascribed to him. Apart from the opening and closing sentences, it consists of two sections, the first setting forth the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, and the second dealing with the doctrine of Christ, especially concerning his two natures. The

teachings of Augustine (AD 354–430) in particular form the background to the Christological section. The creed itself appears for the first time in the first half of the sixth century, but the author is unknown. It is of Western origin and is not recognised by the Eastern Orthodox churches.

The 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, dead, and buried;
he descended into hell¹;
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.

I believe a holy catholic² church, the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

¹ That is, on the cross Jesus suffered the agony of hell which our sins deserved (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q. 44).

² That is, God's people through all times and places (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q. 54).

The Nicene Creed

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

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

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

And I believe one holy catholic¹ 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.

¹ That is, God's people through all times and places (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q. 54).

The Athanasian Creed

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith; which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the catholic faith is this:

Concerning the Trinity

That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.

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

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

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

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

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

The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit 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
Spirit almighty;

and yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God;
and yet they are not three Gods, but one God.

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

and yet they are not three 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 are three Gods or three Lords."

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

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

The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son;

neither made, nor created, nor begotten,

but proceeding.

So there is

one Father, not three Fathers;

one Son, not three Sons;

one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.

And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another;

none is greater, or less than another.

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

So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

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

Concerning the Incarnation

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

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

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

Perfect God and perfect man,

of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

Equal to the Father as touching his Godhead,

and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood.

Who, although he is God and man,

yet he is not two, but one Christ.

One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh,

but by taking of the manhood into God.

One altogether, not by confusion of substance,

but by unity of person.

For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man,

so God and man is one Christ;

who suffered for our salvation,

descended into hell,
rose again the third day from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
he sits on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty;
from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead.
At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;
and shall give account of their own works.
And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting,
and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

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

Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism

The Heidelberg Catechism was written in Heidelberg at the request of Elector Frederick III, ruler of the most influential German province, the Palatinate, from 1559 to 1576. This Protestant prince commissioned Zacharius Ursinus, twenty-eight years of age and professor of theology at the Heidelberg University, to prepare a catechism for instructing the youth and for guiding pastors and teachers. Ursinus was assisted by Caspar Olevianus, twenty-six years old and Frederick's court preacher. Others had a hand in its preparation as is evident from the preface written by the Elector, in which he wrote that it was prepared "with the advice and cooperation of our entire theological faculty in this place, and of all superintendents and distinguished servants of the church."

The Heidelberg Catechism was adopted by a synod in Heidelberg and published in German in 1563. A second and third German edition, each with some small additions, as well as a Latin translation, were published in Heidelberg in the same year. The Catechism was soon divided into fifty-two sections so that a section of the Catechism could be explained to the churches each Sunday of the year.

In the Netherlands the Heidelberg Catechism became generally and favourably known almost as soon as it came from the press, mainly through the efforts of Petrus Dathenus, who translated it into the Dutch language and added this translation of the Catechism to his Dutch rendering of the *Genevan Psalter*, which was published in 1566. In the same year Peter Gabriel set the example of explaining this catechism to his congregation at Amsterdam in his Sunday afternoon sermons. The national synods of the sixteenth century adopted it as one of the *Three Forms of Unity*, requiring office bearers to subscribe to it and ministers to explain it to the churches. These requirements were strongly emphasised by the Synod of Dort in 1618–19.

The Heidelberg Catechism has been translated into many languages and is the most widely used and most widely praised catechism of the Reformation period.

This translation is based on the first German edition of the Catechism and was produced by the Christian Reformed Church of North America and

adopted by their synod in 1975. Scripture quotations are from the New International Version 1984.

The Heidelberg Catechism

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Lord's Day 1

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

A. That I am not my own,¹
but belong—
body and soul,
in life and in death²—
to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.³

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,⁴
and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.⁵

He also watches over me in such a way⁶
that not a hair can fall from my head
without the will of my Father in heaven;⁷
in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.⁸

Because I belong to him,
Christ, by his Holy Spirit,
assures me of eternal life⁹
and makes me whole-heartedly willing and ready
from now on to live for him.¹⁰

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

² Romans 14:7–9.

³ 1 Corinthians 3:23; Titus 2:14.

⁴ 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 John 1:7–9; 2:2.

⁵ John 8:34–36; Hebrews 2:14, 15; 1 John 3:1–11.

⁶ John 6:39, 40; 10:27–30; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 Peter 1:5.

⁷ Matthew 10:29–31; Luke 21:16–18.

⁸ Romans 8:28.

⁹ Romans 8:15, 16; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13, 14.

¹⁰ Romans 8:1–17.

2 Q. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

A. Three things:

first, how great my sin and misery are;¹

second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;²

third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.³

¹ Romans 3:9, 10; 1 John 1:10.

² John 17:3; Acts 4:12; 10:43.

³ Matthew 5:16; Romans 6:13; Ephesians 5:8–10; 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

Part 1: Man's misery

Lord's Day 2

3 Q. How do you come to know your misery?

A. The law of God tells me.

¹ Romans 3:20; 7:7–25.

4 Q. What does God's law require of us?

A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22—

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 greatest commandment.

And a second is like it:

love your neighbour as yourself.²

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

¹ Deuteronomy 6:5.

² Leviticus 19:18.

5 Q. Can you live up to all this perfectly?

A. No.¹ I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbour.²

¹ Romans 3:9–20, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10.

² Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:23, 24; 8:7; Ephesians 2:1–3; Titus 3:3.

Lord's Day 3

6 Q. Did God create man so wicked and perverse?

A. No. God created man good¹ and in his own image,²
that is, in true righteousness and holiness,³
so that he might
truly know God his creator,⁴
love him with all his heart,
and live with him in eternal happiness
for his praise and glory.⁵

¹ Genesis 1:31.

² Genesis 1:26, 27.

³ Ephesians 4:24.

⁴ Colossians 3:10.

⁵ Psalm 8.

7 Q. Then where does man's corrupt nature come from?

A. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents,
Adam and Eve, in Paradise.¹
This fall has so poisoned our nature²
that we are born sinners—
corrupt from conception on.³

¹ Genesis 3.

² Romans 5:12, 18, 19.

³ Psalm 51:5.

8 Q. But are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil?

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

¹ Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Job 14:4; Isaiah 53:6.

² John 3:3–5.

Lord's Day 4

9 Q. But doesn't God do man an injustice by requiring in his law what man is unable to do?

A. No, God created man with the ability to keep the law.¹
Man, however, tempted by the devil,²
in reckless disobedience,³
robbed himself and his descendants of these gifts.⁴

¹ Genesis 1:31; Ephesians 4:24.

² Genesis 3:13; John 8:44.

³ Genesis 3:6.

⁴ Romans 5:12, 18, 19.

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

A. Certainly not.
He is terribly angry
about the sin we are born with
as well as the sins we personally commit.

As a just judge
he punishes them now and in eternity.¹
He has declared:

“Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do
everything written in the Book of the Law.”²

¹ Exodus 34:7; Psalm 5:4–6; Nahum 1:2; Romans 1:18; Ephesians 5:6;
Hebrews 9:27.

² Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10.

11 Q. But isn't God also merciful?

A. God is certainly merciful,¹
but he is also just.²
His justice demands
that sin, committed against his supreme majesty,
be punished with the supreme penalty—
eternal punishment of body and soul.³

¹ Exodus 34:6, 7; Psalm 103:8, 9.

² Exodus 34:7; Deuteronomy 7:9–11; Psalm 5:4–6; Hebrews 10:30, 31.

³ Matthew 25:35–46.

Part 2: Man's deliverance

Lord's Day 5

12 Q. According to God's righteous judgment we deserve punishment both in this world and forever after: how then can we escape this punishment and return to God's favour?

A. God requires that his justice be satisfied.¹
Therefore the claims of his justice
must be paid in full,
either by ourselves, or by another.²

¹ Exodus 23:7; Romans 2:1–11.

² Isaiah 53:11; Romans 8:3, 4.

13 Q. Can we pay this debt ourselves?

A. Certainly not.
Actually, we increase our guilt every day.¹

¹ Matthew 6:12; Romans 2:4, 5.

14 Q. Can another creature—any at all—pay this debt for us?

A. No.
To begin with,

God will not punish another creature
for man's guilt.¹

Besides,

no mere creature can bear the weight
of God's eternal anger against sin
and release others from it.²

¹ Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Hebrews 2:14–18.

² Psalm 49:7–9; 130:3.

15 Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer should we look for then?

A. He must be truly human¹ and truly righteous,²
yet more powerful than all creatures,
that is, he must also be true God.³

¹ Romans 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:21; Hebrews 2:17.

² Isaiah 53:9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26.

³ Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Jeremiah 23:6; John 1:1.

Lord's Day 6

16 Q. Why must he be truly human and truly righteous?

A. God's justice demands it:
man has sinned,
man must pay for his sin,¹
but a sinner cannot pay for others.²

¹ Romans 5:12, 15; 1 Corinthians 15:21; Hebrews 2:14–16.

² Hebrews 7:26, 27; 1 Peter 3:18.

17 Q. Why must he also be true God?

A. So that,
by the power of his divinity,
he might bear the weight of God's anger in his humanity
and earn for us
and restore to us
righteousness and life.¹

¹ Isaiah 53; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

18 Q. And who is this mediator—true God and at the same time truly human and truly righteous?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ,¹
who was given us
to set us completely free
and to make us right with God.²

¹ Matthew 1:21–23; Luke 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:5.

² 1 Corinthians 1:30.

19 Q. How do you come to know this?

A. The holy gospel tells me.
God himself began to reveal the gospel already in Paradise;¹
later, he proclaimed it
by the holy patriarchs² and prophets,³
and portrayed it
by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law;⁴
finally, he fulfilled it
through his own dear Son.⁵

¹ Genesis 3:15.

² Genesis 22:18; 49:10.

³ Isaiah 53; Jeremiah 23:5, 6; Micah 7:18–20; Acts 10:43; Hebrews 1:1, 2.

⁴ Leviticus 1–7; John 5:46; Hebrews 10:1–10.

⁵ Romans 10:4; Galatians 4:4, 5; Colossians 2:17.

Lord's Day 7

20 Q. Are all men saved through Christ just as all were lost through Adam?

A. No.
Only those are saved
who by true faith
are grafted into Christ
and accept all his blessings.¹

¹ Matthew 7:14; John 3:16, 18, 36; Romans 11:16–21.

21 Q. What is true faith?

A. True faith is
not only a knowledge and conviction
that everything God reveals in his Word is true;¹
it is also a deep-rooted assurance,²
created in me by the Holy Spirit³ through the gospel⁴
that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ,⁵
not only others, but I too,⁶
have had my sins forgiven,
have been made forever right with God,
and have been granted salvation.⁷

¹ John 17:3, 17; Hebrews 11:1–3; James 2:19.

² Romans 4:18–21; 5:1; 10:10; Hebrews 4:14–16.

³ Matthew 16:15–17; John 3:5; Acts 16:14.

⁴ Romans 1:16; 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:21.

⁵ Romans 3:21–26; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8–10.

⁶ Galatians 2:20.

⁷ Romans 1:17; Hebrews 10:10.

22 Q. What then must a Christian believe?

A. Everything God promises us in the gospel.¹
That gospel is summarised for us
in the articles of our Christian faith—
a creed beyond doubt,
and confessed through the world.

¹ Matthew 28:18–20; John 20:30, 31.

23 Q. What are these articles?

A. 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;
I believe a holy catholic church, the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.

Lord's Day 8

24 Q. How are these articles divided?

A. Into three parts:
God the Father and our creation;
God the Son and our deliverance;
God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

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

A. Because that is how
God has revealed himself in his Word:²
these three distinct persons
are one, true, eternal God.

¹ Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4, 6.

² Matthew 3:16, 17; 28:18, 19; Luke 4:18 (Isaiah 61:1); John 14:26; 15:26;
2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:6; Titus 3:5, 6.

Lord's Day 9

26 Q. What do you believe when you say, “I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth”?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who out of nothing created heaven and earth
and everything in them,¹
who still upholds and rules them

by his eternal counsel and providence,²
is my God and Father
because of Christ his Son.³

I trust him so much that I do not doubt
he will provide
whatever I need
for body and soul,⁴
and he will turn to my good
whatever adversity he sends me
in this sad world.⁵

He is able to do this because he is almighty God;⁶
he desires to do this because he is a faithful Father.⁷

¹ Genesis 1 & 2; Exodus 20:11; Psalm 33:6; Isaiah 44:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15.

² Psalm 104; Matthew 6:30; 10:29; Ephesians 1:11.

³ John 1:12, 13; Romans 8:15, 16; Galatians 4:4–7; Ephesians 1:5.

⁴ Psalm 55:22; Matthew 6:25, 26; Luke 12:22–31.

⁵ Romans 8:28.

⁶ Genesis 18:14; Romans 8:31–39.

⁷ Matthew 7:9–11.

Lord's Day 10

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

A. Providence is
the almighty and ever present power of God¹
by which he upholds, as with his hand,
heaven
and earth
and all creatures,²
and so rules them that
leaf and blade,
rain and drought,
fruitful and lean years,
food and drink,
health and sickness,
prosperity and poverty³—

all things, in fact, come to us
not by chance⁴
but from his fatherly hand.⁵

¹ Jeremiah 23:23, 24; Acts 17:24–28.

² Hebrews 1:3.

³ Jeremiah 5:24; Acts 14:15–17; John 9:3; Proverbs 22:2.

⁴ Proverbs 16:33.

⁵ Matthew 10:29.

28 Q. How does the knowledge of God’s creation and providence help us?

- A. We can be patient when things go against us,¹
thankful when things go well,²
and for the future we can have
good confidence in our faithful God and Father
that nothing will separate us from his love.³
All creatures are so completely in his hand
that without his will
they can neither move nor be moved.⁴

¹ Job 1:21; James 1:3.

² Deuteronomy 8:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:18.

³ Psalm 55:22; Romans 5:3–5; 8:38, 39.

⁴ Job 1:12; 2:6; Proverbs 21:1; Acts 17:24–28.

Lord’s Day 11

29 Q. Why is the Son of God called “Jesus” meaning “saviour”?

- A. Because he saves us from our sins.¹
Salvation cannot be found in anyone else;
it is futile to look for any salvation elsewhere.²

¹ Matthew 1:21; Hebrews 7:25.

² Isaiah 43:11; John 15:5; Acts 4:11, 12; 1 Timothy 2:5.

30 Q. Do those who look for their salvation and security in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere really believe in the only saviour Jesus?

A. No.

Although they boast of being his,
by their deeds they deny
the only saviour and deliverer, Jesus.¹

Either Jesus is not a perfect saviour,
or those who in true faith accept this saviour
have in him all they need for their salvation.²

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:12, 13; Galatians 5:4.

² Colossians 1:19, 20; 2:10; 1 John 1:7.

Lord's Day 12

31 Q. Why is he called “Christ” meaning “anointed”?

A. Because he has been ordained by God the Father
and has been anointed with the Holy Spirit¹
to be
our chief prophet and teacher²
who perfectly reveals to us
the secret counsel and will of God for our deliverance;³
our only high priest⁴
who has set us free by the one sacrifice of his body,⁵
and who continually pleads our cause with the Father;⁶
and our eternal king⁷
who governs us by his Word and Spirit
and who guards us and keeps us
in the freedom he has won for us.⁸

¹ Luke 3:21, 22; 4:14–19 (Isaiah 61:1); Hebrews 1:9 (Psalm 45:7).

² Acts 3:22 (Deuteronomy 18:15).

³ John 1:18; 15:15.

⁴ Hebrews 7:17 (Psalm 110:4).

⁵ Hebrews 9:12; 10:11–14.

⁶ Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24.

⁷ Matthew 21:5 (Zechariah 9:9).

⁸ Matthew 28:18–20; John 10:28; Revelation 12:10, 11.

32 Q. But why are you called a Christian?

- A. Because by faith I am a member of Christ¹
and so I share in his anointing.²
I am anointed
to confess his name,³
to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks,⁴
to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil in
this life,⁵
and afterward to reign with Christ
over all creation
for all eternity.⁶

¹ 1 Corinthians 12:12–27.

² Acts 2:17 (Joel 2:28); 1 John 2:27.

³ Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9, 10; Hebrews 13:15.

⁴ Romans 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5, 9.

⁵ Galatians 5:16, 17; Ephesians 6:11; 1 Timothy 1:18, 19.

⁶ Matthew 25:34; 2 Timothy 2:12.

Lord's Day 13

33 Q. Why is he called God's "only begotten Son" when we also are God's children?

- A. Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God.¹
We, however, are adopted children of God—
adopted by grace through Christ.²

¹ John 1:1–3, 14, 18; Hebrews 1.

² John 1:12; Romans 8:14–17; Ephesians 1:5, 6.

34 Q. Why do you call him "our Lord"?

- A. Because—
not with gold or silver,
but with his precious blood¹—
he has set us free
from sin and from the tyranny of the devil,²
and has bought us,
body and soul,

to be his very own.³

¹ 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

² Colossians 1:13, 14; Hebrews 2:14, 15.

³ 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.

Lord's Day 14

35 Q. What does it mean that he “was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary”?

A. That the eternal Son of God,
who is and remains
true and eternal God,¹
took to himself,
through the working of the Holy Spirit,²
from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary,³
a truly human nature
so that he might become David's true descendant,⁴
in all things like us his brothers⁵
except for sin.⁶

¹ John 1:1; 10:30–36; Acts 13:33 (Psalm 2:7); Colossians 1:15–17;
1 John 5:20.

² Luke 1:35.

³ Matthew 1:18–23; John 1:14; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14.

⁴ 2 Samuel 7:12–16; Psalm 132:11; Matthew 1:1; Romans 1:3.

⁵ Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 2:17.

⁶ Hebrews 4:15; 7:26, 27.

36 Q. How does the holy conception and birth of Christ benefit you?

A. He is our mediator,¹
and with his innocence and perfect holiness
he removes from God's sight
my sin—mine since I was conceived.²

¹ 1 Timothy 2:5, 6; Hebrews 9:13–15.

² Romans 8:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 4:4, 5; 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

Lord's Day 15

37 Q. What do you understand by the word “suffered”?

A. That during his whole life on earth,
but especially at the end,
Christ sustained
in body and soul
the anger of God against the sin of the whole human race.¹

This he did in order that,
by his suffering as the only atoning sacrifice,²
he might set us free, body and soul,
from eternal condemnation,³
and gain for us
God's grace,
righteousness,
and eternal life.⁴

¹ Isaiah 53; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18.

² Romans 3:25; Hebrews 10:14; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.

³ Romans 8:1–4; Galatians 3:13.

⁴ John 3:16; Romans 3:24–26.

38 Q. Why did he suffer “under Pontius Pilate” as judge?

A. So that he,
though innocent,
might be condemned by a civil judge,¹
and so free us from the severe judgment of God
that was to fall on us.²

¹ Luke 23:13–24; John 19:4, 12–16.

² Isaiah 53:4, 5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13.

39 Q. Is it significant that he was “crucified” instead of dying some other way?

A. Yes.
This death convinces me that he shouldered the curse
which lay on me,
since death by crucifixion was accursed by God.¹

¹ Galatians 3:10–13 (Deuteronomy 21:23).

Lord's Day 16

40 Q. Why did Christ have to go all the way to death?

A. Because God's justice and truth demand it:¹
only the death of God's Son could pay for our sin.²

¹ Genesis 2:17.

² Romans 8:3, 4; Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 2:9.

41 Q. Why was he “buried”?

A. His burial testifies
that he really died.¹

¹ Isaiah 53:9; John 19:38–42; Acts 13:29; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4.

42 Q. Since Christ has died for us, why do we still have to die?

A. Our death does not pay the debt of our sins.¹
Rather, it puts an end to our sinning
and is our entrance into eternal life.²

¹ Psalm 49:7.

² John 5:24; Philippians 1:21–23; 1 Thessalonians 5:9, 10.

43 Q. What further advantage do we receive from Christ's sacrifice and death on the cross?

A. Through Christ's death
our old selves are crucified, put to death, and buried with him,¹
so that the evil desires of the flesh
may no longer rule us,²
but that instead we may dedicate ourselves
as an offering of gratitude to him.³

¹ Romans 6:5–11; Colossians 2:11, 12.

² Romans 6:12–14.

³ Romans 12:1; Ephesians 5:1, 2.

44 Q. Why does the creed add, “he descended into hell”?

- A. To assure me in times of personal crisis and temptation that Christ my Lord,
by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul,
especially on the cross but also earlier,
has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell.¹

¹ Isaiah 53; Matthew 26:36–46; 27:45, 46; Luke 22:44; Hebrews 5:7–10.

Lord's Day 17

45 Q. How does Christ's resurrection benefit us?

- A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death,
so that he might make us share in the righteousness
he won for us by his death.¹

Second, by his power we too
are already now resurrected to a new life.²

Third, Christ's resurrection
is a guarantee of our glorious resurrection.³

¹ Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:16–20; 1 Peter 1:3–5.

² Romans 6:5–11; Ephesians 2:4–6; Colossians 3:1–4.

³ Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:12–23; Philippians. 3:20, 21.

Lord's Day 18

46 Q. What do you mean by saying “he ascended into heaven”?

- A. That Christ,
while his disciples watched,
was lifted up from the earth into heaven¹
and will be there for our good²
until he comes again
to judge the living and the dead.³

¹ Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:9–11.

² Romans 8:34; Ephesians 4:8–10; Hebrews 7:23–25; 9:24.

³ Acts 1:11.

47 Q. But isn't Christ with us until the end of the world as he promised us?

A. Christ is true man and true God.

In his human nature Christ is not now on earth;²
but in his divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit
he is not absent from us for a moment.³

¹ Matthew 28:20.

² Acts 1:9–11; 3:19–21.

³ Matthew 28:18–20; John 14:16–19.

48 Q. If his humanity is not present wherever his divinity is, then aren't the two natures of Christ separated from each other?

A. Certainly not.

Since divinity

is not limited

and is present everywhere,¹

it is evident that

Christ's divinity is surely beyond the bounds of
the humanity he has taken on,
but at the same time his divinity is in
and remains personally united to
his humanity.²

¹ Jeremiah 23:23, 24; Acts 7:48, 49 (Isaiah 66:1).

² John 1:14; 3:13; Colossians 2:9.

49 Q. How does Christ's ascension into heaven benefit us?

A. First, he pleads our cause

in heaven

in the presence of his Father.¹

Second, we have our own flesh in heaven—

a guarantee that Christ our head

will take us, his members,

to himself in heaven.²

Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth

as a further guarantee.³

By the Spirit's power

we make the goal of our lives,
not earthly things,
but the things above where Christ is,
sitting at God's right hand.⁴

¹ Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1.

² John 14:2; 17:24; Ephesians 2:4–6.

³ John 14:16; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 5:5.

⁴ Colossians 3:1–4.

Lord's Day 19

50 Q. Why the next words, “And sits at the right hand of God”?

A. Christ ascended to heaven,
there to show that he is head of his church,¹
and that the Father rules all things through him.²

¹ Ephesians 1:20–23; Colossians 1:18.

² Matthew 28:18; John 5:22, 23.

51 Q. How does this glory of Christ our head benefit us?

A. First, through his Holy Spirit
he pours out his gifts from heaven
upon us his members.¹

Second, by his power
he defends us and keeps us safe
from all enemies.²

¹ Acts 2:33; Ephesians 4:7–12.

² Psalm 110:1, 2; John 10:27–30; Revelation 19:11–16.

52 Q. How does Christ's return “to judge the living and the dead” comfort you?

A. In all my distress and persecution
I turn my eyes to the heavens
and confidently await as judge the very one
who has already stood trial in my place before God
and so has removed the whole curse from me.¹

All his enemies and mine
he will condemn to everlasting punishment;
but me and all his chosen ones
he will take along with him
into the joy and the glory of heaven.²

¹ Luke 21:28; Romans 8:22–25; Philippians 3:20, 21; Titus 2:13, 14.

² Matthew 25:31–46; 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10.

Lord's Day 20

53 Q. What do you believe concerning “the Holy Spirit”?

A. First, he as well as the Father and the Son,
is eternal God.¹

Second, he has been given to me personally,²
so that, by true faith,
he makes me share in Christ and all his blessings,³
comforts me,⁴
and remains with me forever.⁵

¹ Genesis 1:1, 2; Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3, 4.

² 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Galatians 4:6.

³ Galatians 3:14.

⁴ John 15:26; Acts 9:31.

⁵ John 14:16, 17; 1 Peter 4:14.

Lord's Day 21

54 Q. What do you believe concerning the “holy catholic church”?

A. I believe that the Son of God,
through his Spirit and Word,¹
out of the entire human race,²
from the beginning of the world to its end,³
gathers, protects, and preserves for himself
a community chosen for eternal life⁴
and united in true faith.⁵

And of this community I am⁶ and always will be⁷
a living member.

¹ John 10:14–16; Acts 20:28; Romans 10:14–17; Colossians 1:18.

² Genesis 26:3b, 4; Revelation 5:9.

³ Isaiah 59:21; 1 Corinthians 11:26.

⁴ Matthew 16:18; John 10:28–30; Romans 8:28–30; Ephesians 1:3–14.

⁵ Acts 2:42–47; Ephesians 4:1–6.

⁶ 1 John 3:14, 19–21.

⁷ John 10:27, 28; 1 Corinthians 1:4–9; 1 Peter 1:3–5.

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

A. First, that believers one and all,
as members of this community,
share in Christ
and in all his treasures and gifts.¹

Second, that each member
should consider it his duty
to use his gifts
readily and cheerfully
for the service and enrichment
of the other members.²

¹ Romans 8:32; 1 Corinthians 6:17; 12:4–7, 12, 13; 1 John 1:3.

² Romans 12:4–8; 1 Corinthians 12:20–27; 13:1–Philippians 2:4–8.

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

A. I believe that God,
because of Christ’s atonement,
will never hold against me
any of my sins¹
nor my sinful nature
which I need to struggle against all my life.²

Rather, in his grace
God grants me the righteousness of Christ
to free me forever from judgment.³

¹ Psalm 103:3, 4, 10, 12; Micah 7:18, 19; 2 Corinthians 5:18–21;
1 John 1:7; 2:2.

² Romans 7:21–25.

³ John 3:17, 18; Romans 8:1, 2.

Lord's Day 22

57 Q. How does “the resurrection of the body” comfort you?

A. Not only my soul
will be taken immediately after this life
to Christ its head,¹
but even my very flesh, raised by the power of Christ,
will be reunited with my soul
and made like Christ's glorious body.²

¹ Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:21–23.

² 1 Corinthians 15:20, 42–46, 54; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2.

58 Q. How does the article concerning “life everlasting” comfort you?

A. Even as I already now
experience in my heart
the beginning of eternal joy,¹
so after this life I will have
perfect blessedness such as
no eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived:
a blessedness in which to praise God eternally.²

¹ Romans 14:17.

² John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Lord's Day 23

59 Q. What good does it do you, however, to believe all this?

A. In Christ I am right with God
and heir to life everlasting.¹

¹ John 3:36; Romans 1:17 (Habakkuk 2:4); Romans 5:1, 2.

60 Q. How are you right with God?

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.¹

Even though my conscience accuses me
of having grievously sinned against all God's commandments
and of never having kept any of them,²
and even though I am still inclined toward all evil,³
nevertheless,
without my deserving it at all,⁴
out of sheer grace,⁵
God grants and credits to me
the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ,⁶
as if I had never sinned nor been a sinner,
as if I had been as perfectly obedient
as Christ was obedient for me.⁷

All I need to do
is to accept this gift of God with a believing heart.⁸

¹ Romans 3:21–28; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Philippians. 3:8–11.

² Romans 3:9, 10.

³ Romans 7:23.

⁴ Titus 3:4, 5.

⁵ Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8.

⁶ Romans 4:3–5 (Genesis 15:6); 2 Corinthians 5:17–19; 1 John 2:1, 2.

⁷ Romans 4:24, 25; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

⁸ John 3:18; Acts 16:30, 31.

61 Q. Why do you say that by faith alone you are right with God?

A. It is not because of any value my faith has
that God is pleased with me.

Only Christ's satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness
make me right with God.¹

And I can receive this righteousness and make it mine
in no other way than
by faith alone.²

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31.

² Romans 10:10; 1 John 5:10–12.

Lord's Day 24

62 Q. Why can't the good we do make us right with God, or at least help make us right with him?

A. Because the righteousness
which can pass God's scrutiny
must be entirely perfect
and must in every way measure up to the divine law.¹
Even the very best we do in this life
is imperfect
and stained with sin.²

¹ Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:10 (Deuteronomy 27:26).

² Isaiah 64:6.

63 Q. How can you say that the good we do doesn't earn anything when God promises to reward it in this life and the next?

A. This reward is not earned;
it is a gift of grace.²

¹ Matthew 5:12; Hebrews 11:6.

² Luke 17:10; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.

64 Q. But doesn't this teaching make people indifferent and wicked?

A. No.
It is impossible
for those grafted into Christ by true faith
not to produce fruits of gratitude.¹

¹ Luke 6:43–45; John 15:5.

Lord's Day 25

65 Q. You confess that by faith alone you share in Christ and all his blessings: where does that faith come from?

A. The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts¹
by the preaching of the holy gospel,²

and confirms it
through our use of the holy sacraments.³

¹ John 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10–14; Ephesians 2:8.

² Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23–25.

³ Matthew 28:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 10:16.

66 Q. What are sacraments?

A. Sacraments are holy signs and seals for us to see.
They were instituted by God so that
by our use of them
he might make us understand more clearly
the promise of the gospel,
and might put his seal on that promise.¹

And this is God's gospel promise:
to forgive our sins and give us eternal life
by grace alone
because of Christ's one sacrifice
finished on the cross.²

¹ Genesis 17:11; Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 4:11.

² Matthew 26:27, 28; Acts 2:38; Hebrews 10:10.

67 Q. Are both the Word and the sacraments then intended to focus our faith on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

A. Right!
In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us
and through the holy sacraments he assures us
that our entire salvation
rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross.¹

¹ Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 3:27.

68 Q. How many sacraments did Christ institute in the New Testament?

A. Two: baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹

¹ Matthew 28:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

Lord's Day 26

69 Q. How does baptism remind you and assure you that Christ's one sacrifice on the cross is for you personally?

A. In this way:

Christ instituted this outward washing¹
and with it gave the promise that,
as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body,
so certainly his blood and his Spirit
wash away my soul's impurity,
in other words, all my sins.²

¹ Acts 2:38.

² Matthew 3:11; Romans 6:3–10; 1 Peter 3:21.

70 Q. What does it mean to be washed with Christ's blood and Spirit?

A. To be washed with Christ's blood means
that God, by grace has forgiven my sins
because of Christ's blood
poured out for me in his sacrifice on the cross.¹

To be washed with Christ's Spirit means
that the Holy Spirit has renewed me and
set me apart to be a member of Christ
so that more and more I become dead to sin,
and increasingly live a holy and blameless life.²

¹ Zechariah 13:1; Ephesians 1:7, 8; Hebrews 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 1:5.

² Ezekiel 36:25–27; John 3:5–8; Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Colossians 2:11, 12.

71 Q. Where does Christ promise that we are washed with his blood and Spirit as surely as we are washed with the water of baptism?

A. In the institution of baptism where he says:
“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,
baptising them in the name of the Father
and of the Son

and of the Holy Spirit.”¹

“Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved,
but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”²

This promise is repeated when Scripture calls baptism
the washing of regeneration³ and
the washing away of sins.⁴

¹ Matthew 28:19.

² Mark 16:16.

³ Titus 3:5.

⁴ Acts 22:16.

Lord's Day 27

72 Q. Does this outward washing with water itself wash away sins?

A. No, only Jesus Christ's blood and the Holy Spirit
cleanse us from all sins.¹

¹ Matthew 3:11; 1 Peter 3:21; 1 John 1:7.

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

A. God has good reason for these words.
He wants to teach us that
the blood and Spirit of Christ wash away our sins
just as water washes away dirt from our bodies.¹

But more important,
he wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign,
that the washing away of our sins spiritually
is as real as physical washing with water.²

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:11; Revelation 1:5; 7:14.

² Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:27.

74 Q. Should infants, too, be baptised?

A. Yes.
Infants as well as adults

are in God's covenant and are his people.¹
They, no less than adults, are promised
the forgiveness of sin through Christ's blood
and the Holy Spirit who produces faith.²

Therefore, by baptism, the mark of the covenant,
infants should be received into the Christian church
and should be distinguished from the children of unbelievers.³
This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision,⁴
which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism.⁵

¹ Genesis 17:7; Matthew 19:14.

² Isaiah 44:1–3; Acts 2:38, 39; 16:31.

³ Acts 10:47; 1 Corinthians 7:14.

⁴ Genesis 17:9–14.

⁵ Colossians 2:11–13.

Lord's Day 28

75 Q. How does the Lord's Supper remind you and assure you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all his gifts?

A. In this way:

Christ has commanded me and all believers
to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup.

With this command he gave this promise:¹

First,

as surely as I see with my eyes
the bread of the Lord broken for me
and the cup given to me,
so surely
his body was offered and broken for me
and his blood poured out for me
on the cross.

Second,

as surely as
I receive from the hand of him who serves,

and taste with my mouth
the bread and cup of the Lord,
given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood,
so surely
he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life
with his crucified body and poured-out blood.

¹ Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–25.

76 Q. What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink his poured-out blood?

A. It means
to accept with a believing heart
the entire suffering and death of Christ
and by believing
to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.¹

But it means more.

Through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us,
we are united more and more to Christ's blessed body.²

And so, although he is in heaven³ and we are on earth,
we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.⁴

And we forever live on and are governed by one Spirit,
as members of our body are by one soul.⁵

¹ John 6:35, 40, 50–54.

² John 6:55, 56; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

³ Acts 1:9–11; 1 Corinthians 11:26; Colossians 3:1.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:15–17; Ephesians 5:29, 30; 1 John 4:13.

⁵ John 6:56–58; 15:1–6; Ephesians 4:15, 16; 1 John 3:24.

77 Q. Where does Christ promise to nourish and refresh believers with his body and blood as surely as they eat this broken bread and drink this cup?

A. In the institution of the Lord's Supper:

“The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed,
took bread, and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and said,
‘This is my body, which is for you;

do this in remembrance of me.’
In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying,
‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood;
do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’
For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”¹

This promise is repeated by Paul in these words:

“Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks
a participation in the blood of Christ?
And is not the bread that we break
a participation in the body of Christ?
Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body,
for we all partake of the one loaf.”²

¹ 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

² 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17.

Lord’s Day 29

78 Q. Are the bread and wine changed into the real body and blood of Christ?

A. No.

Just as the water of baptism
is not changed into Christ’s blood
and does not itself wash away sins
but is simply God’s sign and assurance,¹
so too the bread of the Lord’s Supper
is not changed into the actual body of Christ²
even though it is called the body of Christ³
in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.⁴

¹ Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5.

² Matthew 26:26–29.

³ 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; 11:26–28.

⁴ Genesis 17:10, 11; Exodus 12:11, 13; 1 Corinthians 10:1–4.

79 Q. Why then does Christ call the bread his body, and the cup his

blood, or the new covenant in his blood? (Paul uses the words, a participation in Christ's body and blood.)

A. Christ has good reason for these words.

He wants to teach us that

as bread and wine nourish our temporal life,
so too his crucified body and poured-out blood
truly nourish our souls for eternal life.¹

But more important,

he wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge,
that we, through the Holy Spirit's work,
share in his true body and blood
as surely as our mouths
receive these holy signs in his remembrance,²
and that all of his suffering and obedience
are as definitely ours
as if we personally
had suffered and paid for our sins.³

¹ John 6:51, 55.

² 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; 11:26.

³ Romans 6:5–11.

Lord's Day 30

80 Q. How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?

A. The Lord's Supper declares to us

that our sins have been completely forgiven
through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ
which he himself finished on the cross once for all.¹

It also declares to us

that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ,²
who with his very body
is now at the right hand of the Father³
where he wants us to worship him.⁴

But the Mass teaches

that the living and the dead

do not have their sins forgiven
through the suffering of Christ
unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.

It also teaches

that Christ is bodily present
in the form of bread and wine
where Christ is therefore to be worshipped.

Thus the Mass is basically
nothing but a denial
of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ
and a condemnable idolatry.

¹ John 19:30; Hebrews 7:27; 9:12, 25, 26; 10:10–18.

² 1 Corinthians 6:17; 10:16, 17.

³ Acts 7:55, 56; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1.

⁴ Matthew 6:20, 21; John 4:21–24; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:1–3.

81 Q. Who are to come to the Lord's Table?

A. Those who are displeased with themselves
because of their sins,
but who nevertheless trust
that their sins are pardoned
and that their continuing weakness is covered
by the suffering and death of Christ,
and who also desire more and more
to strengthen their faith
and to lead a better life.

Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however,
eat and drink judgment on themselves.¹

¹ 1 Corinthians 10:19–22; 11:26–32.

82 Q. Are those to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who show by what they say and do that they are unbelieving and ungodly?

A. No, that would dishonour God's covenant
and bring down God's anger upon the entire congregation.¹
Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ and his apostles,
the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people,
by the official use of the keys of the kingdom,

until they reform their lives.

¹ 1 Corinthians 11:17–32; Psalm 50:14–16; Isaiah 1:11–17.

Lord's Day 31

83 Q. What are the keys of the kingdom?

A. The preaching of the holy gospel
and Christian discipline toward repentance.
Both preaching and discipline
open the kingdom of heaven to believers
and close it to unbelievers.¹

¹ Matthew 16:19; John 20:22, 23.

84 Q. How does preaching the gospel open and close the kingdom of heaven?

A. According to the command of Christ:

The kingdom of heaven is opened
by proclaiming and publicly declaring
to each and every believer, that
as often as he accepts the gospel promise in true faith,
God, because of what Christ has done,
truly forgives all his sins.

The kingdom of heaven is closed, however,
by proclaiming and publicly declaring
to unbelievers and hypocrites that,
as long as they do not repent,
the anger of God and eternal condemnation
rest on them.

God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come,
is based on this gospel testimony.¹

¹ Matthew 16:19; John 3:31–36; 20:21–23.

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

A. According to the command of Christ:

If anyone, though called a Christian,
professes unchristian teachings or lives an unchristian life,
if after repeated brotherly counsel,
he refuses to abandon his errors and wickedness, and,
if after being reported to the church, that is, to its officers,
he fails to respond also to their admonition—
such a one the officers exclude from the Christian fellowship
by withholding the sacraments from him,
and God himself excludes him from the kingdom of Christ.¹

Such a person,
when he promises and demonstrates genuine reform,
is received again
as a member of Christ
and of his church.²

¹ Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 5:3–5, 11–13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15.

² Luke 15:20–24; 2 Corinthians 2:6–11.

Part 3: Man's Gratitude

Lord's Day 32

86 Q. We have been delivered from our misery by God's grace alone through Christ and not because we have earned it. Why then must we still do good?

A. To be sure, Christ has redeemed us by his blood.
But we do good because
Christ by his Spirit is also renewing us to be like himself,
so that in all our living
we may show that we are thankful to God
for all he has done for us,¹
and so that he may be praised through us.²

And we do good
so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits,³

and so that by our godly living
our neighbours may be won over to Christ.⁴

¹ Romans 6:13; 12:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:5–10.

² Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.

³ Matthew 7:17, 18; Galatians 5:22–24; 2 Peter 1:10, 11.

⁴ Matthew 5:14–16; Romans 14:17–19; 1 Peter 2:12; 3:1, 2.

87 Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and impenitent ways?

A. By no means.

Scripture tells us that

no sexually immoral person,
no idolater, adulterer, thief,
no greedy person,
no drunkard, slanderer, swindler,
or the like
is going to inherit the kingdom of God.¹

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Galatians 5:19–21; Ephesians 5:1–20; 1 John 3:14.

Lord's Day 33

88 Q. What is involved in genuine repentance or conversion?

A. Two things:

the dying-away of the old self,
and the coming-to-life of the new.¹

¹ Romans 6:1–11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22–24; Colossians 3:5–10.

89 Q. What is the dying-away of the old self?

A. It is to be genuinely sorry for sin,
to hate it more and more,
and to run away from it.¹

¹ Psalm 51:3, 4, 17; Joel 2:12, 13; Romans 8:12, 13; 2 Corinthians 7:10.

90 Q. What is the coming-to-life of the new self?

A. It is wholehearted joy in God through Christ¹
and a delight to do every kind of good
as God wants us to.²

¹ Psalm 51:8, 12; Isaiah 57:15; Romans 5:1; 14:17.

² Romans 6:10, 11; Galatians 2:20.

91 Q. What do we do that is good?

A. Only that which
arises out of true faith,¹
conforms to God's law,²
and is done for his glory;³
and not that which is based
on what we think is right
or on established human tradition.⁴

¹ John 15:5; Hebrews 11:6.

² Leviticus 18:4; 1 Samuel 15:22; Ephesians 2:10.

³ 1 Corinthians 10:31.

⁴ Deuteronomy 12:32; Isaiah 29:13; Ezekiel 20:18, 19; Matthew 15:7–9.

Lord's Day 34

92 Q. What does the Lord say in his law?

A. And God spoke all these words:
I am the Lord your God,
who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

1. You shall have no other gods before me.

2. You shall not make for yourself an idol
in the form of anything in heaven above
or on the earth beneath
or in the waters below.

You shall not bow down to them or worship them;
for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,
punishing the children for the sin of the fathers
to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,
but showing love to a thousand generations

of those who love me and keep my commandments.

3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God,
for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless
who misuses his name.
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
Six days you shall labour and do all your work,
but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.
On it you shall not do any work,
neither you, nor your son or daughter,
nor your manservant or maidservant,
nor your animals,
nor the alien within your gates.
For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth,
the sea, and all that is in them,
but he rested on the seventh day.
Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day
and made it holy.
5. Honour your father and your mother,
so that you may live long
in the land the Lord your God is giving you.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.
10. You shall not covet your neighbour's house.
You shall not covet your neighbour's wife,
or his manservant or maidservant,
his ox or donkey,
or anything that belongs to your neighbour.¹

¹ Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:6–21.

93 Q. How are these commandments divided?

- A. Into two tables.
The first has four commandments,

teaching us what our relation to God should be.
The second has six commandments,
teaching us what we owe our neighbour.¹

¹ Matthew 22:37–39.

94 Q. What does the Lord require in the first commandment?

A. That I, not wanting to endanger my very salvation,
avoid and shun
all idolatry,¹ magic, superstitious rites,²
and prayer to saints or to other creatures.³

That I sincerely acknowledge the only true God,⁴
trust him alone,⁵
look to him for every good thing⁶
humbly⁷ and patiently,⁸
love him,⁹ fear him,¹⁰ and honour him¹¹
with all my heart.

In short,
that I give up anything
rather than go against his will in any way.¹²

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; 10:5–14; 1 John 5:21.

² Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:9–12.

³ Matthew 4:10; Revelation 19:10; 22:8, 9.

⁴ John 17:3.

⁵ Jeremiah 17:5, 7.

⁶ Psalm 104:27, 28; James 1:17.

⁷ 1 Peter 5:5, 6.

⁸ Colossians 1:11; Hebrews 10:36.

⁹ Matthew 22:37 (Deuteronomy 6:5).

¹⁰ Proverbs 9:10; 1 Peter 1:17.

¹¹ Matthew 4:10 (Deuteronomy 6:13).

¹² Matthew 5:29, 30; 10:37–39.

95 Q. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is
having or inventing something in which one trusts
in place of or alongside of the only true God,

who has revealed himself in his Word.¹

¹ 1 Chronicles 16:26; Galatians 4:8, 9; Ephesians 5:5; Philippians 3:19.

Lord's Day 35

96 Q. What is God's will for us in the second commandment?

A. That we in no way make any image of God¹
nor worship him in any other way
than he has commanded in his Word.²

¹ Deuteronomy 4:15–19; Isaiah 40:18–25; Acts 17:29; Romans 1:23.

² Leviticus 10:1–7; 1 Samuel 15:22, 23; John 4:23, 24.

97 Q. May we then not make any image at all?

A. God cannot and may not
be visibly portrayed in any way.

Although creatures may be portrayed,
yet God forbids making or having such images
if one's intention is to worship them
or to serve God through them.¹

¹ Exodus 34:13, 14, 17; 2 Kings 18:4, 5.

98 Q. But may not images be permitted in the churches as teaching aids for the unlearned?

A. No, we shouldn't try to be wiser than God.
He wants his people instructed
by the living preaching of his Word¹—
not by idols that cannot even talk.²

¹ Romans 10:14, 15, 17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:19.

² Jeremiah 10:8; Habakkuk 2:18–20.

Lord's Day 36

99 Q. What is God's will for us in the third commandment?

A. That we neither blaspheme nor misuse the name of God
by cursing,¹ perjury,² or unnecessary oaths,³
nor share in such horrible sins
by being silent bystanders.⁴

In a word, it requires
that we use the holy name of God
only with reverence and awe,⁵
so that we may properly
confess him,⁶
pray to him,⁷
and praise him in everything we do and say.⁸

¹ Leviticus 24:10–17.

² Leviticus 19:12.

³ Matthew 5:37; James 5:12.

⁴ Leviticus 5:1; Proverbs 29:24.

⁵ Psalm 99:1–5; Jeremiah 4:2.

⁶ Matthew 10:32, 33; Romans 10:9, 10.

⁷ Psalm 50:14, 15; 1 Timothy 2:8.

⁸ Colossians 3:17.

100 Q. Is blasphemy of God's name by swearing and cursing really such serious sin that God is angry also with those who do not do all they can to help prevent it and to forbid it?

A. Yes, Indeed.¹
No sin is greater,
no sin makes God more angry
than blaspheming his name.
That is why he commanded the death penalty for it.²

¹ Leviticus 5:1.

² Leviticus 24:10–17.

Lord's Day 37

101 Q. But may we swear an oath in God's name if we do it reverently?

A. Yes, when the government demands it,

or when necessity requires it,
in order to maintain and promote truth and trustworthiness
for God's glory and our neighbour's good.

Such oaths are approved in God's Word¹
and were rightly used by Old and New Testament believers.²

¹ Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20; Jeremiah 4:1, 2; Hebrews 6:16.

² Genesis 21:24; Joshua 9:15; 1 Kings 1:29, 30; Romans 1:9;
2 Corinthians 1:23.

102 Q. May we swear by saints or other creatures?

A. No.

A legitimate oath means calling upon God
as the one who knows my heart
to witness to my truthfulness
and to punish me if I swear falsely.¹
No creature is worthy of such honour.²

¹ Romans 9:1; 2 Corinthians 1:23.

² Matthew 5:34–37; 23:16–22; James 5:12.

Lord's Day 38

103 Q. What is God's will for us in the fourth commandment?

A. First,

that the gospel ministry and education for it be maintained,¹
and that, especially on the festive day of rest,
I regularly attend the assembly of God's people²
to learn what God's Word teaches,³
to participate in the sacraments,⁴
to pray to God publicly,⁵
and to bring Christian offerings for the poor.⁶

Second,

that every day of my life
I rest from my evil ways,
let the Lord work in me through his Spirit,

and so begin already in this life the eternal sabbath.⁷

¹ Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 20–25; 1 Corinthians 9:13, 14; 2 Timothy 2:2; 3:13–17; Titus 1:5.

² Deuteronomy 12:5–12; Psalm 40:9, 10; 68:26; Acts 2:42–47; Hebrews 10:23–25.

³ Romans 10:14–17; 1 Corinthians 14:31, 32; 1 Timothy 4:13.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:23, 24.

⁵ Colossians 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:1.

⁶ Psalm 50:14; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9.

⁷ Isaiah 66:23; Hebrews 4:9–11.

Lord's Day 39

104 Q. What is God's will for us in the fifth commandment?

A. That I honour, love, and be loyal to
my father and mother
and all those in authority over me;
that I obey and submit to them, as is proper,
when they correct and punish me;¹
and also that I be patient with their failings²—
for through them God chooses to rule us.³

¹ Exodus 21:17; Proverbs 1:8; 4:1; Romans 13:1, 2; Ephesians 5:21, 22; 6:1–9; Colossians 3:18–4:1.

² Proverbs 20:20; 23:22; 1 Peter 2:18.

³ Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1–8; Ephesians 6:1–9; Colossians 3:18–21.

Lord's Day 40

105 Q. What is God's will for us in the sixth commandment?

A. I am not to belittle, insult, hate, or kill my neighbour—
not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture,
and certainly not by actual deeds—
and I am not to be party to this in others;¹
rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge.²

I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either.³

Prevention of murder is also why
government is armed with the sword.⁴

¹ Genesis 9:6; Leviticus 19:17, 18; Matthew 5:21, 22; 26:52.

² Proverbs 25:21, 22; Matthew 18:35; Romans 12:19; Ephesians 4:26.

³ Matthew 4:7; 26:52; Romans 13:11–14.

⁴ Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:14; Romans 13:4.

106 Q. Does this commandment refer only to killing?

A. By forbidding murder God teaches us
that he hates the root of murder:
envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness.¹

In God's sight all such are murder.²

¹ Proverbs 14:30; Romans 1:29; 12:19; Galatians 5:19–21; 1 John 2:9–11.

² 1 John 3:15.

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

A. No.
By condemning envy, hatred, and anger
God tells us
to love our neighbour as ourselves,¹
to be patient, peace-loving, gentle,
merciful, and friendly to him,²
to protect him from harm as much as we can,
and to do good even to our enemies.³

¹ Matthew 7:12; 22:39; Romans 12:10.

² Matthew 5:3–12; Luke 6:36; Romans 12:10, 18; Galatians 6:1, 2;
Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 3:8.

³ Exodus 23:4, 5; Matthew 5:44, 45; Romans 12:20, 21 (Proverbs 25:21, 22).

Lord's Day 41

108 Q. What is God's will for us in the seventh commandment?

A. God condemns all unchastity.¹

We should therefore thoroughly detest it²
and, married or single,
live decent and chaste lives.³

¹ Leviticus 18:30; Ephesians 5:3–5.

² Jude 22, 23.

³ 1 Corinthians 7:1–9; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8; Hebrews 13:4.

109 Q. Does God, in this commandment, forbid only such scandalous sins as adultery?

- A. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, body and soul,
and God wants both to be kept clean and holy.
That is why he forbids
everything which incites to unchastity,¹
whether it be actions, looks, talk, thoughts, or desires.²

¹ 1 Corinthians 15:33; Ephesians 5:18.

² Matthew 5:27–29; 1 Corinthians 6:18–20; Ephesians 5:3, 4.

Lord's Day 42

110 Q. What does God forbid in the eighth commandment?

- A. He forbids not only outright theft and robbery,
punishable by law.¹

But in God's sight theft also includes
cheating and swindling our neighbour
by schemes made to appear legitimate,²
such as:
inaccurate measurements of weight, size, or volume;
fraudulent merchandising;
counterfeit money;
excessive interest;
or any other means forbidden by God.³

In addition he forbids all greed⁴
and pointless squandering of his gifts.⁵

¹ Exodus 22:1; 1 Corinthians 5:9, 10; 6:9, 10.

² Micah 6:9–11; Luke 3:14; James 5:1–6.

³ Deuteronomy 25:13–16; Psalm 15:5; Proverbs 11:1; 12:22; Ezekiel 45:9–12; Luke 6:35.

⁴ Luke 12:15; Ephesians 5:5.

⁵ Proverbs 21:20; 23:20, 21; Luke 16:10–13.

111 Q. What does God require of you in this commandment?

A. That I do whatever I can
for my neighbour's good,
that I treat him
as I would like others to treat me,
and that I work faithfully
so that I may share with those in need.¹

¹ Isaiah 58:5–10; Matthew 7:12; Galatians 6:9, 10; Ephesians 4:28.

Lord's Day 43

112 Q. What is God's will for us in the ninth commandment?

A. God's will is that I
never give false testimony against anyone,
twist no one's words,
not gossip or slander,
nor join in condemning anyone
without a hearing or without a just cause.¹

Rather, in court and everywhere else,
I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind;
these are devices the devil himself uses, and they would call
down on
me God's intense anger.²

I should love the truth,
speak it candidly,
and openly acknowledge it.³

And I should do what I can
to guard and advance my neighbour's good name.⁴

¹ Psalm 15; Proverbs 19:5; Matthew 7:1; Luke 6:37; Romans 1:28–32.

² Leviticus 19:11, 12; Proverbs 12:22; 13:5; John 8:44; Revelation 21:8.

³ 1 Corinthians 13:6; Ephesians 4:25.

⁴ 1 Peter 3:8, 9; 4:8.

Lord's Day 44

113 Q. What is God's will for us in the tenth commandment?

- A. That not even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any one of God's commandments should ever arise in my heart.

Rather, with all my heart
I should always hate sin
and take pleasure in whatever is right.¹

¹ Psalm 19:7–14; 139:23, 24; Romans 7:7, 8.

114 Q. But can those converted to God obey these commandments perfectly?

- A. No.
In this life even the holiest
have only a small beginning of this obedience.¹

Nevertheless, with all seriousness of purpose,
they do begin to live
according to all, not only some,
of God's commandments.²

¹ Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 7:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 13:9; 1 John 1:8–10.

² Psalm 1:1, 2; Romans 7:22–25; Philippians 3:12–16.

115 Q. No one in this life can obey the Ten Commandments perfectly. Why then does God want them preached so pointedly?

- A. First, so that the longer we live
the more we may come to know our sinfulness
and the more eagerly look to Christ
for forgiveness of sins and righteousness.¹

Second, so that,
while praying to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit,

we may never stop striving
to be renewed more and more after God's image,
until after this life we reach our goal:
perfection.²

¹ Psalm 32:5; Romans 3:19–26; 7:7, 24, 25; 1 John 1:9.

² 1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:12–14; 1 John 3:1–3.

Lord's Day 45

116 Q. Why do Christians need to pray?

- A. Because prayer is the most important part
of the thankfulness God requires of us.¹
And also because God gives his grace and Holy Spirit
only to those who pray continually and groan inwardly,
asking God for these gifts
and thanking him for them.²

¹ Psalm 50:14, 15; 116:12–19; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18.

² Matthew 7:7, 8; Luke 11:9–13.

117 Q. How does God want us to pray so that he will listen to us?

- A. First, we must pray from the heart
to no other than the one true God,
who has revealed himself in his Word,
asking for everything he has commanded us to ask for.¹

Second, we must acknowledge our need and misery,
hiding nothing,
and humble ourselves in his majestic presence.²

Third, we must rest on this unshakeable foundation:
even though we do not deserve it,
God will surely listen to our prayer
because of Christ our Lord.

That is what he promised us in his Word.³

¹ Psalm 145:18–20; John 4:22–24; Romans 8:26, 27; James 1:5;
1 John 5:14, 15.

² 2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalm 2:11; 34:18; 62:8; Isaiah 66:2; Revelation 4.

³ Daniel 9:17–19; Matthew 7:8; John 14:13, 14; 16:23; Romans 10:13; James 1:6.

118 Q. What did God command us to pray for?

A. Everything we need, spiritually and physically,¹
as embraced in the prayer
Christ our Lord himself taught us.

¹ James 1:17; Matthew 6:33.

119 Q. What is this prayer?

A. Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.¹

¹ Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4.

Lord's Day 46

120 Q. Why did Christ command us to call God, “Our Father?”

A. At the very beginning of our prayer
Christ wants to kindle in us
what is basic to our prayer—
the childlike awe and trust
that God through Christ has become
our Father.

Our fathers do not refuse us
the things of this life;

God our Father will even less refuse to give us
what we ask in faith.¹

¹ Matthew 7:9–11; Luke 11:11–13.

121 Q. Why the words, “in heaven”?

A. These words teach us
not to think of God’s heavenly majesty
as something earthly,¹
and to expect everything
for body and soul
from his almighty power.²

¹ Jeremiah 23:23, 24; Acts 17:24, 25.

² Matthew 6:25–34; Romans 8:31, 32.

Lord’s Day 47

122 Q. What does the first request mean?

A. *Hallowed be your name* means,

Help us to really know you,¹
to bless, worship, and praise you
for all your works
and for all that shines forth from them:
your almighty power, wisdom, kindness,
justice, mercy, and truth.²

And it means,

Help us to direct all our living—
what we think, say, and do—
so that your name will never be blasphemed because of us
but always honoured and praised.³

¹ Jeremiah 9:23, 24; 31:33, 34; Matthew 16:17; John 17:3.

² Exodus 34:5–8; Psalm 145; Jeremiah 32:16–20; Luke 1:46–55, 68–75;
Romans 11:33–36.

³ Psalm 115:1; Matthew 5:16.

Lord's Day 48

123 Q. What does the second request mean?

A. *Your kingdom come* means,

Rule us by your Word and Spirit in such a way
that more and more we submit to you.¹

Keep your church strong, and add to it.²

Destroy the devil's work;
destroy every force which revolts against you
and every conspiracy against your Word.³

Do this until your kingdom is so complete and perfect
that in it you are
all in all.⁴

¹ Psalm 119:5, 105; 143:10; Matthew 6:33.

² Psalm 122:6–9; Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:42–47.

³ Romans 16:20; 1 John 3:8.

⁴ Romans 8:22, 23; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 22:17, 20.

Lord's Day 49

124 Q. What does the third request mean?

A. *Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven* means,

Help us and all men
to reject our own wills
and to obey your will without any back talk.
Your will alone is good.¹

Help everyone carry out the work he is called to²
as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.³

¹ Matthew 7:21; 16:24–26; Luke 22:42; Romans 12:1, 2; Titus 2:11, 12.

² 1 Corinthians 7:17–24; Ephesians 6:5–9.

³ Psalm 103:20, 21.

Lord's Day 50

125 Q. What does the fourth request mean?

A. *Give us today our daily bread* means,

Do take care of all our physical needs¹
so that we come to know
that you are the only source of everything good,²
and that neither our work and worry
nor your gifts
can do us any good without your blessing.³

And so help us to give up our trust in creatures
and to put trust in you alone.⁴

¹ Psalm 104:27–30; 145:15, 16; Matthew 6:25–34.

² Acts 14:17; 17:25; James 1:17.

³ Deuteronomy 8:3; Psalm 37:16; 127:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

⁴ Psalm 55:22; 62; 146; Jeremiah 17:5–8; Hebrews 13:5, 6.

Lord's Day 51

126 Q. What does the fifth request mean?

A. *And forgive us our sins,*
as we forgive those who sin against us means,

Because of Christ's blood,
do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are,
any of the sins we do
or the evil that constantly clings to us.¹

Forgive us just as we are fully determined,
as evidence of your grace in us,
to forgive our neighbours.²

¹ Psalm 51:1–7; 143:2; Romans 8:1; 1 John 2:1, 2.

² Matthew 6:14, 15; 18:21–35.

Lord's Day 52

127 Q. What does the sixth request mean?

A. *And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil* means,

By ourselves we are too weak
to hold our own even for a moment.¹

And our sworn enemies—
the devil,² the world,³ and our own flesh⁴—
never stop attacking us.

And so, Lord,
uphold us and make us strong
with the strength of your Holy Spirit,
so that we may not go down to defeat
in this spiritual struggle,⁵
but may firmly resist our enemies
until we finally win the complete victory.⁶

¹ Psalm 103:14–16; John 15:1–5.

² 2 Corinthians 11:14; Ephesians 6:10–13; 1 Peter 5:8.

³ John 15:18–21.

⁴ Romans 7:23; Galatians 5:17.

⁵ Matthew 10:19, 20; 26:41; Mark 13:33; Romans 5:3–5.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23.

128 Q. What does your conclusion to this prayer mean?

A. *For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and
ever* means,

We have made all these requests of you
because, as our all-powerful king,
you not only want to,
but are able to give us all that is good;¹
and because your holy name,
and not we ourselves,
should receive all the praise, forever.²

¹ Romans 10:11–13; 2 Peter 2:9.

² Psalm 115:1; John 14:13.

129 Q. What does that little word “Amen” express?

A. *Amen* means, This is sure to be!

It is even more sure
that God listens to my prayer,
than that I really desire
what I pray for.¹

¹ Isaiah 65:2

Introduction to the Belgic Confession

This confession is usually called the Belgic Confession because it originated in the Southern Netherlands, now known as Belgium. Its chief author was Guido de Brès, a preacher of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, who died a martyr to the faith in the year 1567. During the sixteenth century the churches in this country were exposed to the most terrible persecution by the Roman Catholic government. To protest against this cruel oppression, and to prove to the persecutors that the adherents of the Reformed faith were no rebels, as was laid to their charge, but law-abiding citizens who professed the true Christian doctrine according to the Holy Scriptures, de Brès prepared this confession in the year 1561. In the following year a copy was sent to King Philip II, together with an address in which the petitioners declared that they were ready to obey the government in all lawful things, but that they would “offer their backs to stripes, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to fire,” rather than deny the truth expressed in this confession. Although the immediate purpose of securing freedom from persecution was not attained, and de Brès himself fell as one of the many thousands who sealed their faith with their lives, his work has endured and will continue to endure for ages. In its composition the author availed himself to some extent of a confession of the Reformed Churches in France, written chiefly by John Calvin and published two years earlier. The work of de Brès, however, is not a mere revision of Calvin’s work, but an independent composition. In the Netherlands it was at once gladly received by the churches, and adopted by the National Synods, held during the last three decades of the sixteenth century. After a careful revision, not of the contents but of the text, the great Synod of Dort in 1618–19 adopted this confession as one of the doctrinal standards of the Reformed churches, to which all office bearers of the churches were required to subscribe. Its excellence as one of the best doctrinal statements of Reformed doctrine has been generally recognised.

The Belgic Confession

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Article 1 – There is only one God

We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth¹ that there is only one God², who is a simple³ and spiritual being;⁴ he is eternal,⁵ incomprehensible,⁶ invisible,⁷ immutable,^{8, 9} infinite,¹⁰ almighty,¹¹ perfectly wise,¹² just,¹³ good,¹⁴ and the overflowing fountain of all good.¹⁵

¹ Romans 10:10.

² Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4, 6; 1 Timothy 2:5.

³ *Simple* means that God cannot be divided up into different parts (that is, one part Father, one part Son, one part Holy Spirit) or have his characteristics played off against each other (that is, one part love, one part justice, one part holiness).

⁴ John 4:24.

⁵ Psalm 90:2.

⁶ Romans 11:33.

⁷ Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 6:16.

⁸ *Immutable* means unchangeable.

⁹ James 1:17.

¹⁰ 1 Kings 8:27; Jeremiah 23:24.

¹¹ Genesis 17:1; Matthew 19:26; Revelation 1:8.

¹² Romans 16:27.

¹³ Romans 3:25, 26; 9:14; Revelation 16:5, 7.

¹⁴ Matthew 19:17.

¹⁵ James 1:17.

Article 2 – How God makes himself known to us

We know him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most beautiful book,¹ wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters

leading us to perceive clearly God's invisible qualities his eternal power and divine nature, as the apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20. All these things are sufficient to convict men and leave them without excuse. Second, he makes himself more clearly and fully known to us by his holy and divine Word² as far as is necessary for us in this life, to his glory and our salvation.

¹ Psalm 19:1–4.

² Psalm 19:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 1:18–21.

Article 3 – The Word of God

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

¹ Exodus 34:27; Psalm 102:18; Revelation 1:11, 19.

² Exodus 31:18.

³ 2 Timothy 3:16.

Article 4 – The canonical books

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

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

The books of the New Testament: the four gospels, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles; the thirteen letters of the apostle Paul, namely, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians,

Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon; the letter to the Hebrews; the seven other letters, namely, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, Jude; and the Revelation to the apostle John.

Article 5 – The authority of Holy Scripture

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

¹ 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

² 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

³ 1 Corinthians 12:3; 1 John 4:6; 5:7.

⁴ Deuteronomy 18:21, 22; 1 Kings 22:28; Jeremiah 28:9; Ezekiel 33:33.

Article 6 – The difference between the canonical and apocryphal books

We distinguish these holy books from the apocryphal, namely, 3 and 4 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, additions to Esther, the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men in the Furnace, Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasseh, and 1 and 2 Maccabees. The church may read and take instruction from these so far as they agree with the canonical books. They are, however, far from having such power and authority that we may confirm from their testimony any point of faith or of the Christian religion; much less may they be used to detract from the authority of the holy books.

Article 7 – The sufficiency of Holy Scripture

We believe that this Holy Scripture fully contains the will of God and that all that man must believe in order to be saved is sufficiently taught therein.¹ The whole manner of worship which God requires of us is written in it at length. It is therefore unlawful for any one, even for an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in Holy Scripture:² yes,

even if it be an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul says (Galatians 1:8). Since it is forbidden to add to or take away anything from the Word of God (Deuteronomy 12:32),³ it is evident that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.⁴

We may not consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with the divine Scriptures; nor ought we to consider custom, or the majority, age, or the passage of time or persons, or councils, decrees or official decisions, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all;⁵ for all men are liars (Psalm 116:11), and only a breath (Psalm 62:9). We therefore reject with all our heart whatever does not agree with this infallible rule⁶ as the apostles have taught us, “Test the spirits to see whether they are from God” (1 John 4:1). Likewise, “If any one comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him” (2 John 1:10).

¹ 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 1 Peter 1:10–12.

² 1 Corinthians 15:2; 1 Timothy 1:3.

³ Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Acts 26:22; 1 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 22:18, 19.

⁴ Psalm 19:7; John 15:15; Acts 18:28; Acts 20:27; Romans 15:4.

⁵ Mark 7:7–9; Acts 4:19; Colossians 2:8; 1 John 2:19.

⁶ Deuteronomy 4:5, 6; Isaiah 8:20; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 4:4–6; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:14, 15.

Article 8 – God is one in essence, yet distinguished in three persons

According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God,¹ who is one single essence, in which are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct according to their incommunicable properties; namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.² The Father is the cause, origin, and beginning of all things visible and invisible.³ The Son is the Word, the wisdom, and the image of the Father.⁴ The Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might who proceeds from the Father and the Son.⁵ Nevertheless, God is not by this distinction divided into three, since the Holy Scriptures teach us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each has his personal existence, distinguished by their properties; but in such a way that these three persons are but one only God.

It is therefore evident that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, and likewise the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son.

Nevertheless, these persons thus distinguished are not divided, nor intermixed; for the Father has not assumed our flesh and blood, neither has the Holy Spirit, but the Son only. The Father has never been without his Son,⁶ or without his Holy Spirit. For these three, in one and the same essence, are equal in eternity. There is neither first nor last; for all three are one in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy.

¹ 1 Corinthians 8:4–6.

² Matthew 3:16, 17; 28:19.

³ Ephesians 3:14, 15.

⁴ Proverbs 8:22–31; John 1:14; 5:17–26; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Colossians 1:15–20; Hebrews 1:3; Rev 19:13.

⁵ John 15:26.

⁶ Micah 5:2; John 1:1, 2.

Article 9 – Scripture proof of this doctrine

All this we know both from the testimonies of Holy Scripture¹ and from the respective works of the three Persons, and especially those we perceive in ourselves. The testimonies of Scripture which lead us to believe this Holy Trinity are written in many places of the Old Testament. It is not necessary to mention them all; it is sufficient to select some with discretion.

In the book of Genesis God says, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness ... So God created man in his own image ...; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:26, 27). Also, “The man has now become like one of us” (Genesis 3:22). From God’s saying, “Let us make man in our image,” it appears that there are more divine persons than one; and when he says, “God created,” he indicates that there is one God. It is true, he does not say how many persons there are, but what seems to be somewhat obscure in the Old Testament is very plain in the New Testament. For when our Lord was baptised in the river Jordan, the voice of the Father was heard, who said, “This is my Son, whom I love” (Matthew 3:17); the Son was seen in the water, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove.² For the baptism of all believers Christ commanded, “[Baptise all nations] in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). In the gospel according to Luke the angel Gabriel thus addressed Mary, the mother of our Lord: “The

Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). Likewise, “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14). In all these places we are fully taught that there are three persons in one only divine essence.

Although this doctrine far surpasses all human understanding, nevertheless in this life we believe it on the ground of the Word of God, waiting to know and enjoy it fully in heaven.

Moreover, we must observe the distinct offices and works of these three Persons towards us. The Father is called our Creator by his power; the Son is our Saviour and Redeemer by his blood; the Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier by his dwelling in our hearts. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity has always been maintained and preserved in the true church since the time of the apostles to this very day, over against Jews, Muslims, and against false Christians and heretics such as Marcion, Mani, Praxeas, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Arius, and such like, who have been justly condemned by the orthodox fathers. In this doctrine, therefore, we willingly receive the three creeds, of the Apostles, of Nicea, and of Athanasius; likewise that which in accordance with them is agreed upon by the early fathers.

¹ John 14:16; 15:26; Acts 2:32, 33; Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; Titus 3:4–6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 4:13, 14; 5:1–12; Jude 20, 21; Revelation 1:4, 5.

² Matthew 3:16.

Article 10 – Jesus Christ true and eternal God

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

Therefore it must necessarily follow that he who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ, did exist at that time when all things were created by him. Therefore he could say, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58), and he prayed, “Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:5). And so he is true, eternal God, the Almighty, whom we invoke, worship and serve.

¹ Matthew 17:5; John 1:14, 18; 3:16; 14:1–14; 20:17, 31; Romans 1:4; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 1:2.

² John 5:18, 23; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15; Titus 2:13.

³ John 8:58; 17:5; Hebrews 13:8.

⁴ Genesis 1:1.

⁵ John 1:1–3.

⁶ Hebrews 1:2.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16.

Article 11 – The Holy Spirit true and eternal God

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

¹ John 14:15–26; 15:26; Romans 8:9.

² Genesis 1:2; Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 2:10; 3:16; 6:11; 1 John 5:7.

Article 12 – The creation of all things, especially the angels

We believe that the Father through the Word, that is, through his Son, has created out of nothing heaven and earth and all creatures, when it seemed good to him,¹ and that he has given to every creature its being, shape, and form, and to each its specific task and function to serve its Creator. We believe that he also continues to sustain and govern them according to his eternal providence and by his infinite power in order to serve man, to the end that man may serve his God.

He also created the angels good, to be his messengers and to serve his elect.² Some of these have fallen from the exalted position in which God created them into everlasting perdition,^{3,4} but the others have by the grace of God remained steadfast and continued in their first state. The devils and evil spirits are so depraved that they are enemies of God and of all that is good.⁵ With all their might, they lie in wait like murderers to ruin the church and all its members and to destroy everything by their wicked schemes.⁶ They are therefore by their own wickedness sentenced to eternal damnation and daily expect their horrible torments.⁷

Therefore we detest and reject the error of the Sadducees, who deny that there are any spirits and angels;⁸ and also the error of the Manichees, who say that the devils were not created, but have their origin of themselves, and that without having become corrupted, they are wicked by their own nature.

¹ Genesis 1:1; 2:3; Isaiah 40:26; Jeremiah 32:17; Colossians 1:15, 16; 1 Timothy 4:3; Hebrews 11:3; Revelation 4:11.

² Psalm 103:20, 21; Matthew 4:11; Hebrews 1:14.

³ *Perdition* means final and irrevocable ruin.

⁴ John 8:44; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6.

⁵ Genesis 3:1–5; 1 Peter 5:8.

⁶ Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 12:4, 13–17; Revelation 20:7–9.

⁷ Matthew 8:29; 25:41; Revelation 20:10.

⁸ Acts 23:8.

[Article 13 – The providence of God](#)

We believe that this good God, after he had created all things, did not abandon them or give them up to fortune or chance,¹ but that according to his holy will he so rules and governs them that in this world nothing happens without his direction.² Yet God is not the Author of the sins which are committed nor can he be charged with them.³ For his power and goodness are so great and beyond understanding that he ordains and executes his work in the most excellent and just manner, even when devils and wicked men act unjustly.⁴ And as to his actions surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire farther than our capacity allows us. But with the greatest humility and reverence we adore the just judgments of God, which are hidden from us,⁵ and we content ourselves

that we are pupils of Christ, who have only to learn those things which he teaches us in his Word, without transgressing these limits.⁶

This doctrine gives us inexpressible consolation, for we learn thereby that nothing can happen to us by chance, but only by the direction of our gracious heavenly Father. He watches over us with fatherly care, keeping all creatures so under his power that not one hair of our head—for they are all numbered—nor one sparrow can fall to the ground without the will of our Father (Matthew 10:29, 30). In this we trust, because we know that he restrains the devil and all our enemies so that they cannot hurt us without his permission and will.⁷

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

¹ John 5:17; Hebrews 1:3.

² Psalm 115:3; Proverbs 16:1, 9, 33; Proverbs 21:1; Ephesians 1:11, 12; James 4:13–15.

³ James 1:13; 1 John 2:16.

⁴ Job 1:21; Isaiah 10:5; 45:7; Amos 3:6; Acts 2:23; 4:27, 28.

⁵ 1 Kings 22:19–23; Romans 1:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:11.

⁶ Deuteronomy 29:29; 1 Corinthians 4:6.

⁷ Genesis 45:8; 50:20; 2 Samuel 16:10; Romans 8:28, 38, 39.

Article 14 – The creation and fall of man and his incapability of doing what is truly good

We believe that God created man of dust from the ground¹ and he made and formed him after his own image and likeness, good, righteous and holy.² His will could conform to the will of God in every respect. But, when man was in this high position, he did not appreciate it nor did he value his excellency. He gave ear to the words of the devil and wilfully subjected himself to sin and consequently to death and the curse.³ For he transgressed the commandment of life which he had received; by his sin he broke away from God, who was his true life; he corrupted his whole nature. By all this he made himself liable to physical and spiritual death.⁴

Since man became wicked and perverse, corrupt in all his ways, he has lost all his excellent gifts which he had once received from God.⁵ He has nothing left but some small traces, which are sufficient to make man

inexcusable.⁶ For whatever light is in us has changed into darkness,⁷ as Scripture teaches us, “The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it” (John 1:5); where the apostle John calls mankind darkness.

Therefore we reject all teaching contrary to this concerning the free will of man, since man is a slave to sin (John 8:34) and a man can receive only what is given him from heaven (John 3:27). For who dares to boast that he of himself can do any good, when Christ says, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (John 6:44)? Who will glory in his own will, when he understands that the sinful mind is hostile to God (Romans 8:7)? Who can speak of his knowledge, since the man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14)? In short, who dares to claim anything, when he realises that we are not competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God (2 Corinthians 3:5)? Therefore what the apostle says must justly remain sure and firm: “It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13). For there is no understanding nor will conformable to the understanding and will of God unless Christ has brought it about; as he teaches us, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

¹ Genesis 2:7; 3:19; Ecclesiastes 12:7.

² Genesis 1:26, 27; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10.

³ Genesis 3:16–19; Romans 5:12.

⁴ Genesis 2:17; Ephesians 2:1; 4:18.

⁵ Psalm 94:11; Romans 3:10; 8:6.

⁶ Romans 1:20, 21.

⁷ Ephesians 5:8.

Article 15 – Original sin

We believe that by the disobedience of Adam original sin has spread throughout the whole human race.¹ It is a corruption of the entire nature of man² and a hereditary evil which infects even infants in their mother’s womb.³ As a root it produces in man all sorts of sin. It is, therefore, so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn the human race.⁴ It is not abolished nor eradicated even by baptism, for sin continually streams forth like water welling up from this woeful source.⁵ Yet, in spite of all this, original sin is not imputed to the children of God to

their condemnation but by his grace and mercy is forgiven them.⁶ This does not mean believers may rest complacently in their sin, but that the awareness of this corruption may make them often groan as they eagerly wait to be delivered from this body of death.

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

¹ Romans 5:12–14, 19.

² Romans 3:10.

³ Job 14:4; Psalm 51:5; John 3:6.

⁴ Ephesians 2:3.

⁵ Romans 7:18, 19.

⁶ Ephesians 2:4, 5.

Article 16 – Divine election

We believe that, when the entire offspring of Adam plunged into perdition¹ and ruin by the transgression of the first man,² God manifested himself to be as he is: merciful and just. Merciful, in rescuing and saving from this perdition those whom in his eternal and unchangeable counsel³ he has elected⁴ in Jesus Christ our Lord⁵ by his pure goodness, without any consideration of their works.⁶ Just, in leaving the others in the fall and perdition into which they have plunged themselves.⁷

¹ *Perdition* means final and irrevocable ruin.

² Romans 5:12.

³ John 6:37, 44; 10:29; 17:2, 9, 12; 18:9.

⁴ 1 Samuel 12:22; Psalm 65:4; Acts 13:48; Romans 9:16; 11:5; Titus 1:1.

⁵ John 15:16, 19; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4, 5.

⁶ Malachi 1:2, 3; Romans 9:11–13; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:4, 5.

⁷ Romans 9:19–22; 1 Peter 2:8.

Article 17 – The rescue of fallen man

We believe that, when he saw that man had thus plunged himself into physical and spiritual death and made himself completely miserable, our gracious God in his marvellous wisdom and goodness set out to seek man when he trembling fled from him.¹ He comforted him with the promise

that he would give him his Son, born of woman (Galatians 4:4), to crush the head of the serpent² and to make man blessed.³

¹ Genesis 3:9.

² Genesis 3:15.

³ Genesis 22:18; Isaiah 7:14; John 1:14; 5:46; 7:42; Acts 13:32, 33; Romans 1:2, 3; Galatians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 7:14.

Article 18 – The incarnation of the Son of God

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

Contrary to the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of his mother, we therefore confess that Christ partook of the flesh and blood of the children (Hebrews 2:14). He is a descendant of David (Acts 2:30); born of David according to his human nature (Romans 1:3); of the womb of the virgin Mary (Luke 1:42); born of woman (Galatians 4:4); a branch of David (Jeremiah 33:15); a shoot from the stump of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1); descended from Judah (Hebrews 7:14); descended from the Jews according to the flesh (Romans 9:5); of the seed of Abraham, since the Son was concerned with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, yet without sin (Hebrews 2:16, 17; 4:15).

In this way he is in truth our Immanuel, that is, God with us (Matthew 1:23).

¹ Genesis 26:4; 2 Samuel 7:12–16; Psalm 132:11; Luke 1:55; Acts 13:23.

² Galatians 4:4.

³ 1 Timothy 2:5; 3:16; Hebrews 2:14.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22.

⁵ Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35.

Article 19 – The two natures in the one person of Christ

We believe that by this conception the person of the Son of God is inseparably united and joined with the human nature,¹ so that there are not two sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person. Each nature retains its own distinct properties: his divine nature has always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life (Hebrews 7:3), filling heaven and earth.² His human nature has not lost its properties; it has beginning of days and remains created. It is finite and retains all the properties of a true body.³ Even though, by his resurrection, he has given immortality to his human nature, he has not changed its reality,⁴ since our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of his body.⁵

However, these two natures are so closely united in one person that they were not even separated by his death. Therefore, what he, when dying, committed into the hands of his Father was a real human spirit that departed from his body.⁶ Meanwhile his divinity always remained united with his human nature, even when he was lying in the grave.⁷ And the divine nature always remained in him just as it was in him when he was a little child, even though it did not manifest itself so clearly for a little while.

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

¹ John 1:14; John 10:30; Romans 9:5; Philippians 2:6, 7.

² Matthew 28:20.

³ 1 Timothy 2:5.

⁴ Matthew 26:11; Luke 24:39; John 20:25; Acts 1:3, 11; 3:21; Hebrews 2:9.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:21; Philippians 3:21.

⁶ Matthew 27:50.

⁷ Romans 1:4.

Article 20 – The justice and mercy of God in Christ

We believe that God, who is perfectly merciful and just, sent his Son to assume that nature in which disobedience had been committed,¹ to make satisfaction in that same nature; and to bear the punishment of sin by his

most bitter passion and death.² God therefore manifested his justice against his Son when he laid our iniquity on him,³ and poured out his goodness and mercy on us, who were guilty and worthy of damnation. Out of a most perfect love he gave his Son to die for us and he raised him for our justification⁴ that through him we might obtain immortality and life eternal.

¹ Romans 8:3.

² Hebrews 2:14.

³ Romans 3:25, 26; Romans 8:32.

⁴ Romans 4:25.

Article 21 – The satisfaction of Christ our high priest

We believe that Jesus Christ was confirmed by an oath to be a high priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.¹ He presented himself in our place before his Father, appeasing God's wrath by his full satisfaction,² offering himself on the tree of the cross, where he poured out his precious blood to purge away our sins,³ as the prophets had foretold.⁴ For it is written, "The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."⁵ ... he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, ... [he] was numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:5, 7, 12),⁶ and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, though he had first declared him innocent.⁷ He was "forced to restore what [he] did not steal" (Psalm 69:4). He died as "the righteous for the unrighteous" (1 Peter 3:18).⁸ He suffered in body and soul,⁹ feeling the horrible punishment which our sins deserved, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground (Luke 22:44). Finally, he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) All this he endured for the forgiveness of our sins.

Therefore we justly say, with Paul, that we know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2). We "consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus [our] Lord" (Philippians 3:8). We find comfort in his wounds and have no need to seek or invent any other means of reconciliation with God than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which believers are perfected for all times (Hebrews 10:14).¹⁰ This is also the reason why the angel of God called

him Jesus, that is, Saviour, because he would save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21).¹¹

¹ Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:15–17.

² Romans 4:25; 5:8, 9; 8:32; Galatians 3:13; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 2:9, 17; 9:11–15.

³ Acts 2:23; Philippians 2:8; 1 Timothy 1:15; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 7:14.

⁴ Luke 24:25–27; Romans 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:3.

⁵ 1 Peter 2:24.

⁶ Mark 15:28.

⁷ John 18:38.

⁸ Romans 5:6.

⁹ Psalm 22:15.

¹⁰ Hebrews 7:26–28; Hebrews 9:24–28.

¹¹ Luke 1:31; Acts 4:12.

Article 22 – Our justification through faith in Christ

We believe that, in order that we may obtain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts a true faith.¹ This faith embraces Jesus Christ with all his merits, makes him our own, and does not seek anything besides him.² For it must necessarily follow, either that all we need for our salvation is not in Jesus Christ or, if it is all in him, that one who has Jesus Christ through faith, has complete salvation.³ It is, therefore, a terrible blasphemy to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something else is needed besides him; for the conclusion would then be that Christ is only half a saviour.

Therefore we rightly say with Paul that we are justified by faith apart from observing the law (Romans 3:28).⁴ However, we do not mean that faith as such justifies us,⁵ for faith is only the instrument by which we embrace Christ our righteousness; he imputes to us all his merits and as many holy works as he has done for us and in our place.⁶ Therefore Jesus Christ is our righteousness, and faith is the instrument that keeps us with him in the communion of all his benefits. When those benefits have become ours, they are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins.

¹ John 16:14; 1 Corinthians 2:12; Ephesians 1:17, 18.

² John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Galatians 2:21.

³ Psalm 32:1; Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:77; Acts 13:38, 39; Romans 8:1.

⁴ Romans 3:19–4:8; 10:4–11; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9; Titus 3:5.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 4:7.

⁶ Jeremiah 23:6; Matthew 20:28; Romans 8:33; 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 4:10.

Article 23 – Our righteousness before God

We believe that our blessedness lies in the forgiveness of our sins for Jesus Christ’s sake and that therein our righteousness before God¹ consists, as David and Paul teach us. They speak of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works (Romans 4:6; Psalm 32:1). The apostle also says that we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus (Romans 3:24).²

Therefore we always hold to this firm foundation. We give all the glory to God,³ humble ourselves before him, and acknowledge ourselves to be what we are. We do not claim anything for ourselves or our merits,⁴ but rely and rest on the only obedience of Jesus Christ crucified;⁵ his obedience is ours when we believe in him.⁶

This is sufficient to cover all our iniquities and to give us confidence in drawing near to God, freeing our conscience of fear, terror, and dread, so that we do not follow the example of our first father, Adam, who trembling tried to hide and covered himself with fig leaves.⁷ For indeed, if we had to appear before God, relying—be it ever so little—on ourselves or some other creature, (woe be to us!) we would be consumed.⁸ Therefore everyone must say with David, “O Lord, ... do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you” (Psalm 143:2).

¹ 1 John 2:1.

² 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Timothy 2:6.

³ Psalm 115:1; Revelation 7:10–12.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 4:4; James 2:10.

⁵ Acts 4:12; Hebrews 10:20.

⁶ Romans 4:23–25.

⁷ Genesis 3:7; Zephaniah 3:11; Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 4:17–19.

⁸ Luke 16:15; Philippians 3:4–9.

Article 24 – Our sanctification and good works

We believe that this true faith, worked in man by the hearing of God's Word and by the operation of the Holy Spirit,¹ regenerates him and makes him a new man.² It makes him live a new life and frees him from the slavery of sin.³ Therefore it is not true that this justifying faith makes man indifferent to living a good and holy life.⁴ On the contrary, without it no one would ever do anything out of love for God,⁵ but only out of self-love or fear of being condemned. It is therefore impossible for this holy faith to be inactive in man, for we do not speak of an empty faith but of what Scripture calls faith expressing itself through love (Galatians 5:6). This faith induces man to apply himself to those works which God has commanded in his Word. These works, proceeding from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, since they are all sanctified by his grace. Nevertheless, they do not count toward our justification. For through faith in Christ we are justified, even before we do any good works.⁶ Otherwise they could not be good any more than the fruit of a tree can be good unless the tree itself is good.⁷

Therefore we do good works, but not for merit. For what could we merit? We are indebted to God, rather than he to us, for the good works we do,⁸ since it is he who works in us, to will and to act according to his good purpose (Philippians 2:13). Let us keep in mind what is written: So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do should say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty" (Luke 17:10). Meanwhile, we do not deny that God rewards good works,⁹ but it is by his grace that he crowns his gifts.

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

¹ Acts 16:14; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 12:3.

² Ezekiel 36:26, 27; John 1:12, 13; 3:5; Ephesians 2:4–6; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23.

³ John 5:24; 8:36; Romans 6:4–6; 1 John 3:9.

⁴ Galatians 5:22; Titus 2:12.

⁵ John 15:5; Romans 14:23; 1 Timothy 1:5; Hebrews 11:4,6.

⁶ Romans 4:5.

⁷ Matthew 7:17.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31; 4:7; Ephesians 2:10.

⁹ Romans 2:6, 7; 1 Corinthians 3:14; 2 John 8; Revelation 2:23.

¹⁰ Romans 7:21.

¹¹ James 2:10.

¹² Habakkuk 2:4; Matthew 11:28; Romans 10:11.

Article 25 – Christ, the fulfilment of the law

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

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

¹ Matthew 27:51; Romans 10:4; Hebrews 9:9, 10.

² Matthew 5:17; Galatians 3:24; Colossians 2:17.

³ Romans 13:8–10; 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19; 3:2.

Article 26 – Christ's intercession

We believe that we have no access to God except through the only Mediator¹ and Advocate Jesus Christ the righteous.² For this purpose he became man, uniting together the divine and human nature, that we might not be barred from but have access to the divine majesty.³ This Mediator, however, whom the Father has ordained between himself and us, should not frighten us by his greatness, so that we look for another according to our fancy. There is no creature in heaven or on earth who loves us more than Jesus Christ.⁴ Though he was in the form of God, he emptied himself, taking the form of man and of a servant for us (Philippians 2:6, 7), and was made like his brothers in every way (Hebrews 2:17). If, therefore, we had to look for another intercessor, could we find one who loves us more than he who laid down his life for us, even while we were his enemies (Romans 5:8, 10)? If we had to look for one who has authority and power, who has more than he who is seated at the right hand of the Father⁵ and

who has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18)? Moreover, who will be heard more readily than God's own well-beloved Son?⁶

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

Therefore, to take away from us this foolish fear or rather distrust, the author of Hebrews, with good reason says to us that Jesus Christ was made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make propitiation for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Hebrews 2:17, 18). Further, to encourage us more to go to him, he says, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:14–16).¹⁰ The same letter says, "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus ... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith ..." (Hebrews 10:19, 22). Also, because Christ "... lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:24, 25).¹¹ What more is needed? Christ himself says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me" (John 14:6). Why should we look for another advocate? It has pleased God to give us his Son as our Advocate. Let us then not leave him for another, or even look for another, without ever finding one. For when God gave him to us, he knew very well that we were sinners.

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

¹ 1 Timothy 2:5.

² 1 John 2:1.

³ Ephesians 3:12.

⁴ Matthew 11:28; John 15:13; Ephesians 3:19; 1 John 4:10.

⁵ Hebrews 1:3; 8:1.

⁶ Matthew 3:17; John 11:42; Ephesians 1:6.

⁷ Acts 10:26; 14:15.

⁸ Jeremiah 17:5, 7; Acts 4:12.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:30.

¹⁰ John 10:9; Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 9:24.

¹¹ Romans 8:34.

¹² Hebrews 13:15.

¹³ Matthew 6:9–13; Luke 11:2–4.

¹⁴ John 14:13.

Article 27 – The catholic Christian church

We believe and profess one catholic or universal church,¹ which is a holy congregation and assembly² of true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ,³ are washed by his blood, and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit.⁴

This church has existed from the beginning of the world and will be to the end, for Christ is an eternal King who cannot be without subjects.⁵ This holy church is preserved by God against the fury of the whole world,⁶ although for a while it may look very small and as extinct in the eyes of man.⁷ Thus during the perilous reign of Ahab, the Lord kept for himself seven thousand who had not bowed their knees to Baal.⁸

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

¹ Genesis 22:18; Isaiah 49:6; Ephesians 2:17–19.

² Psalm 111:1; John 10:14, 16; Ephesians 4:3–6; Hebrews 12:22, 23.

³ Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21.

⁴ Ephesians 1:13; 4:30.

⁵ 2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 89:36; 110:4; Matthew 28:18, 20; Luke 1:32.

⁶ Psalm 46:5; Matthew 16:18.

⁷ Isaiah 1:9; 1 Peter 3:20; Revelation 11:7.

⁸ 1 Kings 19:18; Romans 11:4.

⁹ Matthew 23:8; John 4:21–23; Romans 10:12, 13.

¹⁰ Psalm 119:63; Acts 4:32; Ephesians 4:4.

Article 28 – Everyone’s duty to join the church

We believe, since this holy assembly and congregation is the assembly of the redeemed and there is no salvation outside of it,¹ that no one ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself, no matter what his status or standing may be. But all are duty bound to join it and unite with it,² maintaining the unity of the church. They must submit themselves to its instruction and discipline,³ bend their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ,⁴ and serve the edification of the brothers and sisters,⁵ according to the talents which God has given them as members of the same body.⁶

To observe this more effectively, it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate from those who do not belong to the church⁷ and to join this assembly⁸ wherever God has established it. They should do so even though the rulers and edicts of princes were against it, and death or physical punishment might follow.⁹

All therefore who draw away from the church or fail to join it act contrary to the ordinance of God.

¹ Matthew 16:18, 19; Acts 2:47; Galatians 4:26; Ephesians 5:25–27; Hebrews 2:11, 12; 12:23.

² 2 Chronicles 30:8; John 17:21; Colossians 3:15.

³ Hebrews 13:17.

⁴ Matthew 11:28–30.

⁵ Ephesians 4:12.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:7, 27; Ephesians 4:16.

⁷ Numbers 16:23–26; Isaiah 52:11, 12; Acts 2:40; Romans 16:17; Revelation 18:4.

⁸ Psalm 122:1; Isaiah 2:3; Hebrews 10:25.

⁹ Acts 4:19, 20.

Article 29 – The marks of the true and the false church

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

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

Those who are of the church may be recognised by the marks of Christians. They believe in Jesus Christ the only saviour,⁹ flee from sin and pursue righteousness,¹⁰ love the true God and their neighbour¹¹ without turning to the right or left, and crucify their flesh and its works.¹² Although great weakness remains in them, they fight against it by the Spirit all the days of their life.¹³ They appeal constantly to the blood, suffering, death, and obedience of Jesus Christ, in whom they have forgiveness of their sins through faith in him.¹⁴

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

These two churches are easily recognised and distinguished from each other.

¹ Revelation 2:9.

² Romans 9:6.

- ³ Galatians 1:8; 1 Timothy 3:15.
⁴ Acts 19:3–5; 1 Corinthians 11:20–29.
⁵ Matthew 18:15–17; 1 Corinthians 5:4, 5, 13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10.
⁶ John 8:47; 17:20; Acts 17:11; Ephesians 2:20; Colossians 1:23; 1 Timothy 6:3.
⁷ 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 Timothy 6:20; Revelation 2:6.
⁸ John 10:14; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18.
⁹ John 1:12; 1 John 4:2.
¹⁰ Romans 6:2; Philippians 3:12.
¹¹ 1 John 4:19–21.
¹² Galatians 5:24.
¹³ Romans 7:15; Galatians 5:17.
¹⁴ Romans 7:24, 25; 1 John 1:7–9.
¹⁵ Acts 4:17, 18; 2 Timothy 4:3, 4; 2 John 9.
¹⁶ John 16:2.

Article 30 – The government of the church

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

- ¹ Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11, 12; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 13:20, 21.
² Luke 1:2; 10:16; John 20:23; Romans 10:14; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 20; 2 Timothy 4:2.
³ Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.
⁴ 1 Timothy 3:8–10.
⁵ Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 4:14.
⁶ Acts 6:1–4; Titus 1:7–9.
⁷ 1 Corinthians 4:2.
⁸ 1 Timothy 3.

Article 31 – The officers of the church

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

¹ Acts 1:23, 24; 6:2, 3.

² Acts 13:2; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Timothy 4:14; 5:22; Hebrews 5:4.

³ 2 Corinthians 5:20; 1 Peter 5:1–4.

⁴ Matthew 23:8, 10; Ephesians 1:22; 5:23.

⁵ 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17.

Article 32 – The order and discipline of the church

We believe that, although it is useful and good for those who govern the church to establish a certain order to maintain the body of the church, they must at all times watch that they do not deviate from what Christ, our only Master, has commanded.¹ Therefore we reject all human inventions and laws introduced into the worship of God which bind and compel the consciences in any way.² We accept only what is proper to preserve and promote harmony and unity and to keep all in obedience to God.³ To that end, discipline and excommunication ought to be exercised in agreement with the Word of God.⁴

¹ 1 Timothy 3:15.

² Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:9; Galatians 5:1.

³ 1 Corinthians 14:33.

⁴ Matthew 16:19; 18:15–18; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5; 1 Timothy 1:20.

Article 33 – The sacraments

We believe that our gracious God, mindful of our weakness and limitations, has ordained sacraments to seal his promises to us and to be

pledges of his good will and grace towards us. He did so to nourish and sustain our faith.¹ He has added these to the Word of the gospel² to represent better to our external senses both what he declares to us in his Word and what he does inwardly in our hearts. Thus he confirms to us the salvation which he imparts to us. Sacraments are visible signs and seals of something internal and invisible, by means of which God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit.³ Therefore the signs are not empty and meaningless so that they deceive us. For Jesus Christ is their truth; apart from him they would be nothing. Moreover, we are satisfied with the number of sacraments which Christ our Master has instituted for us, namely, two: the sacrament of baptism⁴ and the holy supper of Jesus Christ.⁵

¹ Genesis 17:9–14; Exodus 12; Romans 4:11.

² Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 5:26.

³ Romans 2:28, 29; Colossians 2:11, 12.

⁴ Matthew 28:19.

⁵ Matthew 26:26–28; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

Article 34 – The sacrament of baptism

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law (Romans 10:4), has by his shed blood put an end to every other shedding of blood that one could or would make as propitiation or satisfaction for sins. He has abolished circumcision, which involved blood, and has instituted in its place the sacrament of baptism.¹ By baptism we are received into the church of God and set apart from all other peoples and false religions, to be entirely committed to him² whose mark and emblem we bear. This serves as a testimony to us that he will be our God and gracious Father for ever.

For that reason he has commanded all those who are his to be baptised with plain water, into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). By this he signifies to us that as water washes away the dirt of the body when poured on us, and as water is seen on the body of the baptised when sprinkled on him, so the blood of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, does the same thing internally to the soul.³ It washes and cleanses our soul from sin⁴ and regenerates us from children of wrath into children of God.⁵ This is not brought about by the water as such⁶ but

by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God,⁷ which is our Red Sea,⁸ through which we must pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the devil, and enter into the spiritual land of Canaan.

Thus the ministers on their part give us the sacrament and what is visible, but our Lord gives us what is signified by the sacrament, namely, the invisible gifts and grace. He washes, purges, and cleanses our souls of all filth and unrighteousness,⁹ renews our hearts and fills them with all comfort, gives us true assurance of his fatherly goodness, clothes us with the new nature, and takes away the old nature with all its works.¹⁰

We believe, therefore, that anyone who aspires to eternal life ought to be baptised only once.¹¹ Baptism should never be repeated, for we cannot be born twice. Moreover, baptism benefits us not only when the water is on us and when we receive it, but throughout our whole life. For that reason we reject the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with a single baptism received only once, and who also condemn the baptism of the little children of believers. We believe that these children ought to be baptised and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as infants were circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises which are now made to our children.¹² Indeed, Christ shed his blood to wash the children of believers just as much as he shed it for adults.¹³ Therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of what Christ has done for them, as the Lord commanded in the law that a lamb was to be offered shortly after children were born.¹⁴ This was a sacrament of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Because baptism has the same significance for our children as circumcision had for the people of Israel, Paul calls baptism the circumcision done by Christ (Colossians 2:11).

¹ Colossians 2:11.

² Exodus 12:48; 1 Peter 2:9.

³ Matthew 3:11; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

⁴ Acts 22:16; Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5b.

⁵ Titus 3:5.

⁶ 1 Peter 3:21.

⁷ Romans 6:3; 1 Peter 1:2; 2:24.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 10:1–4.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 5:26.

¹⁰ Romans 6:4; Galatians 3:27.

¹¹ Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 4:5.

¹² Genesis 17:10–12; Matthew 19:14; Acts 2:39.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 7:14.

¹⁴ Leviticus 12:6.

Article 35 – The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

We believe and confess that our Saviour Jesus Christ has instituted the sacrament of the holy supper¹ to nourish and sustain those whom he has already regenerated and incorporated into his family, which is his church.

Those who are born anew have a twofold life.² One is physical and temporal, which they received in their first birth and is common to all men. The other is spiritual and heavenly, which is given them in their second birth and is effected by the word of the gospel³ in the communion of the body of Christ. This life is not common to all but only to the elect of God.

For the support of the physical and earthly life God has ordained earthly and material bread. This bread is common to all just as life is common to all. For the support of the spiritual and heavenly life, which believers have, he has sent them a living bread which came down from heaven (John 6:51), namely, Jesus Christ,⁴ who nourishes and sustains the spiritual life of believers⁵ when he is eaten by them, that is, spiritually appropriated and received by faith.⁶

To represent to us the spiritual and heavenly bread, Christ has instituted earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of his body and wine as a sacrament of his blood.⁷ He testifies to us that as certainly as we take and hold the sacrament in our hands and eat and drink it with our mouths, by which our physical life is then sustained, so certainly do we receive by faith,⁸ as the hand and mouth of our soul, the true body and true blood of Christ, our only saviour, in our souls for our spiritual life.

It is beyond any doubt that Jesus Christ did not commend his sacraments to us in vain. Therefore he works in us all that he represents to us by these holy signs. The manner in which he does it goes beyond our understanding, just as we do not comprehend the hidden activity of the Spirit of God.⁹ Yet we do not go wrong when we say that what we eat and drink is the true, natural body and the true blood of Christ. However, the manner in which we eat it is not by mouth but in the spirit by faith. In that

way Jesus Christ always remains seated at the right hand of God his Father in heaven;¹⁰ yet he does not cease to communicate himself to us by faith. This banquet is a spiritual table at which Christ makes us partakers of himself with all his benefits and gives us the grace to enjoy both himself and the merit of his suffering and death.¹¹ He nourishes, strengthens, and comforts our poor, desolate souls by the eating of his flesh, and refreshes and renews them by the drinking of his blood.

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

Finally, we receive this holy sacrament in the congregation of the people of God¹⁵ with humility and reverence as we together commemorate the death of Christ our Saviour with thanksgiving and we confess our faith and Christian religion.¹⁶ Therefore no one should come to this table without careful self-examination, lest by eating this bread and drinking from this cup, he eat and drink judgment upon himself (1 Corinthians 11:28, 29). In short, we are moved by the use of this holy sacrament to a fervent love of God and our neighbours. Therefore we reject as desecrations all additions and condemnable inventions which men have mixed with the sacraments. We declare that we should be content with the ordinance taught by Christ and his apostles and should speak about it as they have spoken.

¹ Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

² John 3:5, 6.

³ John 5:25.

⁴ John 6:48–51.

⁵ John 6:63; 10:10b.

⁶ John 6:40, 47.

⁷ John 6:55; 1 Corinthians 10:16.

⁸ Ephesians 3:17.

⁹ John 3:8.

¹⁰ Mark 16:19; Acts 3:21.

¹¹ Romans 8:32; 1 Corinthians 10:3, 4.

¹² 1 Corinthians 2:14.

¹³ Luke 22:21, 22; Acts 8:13, 21.

¹⁴ John 3:36.

¹⁵ Acts 2:42; 20:7.

¹⁶ Acts 2:46; 1 Corinthians 11:26.

Article 36 – The civil government

We believe that, because of the depravity of mankind, our gracious God has ordained kings, princes, and civil officers.¹ He wants the world to be governed by laws and statutes,² in order that the lawlessness of men be restrained and that everything be conducted among them in good order.³ For that purpose he has placed the sword in the hand of the government to punish wrongdoers and to protect those who do what is good (Romans 13:4). Their task of restraining and sustaining is not limited to the public order but includes the protection of the church and its ministry in order that the kingdom of Christ may come, the word of the gospel may be preached everywhere,⁴ and God may be honoured and served by everyone, as he requires in his Word.

Moreover, everyone—no matter of what quality, condition, or rank—ought to be subject to the civil officers, pay taxes, hold them in honour and respect, and obey them in all things⁵ which do not disagree with the Word of God.⁶ We ought to pray for them, that God may direct them in all their ways and that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (1 Timothy 2:1, 2).

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

¹ Proverbs 8:15; Daniel 2:21; John 19:11; Romans 13:1.

² Exodus 18:20.

³ Deuteronomy 1:16; 16:19; Judges 21:25; Psalm 82; Jeremiah 21:12; 22:3; 1 Peter 2:13, 14.

⁴ Psalm 2; Romans 13:4a; 1 Timothy 2:1–4.

⁵ Matthew 17:27; 22:21; Romans 13:7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:17.

⁶ Acts 4:19; 5:29.

⁷ 2 Peter 2:10; Jude 8.

Article 37 – The last judgment

Finally, we believe, according to the Word of God, that when the time, ordained by the Lord but unknown to all creatures, has come¹ and the number of the elect is complete,² our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, bodily and visibly,³ as he ascended (Acts 1:11), with great glory and majesty.⁴ He will declare himself judge of the living and the dead⁵ and set this old world afire in order to purge it.⁶ Then all people, men, women, and children, who ever lived, from the beginning of the world to the end, will appear in person before this great Judge.⁷ They will be summoned with the voice of the archangel and with trumpet call of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Those who have died before that time will arise out of the earth,⁸ as their spirits are once again united with their own bodies in which they lived. Those who are still alive will not die as the others but will be changed in the twinkling of an eye from perishable to imperishable.⁹ Then the books will be opened and the dead will be judged (Revelation 20:12) according to what they have done in this world, whether good or evil (2 Corinthians 5:10).¹⁰ Indeed, all people will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken (Matthew 12:36), which the world regards as mere jest and amusement. The secrets and hypocrisy of men will then be publicly uncovered in the sight of all. Thus for good reason the thought of this judgment is horrible and dreadful to the wicked and evildoers¹¹ but it is a great joy and comfort to the righteous and elect. For then their full redemption will be completed and they will receive the fruits of their labour and of the trouble they have suffered.¹² Their innocence will be known to all and they will see the terrible vengeance God will bring upon the wicked who persecuted, oppressed, and tormented them in this world.¹³

The wicked will be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences and will become immortal, but only to be tormented in the eternal fire¹⁴ prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).¹⁵ On the other hand, the faithful and elect will be crowned with glory and honour. The Son of God will acknowledge their names before God his Father (Matthew 10:32) and his elect angels.¹⁶ God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Revelation 21:4),¹⁷ and their cause—at present condemned as heretical and evil by many judges and civil authorities—will be recognised as the cause of the Son of God. As a gracious reward,

the Lord will grant them to possess such glory as the heart of man could never conceive.¹⁸ Therefore we look forward to that great day with a great longing to enjoy to the full the promises of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20).

¹ Matthew 24:36; 25:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:1, 2.

² Hebrews 11:39, 40; Revelation 6:11.

³ Revelation 1:7.

⁴ Matthew 24:30; 25:31.

⁵ Matthew 25:31–46; 2 Timothy 4:1; 1 Peter 4:5.

⁶ 2 Peter 3:10–13.

⁷ Deuteronomy 7:9–11; Revelation 20:12, 13.

⁸ Daniel 12:2; John 5:28, 29.

⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; Philippians 3:20, 21.

¹⁰ Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 22:12.

¹¹ Matthew 11:22; Matthew 23:33; Romans 2:5, 6; Hebrews 10:27; 2 Peter 2:9; Jude 15; Revelation 14:7a.

¹² Luke 14:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:3–10; 1 John 4:17.

¹³ Revelation 15:4; 18:20.

¹⁴ Matthew 13:41, 42; Mark 9:48; Luke 16:22–28; Revelation 21:8.

¹⁵ Revelation 20:10.

¹⁶ Revelation 3:5.

¹⁷ Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 7:17.

¹⁸ Daniel 12:3; Matthew 5:12; 13:43; 1 Corinthians 2:9; Revelation 21:9–22:5.

Introduction to the Canons of Dort

The Canons of Dort are statements of doctrine adopted by the Reformed Synod of Dort in 1618–1619. This Synod had an international character as it was not only composed of the delegates of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands but also attended by twenty-seven representatives of foreign churches.

The Synod of Dort was held in view of the serious disturbance in the Reformed churches caused by the views of Jacob Arminius, a theological professor at Leiden University, who questioned the teaching of Calvin and his followers on a number of important points. After his death his followers presented their views on five points of doctrine in the Remonstrance of 1610. The Remonstrants held to conditional election on the ground of foreseen faith, universal atonement, partial depravity, resistible grace, and the possibility of a lapse from grace. These views were rejected by the Synod of Dort which met in 154 sessions over a period of seven months, from November 1618 to May 1619, under the leadership of Johannes Bogerman.

The Synod of Dort opposed the views of the Remonstrants and laid out the Reformed doctrine on the debated points in what is now known as the *Canons of Dort* or the *Five Articles against the Remonstrants*. These five points are unconditional election, particular atonement, total depravity, irresistible grace and the perseverance of the saints. These points of doctrine do not represent all the doctrines of Calvinism but they emphasise the biblical teaching on the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners.

Each of the heads of doctrine is expressed positively and then negatively, the former being an exposition of the Reformed doctrine on the subject, and the latter a repudiation of the corresponding Arminian error.

The Canons of Dort

First head of doctrine

Articles: [1.1](#) [1.2](#) [1.3](#) [1.4](#) [1.5](#) [1.6](#) [1.7](#) [1.8](#) [1.9](#) [1.10](#)
[1.11](#) [1.12](#) [1.13](#) [1.14](#) [1.15](#) [1.16](#) [1.17](#) [1.18](#)
[Rejection of errors](#)

Second head of doctrine

Articles: [2.1](#) [2.2](#) [2.3](#) [2.4](#) [2.5](#) [2.6](#) [2.7](#) [2.8](#) [2.9](#)
[Rejection of errors](#)

Third and fourth heads of doctrine

Articles: [3.1](#) [3.2](#) [3.3](#) [3.4](#) [3.5](#) [3.6](#) [3.7](#) [3.8](#) [3.9](#) [3.10](#)
[3.11](#) [3.12](#) [3.13](#) [3.14](#) [3.15](#) [3.16](#) [3.17](#)
[Rejection of errors](#)

Fifth head of doctrine

Articles: [5.1](#) [5.2](#) [5.3](#) [5.4](#) [5.5](#) [5.6](#) [5.7](#) [5.8](#) [5.9](#) [5.10](#)
[5.11](#) [5.12](#) [5.13](#) [5.14](#) [5.15](#) [Rejection of errors](#)

[Conclusion](#)

First head of doctrine: divine election and reprobation

Article 1.1: All mankind condemnable before God

Since all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and deserve eternal death,¹ God would have done no one an injustice if it had been his will to leave the whole human race in sin and under the curse, and to condemn it on account of its sin, according to these words of the apostle: “So that ... the whole world [may be] held accountable to God ... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:19, 23); and, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

¹ Romans 5:12.

Article 1.2: The sending of the Son of God

But in this the love of God was made manifest,¹ that “he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

¹ 1 John 4:9.

Article 1.3: The preaching of the Gospel

So that men may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends heralds of this most joyful message to whom he will and when he wills.¹ By their ministry, men are called to repentance and to faith in Christ crucified.² For “how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?” (Romans 10:14 –15)

¹ Isaiah 52:7.

² 1 Corinthians 1:23–24.

Article 1.4: A twofold outcome

The wrath of God remains upon those who do not believe this gospel.¹ But those who receive it and embrace Jesus the Saviour with a true and living faith are delivered by him from the wrath of God and from destruction, and are given eternal life.²

¹ John 3:36.

² Mark 16:16; Romans 10:9.

Article 1.5: The cause of unbelief, the source of faith

The cause or guilt for this unbelief, as well as for all other sins, is by no means in God, but rather in man.¹ Faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through him, however, is the free gift of God, as it is written: “By grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Similarly: “It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ ... to believe on him” (Philippians 1:29).

¹ Hebrews 4:6.

Article 1.6: God's eternal decree

That God, in time, confers the gift of faith on some, and not on others, proceeds from his eternal decree.¹ For he knows all his works from eternity,² and he “works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11). According to this decree he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, no matter how hard they may be, and inclines them to believe; those not elected, however, he leaves in their own wickedness and hardness by a just judgment. And here especially is disclosed to us the profound, merciful, and at the same time just distinction between men equally worthy of condemnation, or that decree of election and reprobation which has been revealed in God's Word. Although perverse, impure, and unstable men twist this decree to their own destruction, it provides unspeakable comfort for holy and God-fearing souls.

¹ Acts 13:48.

² 1 Peter 2:8.

Article 1.7: Election defined

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God whereby, before the foundation of the world,¹ out of the whole human race, which had fallen by its own fault out of its original integrity into sin and perdition,² he has, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his will, out of mere grace, chosen in Christ to salvation a definite number of specific persons, neither better nor more worthy than others, but involved together with them in a common misery. He has also from eternity appointed Christ to be the mediator and head of all the elect and the foundation of salvation and thus he decreed to give to Christ those who were to be saved, and effectually to call and draw them into his communion through his Word and Spirit. He decreed to give them true faith in him, to justify them, to sanctify them, and, after having powerfully kept them in the fellowship of his Son,³ finally to glorify them, for the demonstration of his mercy and the praise of the riches of his glorious grace.⁴ As it is written: God chose us in Christ, “before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his

glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves” (Ephesians 1:4–6). And elsewhere, “Those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified” (Romans 8:30).⁵

¹ Ephesians 1:4, 11; John 17:2.

² *Perdition* means final and irrevocable ruin.

³ John 17:12.

⁴ John 17:24; 6:37, 44.

⁵ John 17:2.

Article 1.8: One decree of election

There are not various decrees of this election, but there is one and the same decree concerning all those that are to be saved under both the Old and the New Testament. For Scripture declares that the good pleasure, purpose, and counsel of the will of God is one.¹ According to this purpose he has chosen us from eternity both to grace and to glory, both to salvation and to the way of salvation, which he prepared for us that we should walk in it.²

¹ Deuteronomy 7:7; 9:6; Ephesians 1:4–5.

² Ephesians 2:10.

Article 1.9: Election not based on foreseen faith

This election is not based on foreseen faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition, as a cause or condition in man required for being chosen, but men are chosen to faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, and so on. Election, therefore, is the fountain of every saving good, from which flow faith, holiness, and other saving gifts, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects.¹ This the apostle teaches when he says, “He chose us” (not because we were, but are) “to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:4).

¹ Romans 8:30.

Article 1.10: Election based on God’s good pleasure

The cause of this gracious election is solely the good pleasure of God. This good pleasure does not consist in this, that out of all possible conditions

God chose certain qualities or actions of men as a condition for salvation, but in this, that out of the common mass of sinners he adopted certain persons to be his own possession. For it is written, “Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad” (Romans 9:11–13), and so on, she (namely, Rebecca) was told, “The older will serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23). Just as it is written: “I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated” (Malachi 1:2–3). And, “All who were appointed for eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48).

Article 1.11: Election unchangeable

As God himself is most wise, unchangeable, all-knowing and almighty, so his election can neither be undone and redone, nor changed, revoked, or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away,¹ nor their number be diminished.²

¹ John 6:37.

² John 10:28.

Article 1.12: The assurance of election

The elect in due time, though in various stages and in different measure, are made certain of this their eternal and unchangeable election to salvation. They attain this assurance, however, not by inquisitively prying into the hidden and deep things of God,¹ but by observing in themselves,² with spiritual joy and holy delight, the unfailing fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God: such as a true faith in Christ, a childlike fear of God, a godly sorrow for their sins,³ and a hunger and thirst for righteousness.⁴

¹ Deuteronomy 29:29; 1 Corinthians 2:10–11.

² 2 Corinthians 13:5.

³ 2 Corinthians 7:10.

⁴ Matthew 5:6.

Article 1.13: The value of this assurance

The awareness and assurance of this election provide the children of God with greater reason for daily humbling themselves before God, for adoring the depth of his mercies, for cleansing themselves,¹ and for fervently

loving him in turn who first so greatly loved them.² It is therefore not at all true that this doctrine of election and the reflection on it makes them lax in observing the commands of God or falsely secure. In the just judgment of God, this usually happens to those who rashly presume to have the grace of election, or idly and boldly chatter about it, but refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

¹ 1 John 3:3.

² 1 John 4:19.

Article 1.14: How election is to be taught

This doctrine of divine election, according to the most wise counsel of God, was preached in Old and New Testament times by the prophets, by Christ himself, and by the apostles, and was then committed to writing in the holy Scriptures. Therefore, also today this doctrine should be taught in the church of God,¹ for which it was particularly intended, in its proper time and place, provided it be done with a spirit of discretion, in a reverent and holy manner, without inquisitively prying into the ways of the Most High, to the glory of God's most holy name, and for the living comfort of his people.²

¹ Acts 20:27; Job 36:23–26.

² Romans 11:33; 12:3; 1 Corinthians 4:6.

Article 1.15: Reprobation described

Holy Scripture illustrates and recommends to us this eternal and undeserved grace of our election, especially when it further declares that not all men are elect but that some have not been elected, or have been passed by in the eternal election of God.¹ Out of his most free, most just, blameless, and unchangeable good pleasure, God has decreed to leave them in the common misery into which they have by their own fault plunged themselves,² and not to give them saving faith and the grace of conversion. These, having been left in their own ways³ and under his just judgment, God has decreed finally to condemn and punish eternally, not only on account of their unbelief but also on account of all their other sins, in order to display his justice. This is the decree of reprobation, which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought is blasphemous!),

but rather declares him to be its fearsome, blameless, and just judge and avenger.

¹ Romans 9:22.

² 1 Peter 2:8.

³ Acts 14:16.

Article 1.16: Responses to the doctrine of reprobation

Some do not yet clearly discern in themselves a living faith in Christ,¹ an assured confidence of heart, peace of conscience, a zeal for childlike obedience, and a glorying in God through Christ;² nevertheless, they use the means through which God has promised to work these things in us. They ought not to be alarmed when reprobation is mentioned, nor to count themselves among the reprobate. Rather, they must diligently continue in the use of these means, fervently desire a time of more abundant grace, and expect it with reverence and humility. Others seriously desire to be converted to God, to please him only, and to be delivered from the body of death.³ Yet they cannot reach that point on the way of godliness and faith which they would like. They should be even less terrified by the doctrine of reprobation, since a merciful God has promised not to snuff out the smouldering wick nor to break the bruised reed.⁴

Still others disregard God and the Saviour Jesus Christ and have completely given themselves over to the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth.⁵ For them this doctrine of reprobation is rightly fearsome as long as they do not seriously turn to God.⁶

¹ James 2:26.

² 2 Corinthians 1:12; Romans 5:11.

³ Philippians 3:3; Romans 7:24.

⁴ Isaiah 42:3; Matthew 12:20.

⁵ Matthew 13:22.

⁶ Hebrews 12:29.

Article 1.17: Children of believers who die in infancy.

We must judge concerning the will of God from his Word, which declares that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they are included with their parents.¹

Therefore, God-fearing parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in their infancy.²

¹ Genesis 17:7; Isaiah 59:21.

² Acts 2:39; 1 Corinthians 7:14.

Article 1.18: Not protest but adoration

To those who complain about this grace of undeserved election and the severity of righteous reprobation,¹ we reply with this word of the apostle: “But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?” (Romans 9:20) And with this word of our Saviour: Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? ²

We, however, with reverent adoration of these mysteries, exclaim with the apostle: “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ‘Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?’ ‘Who has ever 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” (Romans 11:33–36).

¹ Job 40:1–5.

² Matthew 20:15.

First head of doctrine: rejection of errors

Having explained the true doctrine of divine election and reprobation, Synod rejects the following errors:

Error 1.a: The will of God to save those who would believe and persevere in faith and obedience is the whole and entire decree of election to salvation. Nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in God’s Word.

Refutation: This error is deceptive and clearly contradicts Scripture, which declares not only that God will save those who believe but also that he has chosen specific persons from eternity. Within time he grants to these elect, above others, both faith in Christ and perseverance. “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world” (John 17:6).

“And all who were appointed for eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48). “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:4).

Error 1.b: There are various kinds of divine election to eternal life. One is general and indefinite, another is particular and definite. The latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive, and conditional, or it is complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute. In the same fashion there is an election to faith and another to salvation. Therefore election can be to justifying faith, without being decisive to salvation.

Refutation: All this is an invention of the human mind without any basis in the Scriptures. The doctrine of election is thus corrupted and the golden chain of our salvation broken: “And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified” (Romans 8:30).

Error 1.c: The good pleasure and purpose of God of which Scripture speaks in the doctrine of election is not that he chose certain specific persons and not others, but that out of all possible conditions (such as the works of the law) he chose or selected the act of faith, which in itself is without merit, as well as the imperfect obedience of faith, to be a condition of salvation. In his grace he wished to count such faith as complete obedience and worthy of the reward of eternal life.

Refutation: This offensive error deprives God’s good pleasure and Christ’s merits of all efficacy, and draws people away from the truth of gracious justification and from the simplicity of Scripture. It contradicts the word of the apostle: God “has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time” (2 Timothy 1:9).

Error 1.d: Election to faith depends on the condition that man should use the light of nature properly, and that he be pious, humble, meek, and fit for eternal life.

Refutation: If this were true, election would depend on man. This smacks of the teaching of Pelagius and is in open conflict with the teaching of the apostle, “All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the

cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to 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” (Ephesians 2:3–9).

Error 1.e: Incomplete and non-decisive election of specific persons to salvation took place on the ground of foreseen faith, conversion, holiness, and godliness, which either began or continued for some time. Complete and decisive election, however, occurred because of foreseen perseverance in faith, conversion, holiness, and godliness till the end. This is the gracious and evangelical worthiness because of which the person who is chosen is more worthy than the one who is not chosen. Therefore faith, obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits of unchangeable election to glory. Instead, they are necessary conditions and causes required and foreseen as accomplished in those who are to be fully elected.

Refutation: This error militates against all of Scripture, which constantly impresses the following upon us: Election is “not by works but by him who calls” (Romans 9:11); “And all who were appointed for eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48); “He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:4); “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16); “And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace” (Romans 11:6); “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

Error 1.f: Not every election to salvation is unchangeable. Some of the elect can and do indeed perish everlastingly, notwithstanding any decree of God.

Refutation: This gross error makes God changeable, destroys the comfort which the believers obtain from the firmness of their election, and contradicts Holy Scripture: The elect can not be led astray

(Matthew 24:24); Christ does not lose those given to him by the Father (John 6:39); and those whom God predestined, called, and justified, he also glorifies (Romans 8:30).

Error 1.g: In this life there is no fruit, consciousness, or certainty of the unchangeable election to glory, except such as is based upon a changeable and uncertain condition.

Refutation: To speak about an uncertain certainty is not only absurd but also contrary to the experience of the believers. As a result of the awareness of their election, they glory with the apostle in this favour of God.¹ With the disciples of Christ they rejoice that their names are written in heaven.² They put the consciousness of their election over against the flaming darts of the devil, when they exclaim: “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen” (Romans 8:33)?

¹ Ephesians 1.

² Luke 10:20.

Error 1.h: God did not simply by an act of his righteous will decide to leave any person in the common state of sin and condemnation since his fall in Adam, nor did he decide to pass by any one in granting such grace as is necessary for faith and conversion.

Refutation: Scripture, however, states, “God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden” (Romans 9:18). It also declares, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them” (Matthew 13:11). “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure” (Matthew 11:25, 26).

Error 1.i: God sends the gospel to one people rather than to another not merely and solely because of the good pleasure of his will, but because one people is better and worthier than another to which the gospel is not preached.

Refutation: Moses denies this when he addresses the people of Israel as follows: “To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest

heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the Lord set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today” (Deuteronomy 10:14, 15). And Christ says, “Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes” (Matthew 11:21).

Second head of doctrine: Christ’s death and man’s redemption through it

Article 2.1: The punishment which God’s justice requires

God is not only supremely merciful but also supremely just. And as he himself has revealed in his Word,¹ his justice requires that our sins, committed against his infinite majesty, should be punished² not only in this age but also in the age to come, both in body and soul. We cannot escape these punishments unless satisfaction is made to the justice of God.

¹ Exodus 34:6–7.

² Romans 5:16; Galatians 3:10.

Article 2.2: The satisfaction made by Christ

We ourselves, however, cannot make this satisfaction and cannot free ourselves from God’s wrath. God, therefore, in his infinite mercy has given his only begotten Son as our surety.¹ For us and in our place he was made sin² and a curse on the cross³ so that he might make satisfaction on our behalf.

¹ John 3:16; Romans 5:8.

² 2 Corinthians 5:21.

³ Galatians 3:13.

Article 2.3: The infinite value of Christ’s death

This death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sins,¹ of infinite value and worth, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.²

¹ Hebrews 9:26, 28; 10:14.

² 1 John 2:2.

Article 2.4: Why his death has infinite value

This death is of such great value and worth because the person who submitted to it is not only a true and perfectly holy man,¹ but also the only begotten Son of God,² of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for these qualifications were necessary for our Saviour. Further, this death is of such great value and worth because it was accompanied by a sense of the wrath and curse of God³ which we by our sins had deserved.

¹ Hebrews 4:15; 7:26.

² 1 John 4:9.

³ Matthew 27:46.

Article 2.5: The universal proclamation of the Gospel

The promise of the gospel is that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life.¹ This promise, together with the command to repent and believe,² ought to be announced and proclaimed universally and without discrimination to all peoples and to all men,³ to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel.

¹ John 3:16.

² Acts 2:38; 16:31.

³ 1 Corinthians 1:23; Matthew 28:19.

Article 2.6: Why some do not believe

That, however, many who have been called by the gospel neither repent nor believe in Christ but perish in unbelief¹ does not happen because of any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross, but through their own fault.

¹ Matthew 22:14; Psalm 95:11; Hebrews 4:6.

Article 2.7: Why others do believe

But to those who truly believe and by the death of Christ are freed from their sins and saved from perdition,¹ this benefit comes only through God's grace, given to them from eternity in Christ.² God owes this grace to no one.³

¹ *Perdition* means final and irrevocable ruin.

² 2 Corinthians 5:18.

³ Ephesians 2:8–9.

Article 2.8: The efficacy of the death of Christ

For this was the most free counsel of God the Father, that the life-giving and saving efficacy of the most precious death of his Son should extend to all the elect.¹ It was his most gracious will and intent to give to them alone justifying faith and thereby to bring them unfailingly to salvation.² This means: God willed that Christ through the blood of the cross (by which he confirmed the new covenant)³ should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and tongue⁴ all those, and those only, who from eternity were chosen to salvation and were given to him by the Father. God further willed that Christ should give to them faith,⁵ which, together with other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, he acquired for them by his death; that he should cleanse them by his blood from all sins,⁶ both original and actual, both those committed after faith and before faith; and that he should guard them faithfully to the end⁷ and at last present them to himself in splendour without any spot or wrinkle.⁸

¹ John 17:9.

² Ephesians 5:25–27; Luke 22:20.

³ Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6.

⁴ Revelation 5:9.

⁵ Philippians 1:29.

⁶ 1 John 1:7.

⁷ John 10:28.

⁸ Ephesians 5:27.

Article 2.9: The fulfilment of God's counsel

This counsel, proceeding from eternal love for the elect, has from the beginning of the world to the present time been powerfully fulfilled, and

will also continue to be fulfilled, though the gates of hell vainly try to frustrate it.¹ In due time the elect will be gathered together into one,² and there will always be a church of believers,³ founded on the blood of Christ. This church shall steadfastly love and faithfully serve him as her saviour (who as bridegroom for his bride laid down his life for her on the cross)⁴ and celebrate his praises here and through all eternity.

¹ Matthew 16:18.

² John 11:52.

³ 1 Kings 19:18.

⁴ Ephesians 5:25.

Second head of doctrine: rejection of errors

Having explained the true doctrine of the death of Christ and the redemption of man by this death, Synod rejects the following errors:

Error 2.a: God the Father has ordained his Son to the death of the cross without a specific and definite decree to save any. What Christ obtained by his death might have been necessary, profitable, and valuable, and might remain in all its parts complete, perfect, and intact, even though the redemption he acquired had actually never been applied to any person.

Refutation: This doctrine is offensive to the wisdom of the Father and the merits of Jesus Christ and is contrary to Scripture. For our Saviour says: “I lay down my life for the sheep,” and, “I know them” (John 10:15, 27). And the prophet Isaiah says concerning the Saviour: “Though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand” (Isaiah 53:10). Finally, this error contradicts the article of faith concerning the catholic Christian church.

Error 2.b: It was not the purpose of Christ’s death that he should confirm the new covenant of grace by his blood, but only that he should acquire for the Father the mere right to establish once more with man such a covenant as he might please, whether of grace or of works.

Refutation: This militates against Scripture, which teaches that Christ has become the surety and mediator of a better, that is, a new covenant, and

that a will is in force only when somebody has died.¹

¹ Hebrews 7:22; 9:15, 17.

Error 2.c: By his satisfaction Christ did not really merit for anyone either salvation itself or faith by which this satisfaction of Christ to salvation is effectually made one's own. He acquired for the Father only the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as he might desire. It depends, however, on the free will of man to fulfil these conditions. Therefore it was possible that either no one or all men would fulfil them.

Refutation: Those who teach this error think contemptuously of the death of Christ, do not at all acknowledge its most important fruit or benefit, and bring back out of hell the Pelagian error.

Error 2.d: The new covenant of grace which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not consist herein that we are justified before God and saved by faith, inasmuch as it accepts the merit of Christ. It consists in the fact that God has revoked the demand of perfect obedience of the law and regards faith as such and the obedience of faith, though imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law. He graciously deems it worthy of the reward of eternal life.

Refutation: This doctrine contradicts Scripture: They "are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood" (Romans 3:24, 25). Those who teach this error proclaim, as did the ungodly Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole church.

Error 2.e: All men have been accepted into the state of reconciliation and into the grace of the covenant, so that no one is liable to condemnation on account of original sin, and no one shall be condemned because of it, but all are free from the guilt of original sin.

Refutation: This opinion is in conflict with Scripture, which teaches that we are "by nature objects of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3).

Error 2.f: As far as God is concerned, he wished to bestow equally upon all people the benefits acquired by the death of Christ; however, some obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life and others do not. This distinction depends on their own free will, which applies itself to the grace that is offered indifferently, and not on the special gift of mercy which so powerfully works in them that they rather than others apply this grace to themselves.

Refutation: Those who teach this misuse the difference between the acquisition and the application of salvation and confuse the minds of imprudent and inexperienced people. While they pretend to present this distinction in a sound sense, they seek to instil into the minds of people the pernicious poison of Pelagianism.

Error 2.g: Christ could not die, did not need to die, and did not die for those whom God loved in the highest degree and elected to eternal life, since these do not need the death of Christ.

Refutation: This doctrine contradicts the apostle, who declares: The Son of God “loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Likewise: “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died” (Romans 8:33, 34), namely, for them. And the Saviour assures us: “I lay down my life for the sheep” (John 10:15). And: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12, 13).

Third and fourth heads of doctrine: the corruption of man, his conversion to God, and the manner in which it occurs

Article 3.1: The effect of the fall

In the beginning man was created in the image of God. He was adorned in his mind with a true and wholesome knowledge of his Creator and of all spiritual things; his will and heart were upright, all his affections pure, and therefore man was completely holy.¹

But rebelling against God through the instigation of the devil and through his own free will, he deprived himself of these excellent gifts,² and instead brought upon himself blindness, horrible darkness, futility, and perverseness of judgment in his mind; wickedness, rebelliousness, and stubbornness in his will and heart; and impurity in all his affections.³

¹ Genesis 1:26–27.

² Genesis 3:1–7.

³ Ephesians 4:17–19.

Article 3.2: The spread of corruption

Since after the fall man became corrupt, he as a corrupt father brought forth corrupt children.¹ Thus the corruption has spread from Adam to all his descendants,² with the exception of Christ alone,³ not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old maintained, but by the propagation of a perverted nature, according to the righteous judgment of God.

¹ Job 14:4; Psalm 51:5.

² Romans 5:12.

³ Hebrews 4:15.

Article 3.3: Man's total inability

Therefore all men are conceived in sin and are born as children of wrath, incapable of any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in sins, and slaves of sin.¹ And without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit² they neither will nor can return to God, reform their depraved nature, or prepare themselves for its reformation.

¹ Ephesians 2:1, 3; John 8:34; Romans 6:16–17.

² John 3:3–6; Titus 3:5.

Article 3.4: The inadequacy of the light of nature

To be sure, there is left in man after the fall, some light of nature, whereby he retains some notions about God,¹ about natural things, and about the difference between what is honourable and shameful, and shows some regard for virtue and outward order.² But so far is he from arriving at the saving knowledge of God and true conversion through this light of nature

that he does not even use it properly in natural and civil matters. Rather, whatever this light may be, man wholly pollutes it in various ways and suppresses it by his wickedness. In doing so, he renders himself without excuse before God.³

¹ Romans 1:19–20.

² Romans 2:14–15.

³ Romans 1:18, 20.

Article 3.5: The inadequacy of the law

What holds for the light of nature also applies to the Ten Commandments, given by God through Moses particularly to the Jews. For though it reveals the greatness of sin, and more and more convicts man of his guilt, yet it neither points out a remedy nor gives him power to rise out of this misery. Rather, weakened by the flesh, it leaves the transgressor under the curse. Man cannot, therefore, through the law obtain saving grace.¹

¹ Romans 3:19–20; 7:10, 13; 8:3; 2 Corinthians 3:6–7.

Article 3.6: The need for the Gospel

What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law can do, God performs by the power of the Holy Spirit through the word or ministry of reconciliation,¹ which is the gospel of the Messiah, by which it has pleased God to save men who believe,² both under the old and under the new dispensation.

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:18–19.

² 1 Corinthians 1:21.

Article 3.7: Why the Gospel is sent to some and not to others

Under the old dispensation God revealed this mystery of his will to few. Under the new dispensation, however, he took the distinction between the peoples away and revealed it to a larger number.¹ The cause of this distribution of the gospel is not to be ascribed to the worthiness of one people above another, nor to the better use of the light of nature, but to the sovereign good pleasure and undeserved love of God.² Therefore we to whom so great a grace is granted, beyond and contrary to all we deserve,

ought to acknowledge it with a humble and grateful heart.³ But as regards others to whom this grace is not given, we ought with the apostle to adore the severity and righteousness of the judgments of God⁴ but by no means inquisitively to pry into them.⁵

¹ Ephesians 1:9; 2:14; Colossians 3:11.

² Romans 2:11; Matthew 11:26.

³ Romans 11:22–23.

⁴ Revelation 16:7.

⁵ Deuteronomy 29:29.

Article 3.8: The earnest call by the Gospel

But as many as are called by the gospel are earnestly called,¹ for God earnestly and most sincerely reveals in his Word what is pleasing to him, namely, that those who are called should come to him.² He also earnestly promises rest for their souls and eternal life to all who come to him and believe.³

¹ Isaiah 55:1; Matthew 22:4.

² Revelation 22:17.

³ John 6:37; Matthew 11:28–29.

Article 3.9: Why some who are called do not come

It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of the Christ offered by the gospel, nor of God, who calls through the gospel and who even confers various gifts upon them, that many who are called through the ministry of the gospel do not come and are not converted. The fault lies in themselves.¹ Some of them do not care and do not accept the word of life. Others do indeed receive it, but they do not accept it into their hearts, and therefore, after the joy of a temporary faith has vanished, they turn away. Still others choke the seed of the word by the thorns of the cares and the pleasures of this world, and bring forth no fruit. This our Saviour teaches in the parable of the sower.²

¹ Matthew 11:20–24; 22:1–8; 23:37.

² Matthew 13:1–21.

Article 3.10: Why others who are called do come

Others who are called by the ministry of the gospel do come and are converted. This is not to be ascribed to man. He does not distinguish himself by his free will above others who are furnished with equal or sufficient grace for faith or conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains). It is to be ascribed to God.¹ He has chosen his own in Christ from eternity and calls them effectually within time. He gives them faith and repentance; he delivers them from the power of darkness and transfers them to the kingdom of his Son.² All this he does that they may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light,³ and may boast not of themselves but of the Lord,⁴ according to the testimony of the apostles in various places.

¹ Romans 9:16.

² Colossians 1:13; Galatians 1:4.

³ 1 Peter 2:9.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10:17; Ephesians 2:8–9.

Article 3.11: How God brings about conversion

God carries out his good pleasure in the elect and works in them true conversion in the following manner. He takes care that the gospel is preached to them, and powerfully enlightens their minds by the Holy Spirit, so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God.¹ By the efficacious working of the same regenerating Spirit he also penetrates into the innermost recesses of man.² He opens the closed and softens the hard heart,³ circumcises that which was uncircumcised, and instils new qualities into the will.⁴ He makes the will, which was dead, alive; which was bad, good; which was unwilling, willing; and which was stubborn, obedient.⁵ He moves and strengthens it so that, like a good tree, it may be able to produce the fruit of good works.⁶

¹ Hebrews 6:4–5; 1 Corinthians 2:10–14.

² Hebrews 4:12.

³ Acts 16:14.

⁴ Deuteronomy 30:6.

⁵ Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26.

⁶ Matthew 7:18.

Article 3.12: Regeneration is the work of God alone

This conversion is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, the making alive,¹ so highly spoken of in the Scriptures, which God works in us without our help. But this regeneration is by no means brought about only by outward teaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a mode of operation that, after God has done his part, it remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not regenerated, converted or not converted. It is, however, clearly a supernatural, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, marvellous, mysterious, and inexpressible work. According to Scripture, inspired by the Author of this work, regeneration is not inferior in power to creation or the raising of the dead.² Hence all those in whose hearts God works in this amazing way are certainly, unfailingly, and effectually regenerated and do actually believe.³ And then the will so renewed is not only acted upon and moved by God but, acted upon by God, the will itself also acts. Therefore man himself is rightly said to believe and repent through the grace he has received.

¹ John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 4:6; 5:17; Ephesians 5:14.

² John 5:25; Romans 4:17.

³ Philippians 2:13.

Article 3.13: Regeneration is incomprehensible

In this life believers cannot fully understand the way in which God does this work. Meanwhile, however, it is enough for them to know and experience that by this grace of God they believe with the heart and love their Saviour.¹

¹ John 3:18; Romans 10:9.

Article 3.14: How faith is a gift of God

Faith is therefore a gift of God,¹ not because it is merely offered by God to the free will of man, but because it is actually conferred on man, instilled and infused into him. Nor is it a gift in the sense that God confers only the power to believe and then awaits from man's free will the consent to believe or the act of believing. It is, however, a gift in the sense that he who works both to will and to work,² and indeed all things in all, brings about in man both the will to believe and the act of believing.

¹ Ephesians 2:8.

² Philippians 2:13.

Article 3.15: The proper attitude with respect to God's undeserved grace

This grace God owes to no one. For what could he owe to man? Who has given him first that he might be repaid?¹ What could God owe to one who has nothing of his own but sin and falsehood? He, therefore, who receives this grace owes and renders eternal thanks to God alone. He who does not receive this grace, however, either does not care at all for these spiritual things and is pleased with what he has, or in false security vainly boasts that he has what he does not have.² Further, about those who outwardly profess their faith and amend their lives we are to judge and speak in the most favourable way,³ according to the example of the apostles, for the inner recesses of the heart are unknown to us. As for those who have not yet been called, we should pray for them to God, who calls into existence the things that do not exist.⁴ But we must by no means act haughtily,⁵ as if we had distinguished ourselves from them.

¹ Romans 11:35.

² Amos 6:1; Jeremiah 7:4.

³ Romans 14:10.

⁴ Romans 4:17.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 4:7.

Article 3.16: Man's will not taken away but made alive

Man through his fall did not cease to be man, endowed with intellect and will; and sin, which has pervaded the whole human race, did not deprive man of his human nature, but brought upon him depravity and spiritual death.¹ So also this divine grace of regeneration does not act upon men as if they were blocks and stones and does not take away the will and its properties, or violently coerce it, but makes the will spiritually alive, heals it, corrects it, pleasantly and at the same time powerfully bends it.² As a result, where formerly the rebellion and resistance of the flesh fully dominated, now a prompt and sincere obedience of the Spirit begins to prevail, in which the true, spiritual renewal and freedom of our will consists. And if the wonderful Maker of all good did not deal with us in

this way, man would have no hope of rising from his fall through this free will, by which he, when he was still standing, plunged himself into ruin.

¹ Romans 8:2; Ephesians 2:1.

² Psalm 51:12; Philippians 2:13.

Article 3.17: The use of means

The almighty working of God whereby he brings forth and sustains this our natural life does not exclude but requires the use of means, by which he according to his infinite wisdom and goodness has willed to exercise his power.¹ So also the aforementioned supernatural working of God whereby he regenerates us,² in no way excludes or cancels the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul.³ For this reason the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them, reverently instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to his glory and to the abasement of all pride. In the meantime, however, they did not neglect to keep them, by the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline.⁴ So today those who give or receive instruction in the church should not dare to tempt God by separating what he in his good pleasure has willed to be closely joined together. For grace is conferred through admonitions,⁵ and the more readily we do our duty, the more this favour of God, who works in us, usually manifests itself in its lustre, and so his work best proceeds. To God alone, both for the means and for their saving fruit and efficacy, all glory is due throughout eternity.⁶ Amen.

¹ Isaiah 55:10–11; 1 Corinthians 1:21.

² James 1:18.

³ 1 Peter 1:23, 25; 2:2.

⁴ Acts 2:42; 2 Corinthians 5:11–21; 2 Timothy 4:2.

⁵ Romans 10:14–17.

⁶ Jude 24, 25.

Third and fourth heads of doctrine: rejection of errors

Having explained the true doctrine of the corruption of man and his conversion to God, Synod rejects the following errors:

Error 3.a: Properly speaking, it cannot be said that original sin as such is sufficient to condemn the whole human race or to deserve temporal and eternal punishment.

Refutation: This contradicts the words of the apostle when he declares: “Sin rentered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). And: “The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation” (Romans 5:16). Also: “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

Error 3.b: The spiritual gifts or the good qualities and virtues, such as goodness, holiness, righteousness, cannot have belonged to the will of man when he was first created, and therefore cannot have been separated from his will when he fell.

Refutation: This error is contrary to the description of the image of God which the apostle gives, when he connects it with righteousness and holiness, which undoubtedly belong to the will.¹

¹ Ephesians 4:24.

Error 3.c: In spiritual death the spiritual gifts are not separate from the will of man, since the will as such has never been corrupted but only hampered by the darkness of the mind and the unruliness of the passions. If these hindrances have been removed, the will can exert its full innate power. The will is of itself able to will and to choose, or else not to will and not to choose, all manner of good which may be presented to it.

Refutation: This is an innovation and an error, and tends to extol the powers of the free will, contrary to what the prophet Jeremiah states, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure” (Jeremiah 17:9). And the apostle Paul writes: “All of us also lived among them [the sons of disobedience] at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts” (Ephesians 2:3).

Error 3.d: The unregenerate man is not really or totally dead in sins, or deprived of all powers unto spiritual good. He can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit which is pleasing to God.

Refutation: These things are in conflict with the clear testimonies of Scripture: “You were dead in your transgressions and sins” (Ephesians 2:1, cf. 2:5). And “every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time” (Genesis 6:5; 8:21). Moreover, only the regenerate and those who are called blessed hunger and thirst after deliverance from misery and after life, and offer to God the sacrifice of a broken spirit.¹

¹ Psalm 51:19; Matthew 5:6.

Error 3.e: The corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (which for the followers of Arminius is the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, that is, the evangelical or saving grace, and salvation itself. In this way God on his part shows himself ready to reveal Christ to all men, since he administers to all sufficiently and efficaciously the means necessary for the knowledge of Christ, for faith and repentance.

Refutation: Not only the experience of all ages but also Scripture testifies that this is untrue. “He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws” (Psalm 147:19, 20). “In the past, he let all nations go their own way” (Acts 14:16). And Paul and his companions were “kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to” (Acts 16:6, 7).

Error 3.f: In the true conversion of man no new qualities, powers, or gifts can be infused by God into the will. Therefore faith, through which we are first converted and because of which we are called believers, is not a quality or gift infused by God but only an act of man. It cannot be called a gift except with respect to the power to attain to this faith.

Refutation: This teaching contradicts the Holy Scriptures, which declare that God infuses new qualities of faith, of obedience, and of the consciousness of his love into our hearts: “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33). And: “I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground” (Isaiah 44:3). And: “God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:5). This also conflicts with the constant practice of

the church, which prays by the mouth of the prophet: “Restore me, and I will return, because you are the Lord my God” (Jeremiah 31:18).

Error 3.g: The grace whereby we are converted to God is only a gentle advising. This manner of working which consists in advising is the most noble manner in the conversion of man and is most in harmony with man’s nature. There is no reason why this advising grace alone should not be sufficient to make the natural man spiritual. Indeed, God does not bring about the consent of the will except through this moral persuasion. The power of the divine working surpasses the working of Satan, in that God promises eternal while Satan promises only temporal goods.

Refutation: This is entirely Pelagian and contrary to the whole Scripture, which teaches beyond this moral persuasion yet another, far more powerful and divine manner of the working of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of man: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

Error 3.h: In regenerating man God does not use the powers of his omnipotence so as to forcefully and unfailingly bend man’s will to faith and conversion. Even if all the works of grace have been accomplished which God employs to convert man and even if God intends his regeneration and wills to regenerate him, man may yet so resist God and the Holy Spirit, and indeed often does so resist, that he entirely prevents his regeneration. It therefore remains in man’s power to be regenerated or not.

Refutation: This is nothing less than the denial of all the efficacy of God’s grace in our conversion, and the subjecting of the working of Almighty God to the will of man. It is contrary to the apostles, who teach “his incomparably great power for us who believe” (Ephesians 1:19); who pray that our God “by his power [may] fulfil every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith” (2 Thessalonians 1:11), and who declare that “his divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3).

Error 3.i: Grace and free will are partial causes which together work the beginning of conversion. In the order of these causes grace does not precede the working of the will. God does not effectually help the will of

man to come to conversion until the will of man moves itself and determines to do this.

Refutation: The early church long ago condemned this doctrine of the Pelagians according to the words of the apostle: “It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy” (Romans 9:16). Also: “For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). And: “It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13).

Fifth head of doctrine: the perseverance of the saints

Article 5.1: The regenerate not free from indwelling sin

Those whom God according to his purpose calls into the fellowship of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by his Holy Spirit, he certainly sets free from the dominion and slavery of sin,¹ but not entirely in this life from the flesh and the body of sin.²

¹ John 8:34; Romans 6:17.

² Romans 7:21–24.

Article 5.2: Daily sins of weakness

Therefore daily sins of weakness spring up and defects cling to even the best works of the saints.¹ These are for them a constant reason to humble themselves before God, to flee to the crucified Christ, to put the flesh to death more and more through the Spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of godliness,² and to long and strive for the goal of perfection until at last,³ delivered from this body of death, they reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.⁴

¹ 1 John 1:8.

² Colossians 3:5.

³ 1 Timothy 4:7; Philippians 3:12, 14.

⁴ Revelation 5:6, 10.

Article 5.3: God preserves his own

Because of these remnants of indwelling sin and also because of the temptations of the world and of Satan, those who have been converted could not remain standing in that grace if left to their own strength.¹ But God is faithful, who mercifully confirms them in the grace once conferred upon them and powerfully preserves them in that grace to the end.²

¹ Romans 7:20.

² 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Peter 1:5.

Article 5.4: Saints may fall into serious sins

Although the power of God whereby he confirms and preserves true believers in grace is so great¹ that it cannot be conquered by the flesh, yet the converted are not always so led and moved by God that they cannot in certain particular actions turn aside through their own fault from the guidance of grace and be seduced by and yield to the lusts of the flesh. They must therefore constantly watch and pray that they may not be led into temptation.² When they do not watch and pray,³ they not only can be drawn away by the flesh, the world, and Satan into serious and atrocious sins, but with the righteous permission of God are sometimes actually drawn away. The lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints, described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates this.⁴

¹ Ephesians 1:19.

² Matthew 26:41.

³ 1 Thessalonians 5:6, 17.

⁴ 2 Samuel 11; Matthew 26.

Article 5.5: The effects of such serious sins

By such gross sins, however, they greatly offend God, incur the guilt of death, grieve the Holy Spirit, suspend the exercise of faith, severely wound their consciences, and sometimes for a while lose the sense of God's favour¹—until they return to the right way through sincere repentance and God's fatherly face again shines upon them.²

¹ 2 Samuel 12; Ephesians 4:30.

² Psalm 32:3–5; Numbers 6:25.

Article 5.6: God will not permit his elect to be lost

For God, who is rich in mercy,¹ according to the unchangeable purpose of his election,² does not completely withdraw his Holy Spirit from his own even in their deplorable fall.³ Neither does he permit them to sink so deep that they fall away from the grace of adoption and the state of justification,⁴ or commit the sin unto death⁵ or the sin against the Holy Spirit⁶ and, totally deserted by him, plunge themselves into eternal ruin.

¹ Ephesians 2:4, 5.

² Ephesians 1:11.

³ Psalm 51:13.

⁴ Galatians 4:5.

⁵ 1 John 5:16–18.

⁶ Matthew 12:31–32.

Article 5.7: God will again renew his elect to repentance

For in the first place, in their fall, he preserves in them his imperishable seed of regeneration, so that it does not perish and is not cast out.¹ Further, through his Word and Spirit he certainly and effectually renews them to repentance.² As a result they grieve from the heart with a godly sorrow for the sins they have committed;³ they seek and obtain through faith with a contrite heart forgiveness in the blood of the mediator; they again experience the favour of a reconciled God and adore his mercies and faithfulness.⁴ And from now on they more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.⁵

¹ 1 Peter 1:23.

² 1 John 3:9.

³ 2 Corinthians 7:10.

⁴ Psalm 32:5; 51:19.

⁵ Philippians 2:12.

Article 5.8: The grace of the triune God preserves

So it is not through their own merits or strength but through the undeserved mercy of God that they neither totally fall away from faith and grace nor remain in their downfall and are finally lost. With respect to themselves this could not only easily happen but would undoubtedly happen. But with respect to God this cannot possibly happen, since his

counsel cannot be changed,¹ his promise cannot fail, the calling according to his purpose cannot be revoked,² the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ cannot be nullified,³ and the sealing of the Holy Spirit can neither be frustrated nor destroyed.⁴

¹ Psalm 33:11.

² Hebrews 6:17; Romans 8:30, 34; 9:11.

³ Luke 22:32.

⁴ Ephesians 1:13.

Article 5.9: The assurance of this preservation

Believers themselves can be certain of this preservation of the elect to salvation and the perseverance of true believers in the faith.¹ And they are indeed certain according to the measure of their faith,² by which they firmly believe that they are and always shall remain true and living members of the church, and that they have forgiveness of sins and life eternal.³

¹ Romans 8:31–39.

² 2 Timothy 4:8.

³ 2 Timothy 4:18.

Article 5.10: The source of this assurance

This assurance is not produced by a certain private revelation besides or outside the Word, but by faith in the promises of God, which he has most abundantly revealed in his Word for our comfort; by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God;¹ and, finally, by the serious and holy pursuit of a clear conscience² and of good works. And if the elect of God did not have in this world the solid comfort of obtaining the victory³ and this unfailing pledge of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.⁴

¹ Romans 8:16–17; 1 John 3:1–2.

² Acts 24:16.

³ Romans 8:37.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:19.

Article 5.11: This assurance not always felt

Scripture meanwhile testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various doubts of the flesh and, placed under severe temptation, do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of perseverance. But God, the Father of all comfort,¹ will not let them be tempted beyond their strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, and by the Holy Spirit will again revive in them the certainty of perseverance.²

¹ 2 Corinthians 1:3.

² 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Article 5.12: This assurance is an incentive to godliness

This certainty of perseverance, however, so far from making true believers proud and complacent, is rather the true root of humility, childlike reverence,¹ genuine godliness, endurance in every struggle, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering and in the confession of the truth, and lasting joy in God.² Further, the consideration of this benefit is for them an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works,³ as is evident from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

¹ Romans 12:1.

² Psalm 56:12–13.

³ Psalm 116:12; Titus 2:11–14; 1 John 3:3.

Article 5.13: This assurance does not lead to carelessness

Neither does this renewed confidence produce carelessness or neglect of godliness in those who have been restored after their fall;¹ rather, it produces in them a much greater concern to observe carefully the ways of the Lord, which he prepared beforehand.² They observe these ways in order that by walking in them they may retain the certainty of their perseverance. Then shall the face of their gracious God not turn away from them again³ because of their abuse of his fatherly goodness, with the result that they would fall into still greater anguish of spirit. Indeed, to those who fear God the contemplation of his face is sweeter than life, but its withdrawal is more bitter than death.⁴

¹ 2 Corinthians 7:10.

² Ephesians 2:10.

³ Psalm 63:4; Isaiah 64:7.

⁴ Jeremiah 33:5.

Article 5.14: The use of means in perseverance

Just as it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the preaching of the gospel, so he maintains, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of his Word,¹ by meditation on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises,² and by the use of the sacraments.³

¹ Deuteronomy 6:20–25.

² 2 Timothy 3:16–17.

³ Acts 2:42.

Article 5.15: This doctrine is hated by Satan but loved by the church

This doctrine of the perseverance of true believers and saints, and of their assurance of it,¹ God has most abundantly revealed in his Word for the glory of his name and for the consolation of the godly, and he impresses it on the hearts of believers. It is something which the flesh does not understand, Satan hates, the world ridicules, the ignorant and the hypocrites abuse, and the heretics attack. The bride of Christ, on the other hand, has always loved this doctrine most tenderly and defended it steadfastly as a treasure of inestimable value;² and God, against whom no counsel can avail and no strength can prevail,³ shall see to it that she will continue to do so. To this God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and glory forever.⁴ Amen.

¹ Revelation 14:12.

² Ephesians 5:32.

³ Psalm 33:10–11.

⁴ 1 Peter 5:10–11.

Fifth head of doctrine: rejection of errors

Having explained the true doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, Synod rejects the following errors:

Error 5.a: The perseverance of true believers is not a fruit of election or a gift of God obtained by the death of Christ, but a condition of the new covenant, which man before his so-called decisive election and justification must fulfil through his free will.

Refutation: Holy Scripture testifies that perseverance follows from election and is given to the elect by virtue of the death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ: “The elect [obtained it]. The others were hardened” (Romans 11:7). Also: “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Romans 8:32–35).

Error 5.b: God does indeed provide the believer with sufficient strength to persevere, and is ready to preserve this in him if he will do his duty. But even with all those things in place which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God will use to preserve faith, it still always depends on the decision of man’s will whether he will persevere or not.

Refutation: This idea contains outright Pelagianism. While it wants to make men free, it makes them robbers of God’s honour. It conflicts with the consistent teaching of the gospel, which takes from man all cause for boasting, and ascribes all the praise for this benefit to the grace of God alone. It is also contrary to the testimony of the apostle: it is God who “will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:8).

Error 5.c: True regenerate believers not only can fall completely and definitely from justifying faith and also from grace and salvation, but indeed they often do fall from them and are lost forever.

Refutation: This opinion nullifies the grace of justification and regeneration and the continuous preservation by Christ, contrary to the clear words of the apostle Paul: “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!” (Romans 5:8, 9) And contrary to the apostle John: “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed

remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God” (1 John 3:9), and also to the words of Jesus Christ: “I give them eternal life, 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).

Error 5.d: True regenerate believers can commit the sin that leads to death or the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Refutation: The same apostle John, after speaking of those who commit the sin that leads to death and forbidding prayer for them, immediately adds: “We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin” (namely, with that kind of sin); “the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him” (1 John 5:18).

Error 5.e: Without a special revelation we can have no certainty of future perseverance in this life.

Refutation: By this doctrine the sure comfort of true believers in this life is taken away, and the doubting of the followers of the pope is again introduced into the church. The Holy Scriptures, however, always deduce this assurance, not from a special and extraordinary revelation, but from the marks peculiar to the children of God and from the very constant promises of God. So especially the apostle Paul declares that nothing in all creation “will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39). And John writes: “Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us” (1 John 3:24).

Error 5.f: By its very nature the doctrine of the certainty of perseverance and salvation causes false security and is harmful to godliness, good morals, prayers, and other holy exercises. On the contrary, it is praiseworthy to doubt.

Refutation: This error ignores the effective power of God’s grace and the working of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. It contradicts the apostle John, who teaches the opposite with these clear words: “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, 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). Furthermore, it is refuted by the example of the saints in both the Old and the New Testaments who, although they were certain of their perseverance and salvation, nevertheless continued in prayer and other exercises of godliness.

Error 5.g: The faith of those who believe for a time does not differ from justifying and saving faith except with respect to its duration.

Refutation: In Matthew 13:20–23 and Luke 8:13–15 Christ himself clearly indicates, besides this duration, a threefold difference between those who believe only for a time and true believers. He declares that the former receive the seed on rocky ground, but the latter in good soil, or in a good heart; that the former are without root, but the latter have a firm root; and that the former are without fruit, but the latter bring forth fruit in varying measure, constantly and steadfastly.

Error 5.h: It is not absurd that one, having lost his first regeneration, is again and even often born anew.

Refutation: This doctrine denies that the seed of God, by which we are born again, is imperishable, contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: “You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable” (1 Peter 1:23).

Error 5.i: Christ did not pray anywhere that believers should unfailingly continue in faith.

Refutation: This contradicts Christ himself, who says: “I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail” (Luke 22:32). It also contradicts the apostle John, who declares that Christ did not pray only for the apostles, but also for all who would believe through their word: “Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, and, My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one” (John 17:11, 15, cf. 17:20).

Conclusion

This is the clear, simple, and straightforward explanation of the orthodox doctrine with respect to the five articles in dispute in the Netherlands, as well as the rejection of the errors by which the churches have for some

time been disturbed. The Synod judges this explanation and rejection to be taken from the Word of God and to be in agreement with the confessions of the Reformed churches. Hence it clearly appears that some have acted very improperly and against all truth, fairness, and love in wishing to persuade the public of the following:

1. The doctrine of the Reformed churches concerning predestination and related subjects, by its very character and tendency, turns the hearts of men away from all godliness and religion.
2. It is an opiate for the flesh administered by the devil, and a stronghold of Satan, where he lies in wait for all, wounds multitudes, and mortally pierces many with the darts both of despair and false security.
3. It makes God the author of sin, an unjust tyrant and hypocrite; and is nothing more than a renewed Stoicism, Manichaeism, Libertinism, and Mohammedanism.
4. It leads to sinful carelessness, since it makes people believe that nothing can prevent the salvation of the elect, no matter how they live, and that, therefore, they may safely commit the most atrocious crimes. On the other hand, it would not in the least contribute to the salvation of the reprobate, even if they had performed all the works of the saints.
5. It teaches that God has predestined and created the greatest part of the world for eternal damnation by a mere arbitrary act of his will, without taking into account any sin.
6. It teaches 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.
7. It teaches that many innocent children of believers are torn from their mothers' breasts and tyrannically thrown 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 help to them.

And there are many more teachings of this kind which the Reformed churches not only do not confess but even detest wholeheartedly.

Therefore, this Synod of Dort adjures, in the name of the Lord, all who piously call upon our Saviour Jesus Christ not to judge the faith of the Reformed churches from the slander gathered from here and there. Neither

are they to judge from personal statements of some ancient or modern teachers, often quoted in bad faith, or taken out of context and explained contrary to their meaning. But one ought to judge the faith of the Reformed churches from the public confessions of these churches themselves and from the present explanation of the orthodox doctrine, confirmed by the unanimous consent of the members of the entire Synod, one and all.

Moreover, the Synod warns the slanderers themselves to consider how severe a judgment of God awaits those who bear false witness against so many churches and their confessions, disturb the consciences of the weak, and try to make many suspicious of the community of true believers.

Finally, this Synod exhorts all fellow ministers in the gospel of Christ to conduct themselves in a God-fearing and reverent manner when they deal with this doctrine in schools and churches. In teaching it, both in speaking and writing, they ought to seek the glory of God's name, the holiness of life, and the consolation of afflicted souls. Their thinking and speaking about this doctrine should be in agreement with Scripture according to the analogy of faith. And they must refrain from all those expressions which exceed the prescribed limits of the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures and which may provide shameless sophists with a good opportunity to scoff at the doctrine of the Reformed churches, or even to slander it.

May Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is seated at the Father's right hand and gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth, lead to the truth those who err, silence the slanderers of the sound doctrine, and equip the faithful ministers of his Word with the Spirit of wisdom and discretion, that everything they say may tend to the glory of God and the building up of those who hear them. Amen.

Introduction to the Westminster Confession of Faith

In 1643, during a period of civil war, the English “Long Parliament”, under the control of Presbyterian Puritans, convened an Assembly of Divines at Westminster Abbey in London. Their task was to advise Parliament on how to bring the Church of England into greater conformity with the Church of Scotland and the Continental Reformed Churches.¹ Shortly after beginning this work the Assembly adopted *The Solemn League and Covenant* to reform religion “according to the Word of God, and the example of the best Reformed Churches”. Parliament then directed the Assembly to “consider among themselves of such a discipline and government as may be most agreeable to God’s holy Word.”

The Assembly was made up mostly of English Puritan ministers, but included six influential Scottish commissioners who were appointed to consult and deliberate but not to vote. The total number appointed to the Assembly was 151 but usually 60 to 80 were in regular attendance. These men were the finest representatives of the church of that age, men with considerable ability, learning and godliness. Their meetings began on the 1st of July 1643 and continued until the 22nd of February 1649 in 1163 sessions. They produced the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), a Directory of Worship, a Larger Catechism and a Shorter Catechism. These documents were formulated “through a process of committee work in the afternoons, followed by plenary discussion on the floor of the Assembly in the mornings, with regular additional gatherings for worship and fast days”.²

The Assembly was often delayed by controversy with the Independent and Erastian members, but despite this, it “produced one of the truly monumental documents of church history, which has instructed, directed, and profoundly influenced Presbyterian churches worldwide ever since.”³ Reformed and Presbyterian churches in many countries have adopted the Confession and the Catechisms as their standards of doctrine, subordinate to the Bible.⁴ “While the Confession was composed by disciplined theological minds it displays the influence of men with deep pastoral and

preaching experience. It is an outstanding expression of classical Reformed theology framed for the needs of the people of God.”⁵

The text in parallel with the WCF is the Modern English Study Version (MESV). This was prepared over a number of years by the joint efforts of three Reformed and Presbyterian denominations. It was then extensively revised by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and approved by the 60th General Assembly of the OPC in 1993. It is the OPC text that appears here. The MESV does not have any constitutional authority in the OPC and it does not take the place of the 1647 WCF in its form adopted by the OPC in 1956. The 2011 Synod of the RCNZ agreed to “retain the Westminster Confession of Faith as our confessional standard to which all office bearers must subscribe and that we allow the MESV in the preaching and teaching of our churches.”⁶

¹ *The Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church with Proof Texts*, Published by the Committee on Christian Education of the OPC, 2005, p. vii.

² Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair Ferguson, *Reformed Confessions Harmonized*, Baker Books, 1999, p. xii.

³ Ibid.

⁴ This edition of WCF does not include the Scripture proofs but these can be found in the editions referred to in footnotes 1 and 2, and in many other publications of the WCF.

⁵ Joel R. Beeke and Sinclair Ferguson, *Reformed Confessions Harmonized*, Baker Books, 1999, p. xii.

⁶ *The Acts of Synod of the RCNZ, 2011*, Art. 67.6

WCF

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Chapter 1 – Of the Holy Scripture

to MESV

1. Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.

2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these:

Of the Old Testament:

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth
I Samuel
II Samuel
I Kings

II Kings
I Chronicles
II Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
The Song of Songs
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

Of the New Testament:

The Gospels according to
 Matthew
 Mark
 Luke
 John
The Acts of the Apostles
Paul's Epistles to
 the Romans
 the Corinthians I

the Corinthians II
the Galatians
the Ephesians
the Philippians
the Colossians
the Thessalonians I
the Thessalonians II
Timothy I
Timothy II
Titus
Philemon
The Epistle to the Hebrews
The Epistle of James
The first and second Epistles of Peter
The first, second, and third Epistles of John
The Epistle of Jude
The Revelation of John

All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.

3. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings.

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

7. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, by his singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as, in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them. But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner; and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope.

9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

10. The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose

sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

Chapter 2 – Of God, and of the Holy Trinity.

to MESV

1. There is but one only, living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; and withal, most just, and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

2. God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever himself pleaseth. In his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent, or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them.

3. In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

Chapter 3 – Of God's eternal decree

to MESV

1. God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to

the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

2. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death.

4. These angels and men, thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen, in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

7. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.

8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men, attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of

humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

Chapter 4 – Of creation

to MESV

1. It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good.

2. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it: and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change. Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.

Chapter 5 – Of providence

to MESV

1. God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

2. Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.

3. God, in his ordinary providence, maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure.

4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a

bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave, for a season, his own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.

6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous Judge, for former sins, doth blind and harden, from them he not only withholdeth his grace whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasions of sin; and, withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.

7. As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures; so, after a most special manner, it taketh care of his church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof.

Chapter 6 – Of the fall of man, of sin, and of the punishment thereof

to
MESV

1. Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.

2. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.

3. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.
4. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.
5. This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be, through Christ, pardoned, and mortified; yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin.
6. Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal.

Chapter 7 – Of God’s covenant with man

to MESV

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God’s part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.
2. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.
3. Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.
4. This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in Scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the Testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed.

5. This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the old testament.

6. Under the gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper: which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet, in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the new testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.

Chapter 8 – Of Christ the mediator

to MESV

1. It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Head and Saviour of his church, the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world: unto whom he did from all eternity give a people, to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

2. The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.

3. The Lord Jesus, in his human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified, and anointed with the Holy Spirit, above measure, having in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell; to the end that, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, he might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a mediator, and surety. Which office he took not unto himself, but was thereunto called by his Father, who put all power and judgment into his hand, and gave him commandment to execute the same.

4. This office the Lord Jesus did most willingly undertake; which that he might discharge, he was made under the law, and did perfectly fulfil it; endured most grievous torments immediately in his soul, and most painful sufferings in his body; was crucified, and died, was buried, and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption. On the third day he arose from the dead, with the same body in which he suffered, with which also he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of his Father, making intercession, and shall return, to judge men and angels, at the end of the world.

5. The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience, and sacrifice of himself, which he, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.

6. Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof were communicated unto the elect, in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices, wherein he was revealed, and signified to be the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head; and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world; being yesterday and today the same, and forever.

7. Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature.

8. To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; making intercession for them, and revealing unto them, in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation; effectually persuading them by his Spirit to believe

and obey, and governing their hearts by his Word and Spirit; overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, in such manner, and ways, as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation.

Chapter 9 – Of free will

to MESV

1. God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good, or evil.
2. Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom, and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but yet, mutably, so that he might fall from it.
3. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.
4. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin; and, by his grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so, as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.
5. The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to good alone, in the state of glory only.

Chapter 10 – Of effectual calling

to MESV

1. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and

effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

3. Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth: so also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.

4. Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the laws of that religion they do profess. And, to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.

Chapter 11 – Of justification

to MESV

1. Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness, by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.

2. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love.

3. Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, inasmuch as he was

given by the Father for them; and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead; and both, freely, not for anything in them; their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.

4. God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did, in the fullness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth, in due time, actually apply Christ unto them.

5. God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and, although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.

6. The justification of believers under the old testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the new testament.

[Chapter 12 – Of adoption](#)

[to MESV](#)

1. All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have his name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him, as by a father: yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.

[Chapter 13 – Of sanctification](#)

[to MESV](#)

1. They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all

saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

2. This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

3. In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Chapter 14 – Of saving faith

to MESV

1. The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.

2. By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

3. This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed, and weakened, but gets the victory: growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance, through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.

Chapter 15 – Of repentance unto life

to MESV

1. Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in

Christ.

2. By it, a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature, and righteous law of God; and upon the apprehension of his mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavouring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments.

3. Although repentance be not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ; yet it is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.

4. As there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation; so there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent.

5. Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man's duty to endeavour to repent of his particular sins, particularly.

6. As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof; upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy; so, he that scandaliseth his brother, or the church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended, who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him.

[Chapter 16 – Of good works](#)

[to MESV](#)

1. Good works are only such as God hath commanded in his holy Word, and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention.

2. These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life.

3. Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And that they may be enabled thereunto, beside the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will, and to do, of his good pleasure: yet are they not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty unless upon a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.

4. They who, in their obedience, attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate, and to do more than God requires, as that they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do.

5. We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come; and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom, by them, we can neither profit, nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins, but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants: and because, as they are good, they proceed from his Spirit; and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

6. Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unreprovable in God's sight; but that he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.

7. Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things which God commands; and of good use both to themselves and others: yet, because they proceed not from an heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word; nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God: and yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God.

1. They, whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.
2. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.
3. Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalise others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

Chapter 18 – Of the assurance of grace and salvation

to MESV

1. Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favour of God, and estate of salvation (which hope of theirs shall perish): yet such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before him, may, in this life, be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.
2. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.
3. This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties

before he be partaker of it: yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance; so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as, by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light: yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may, in due time, be revived; and by the which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.

Chapter 19 – Of the law of God

to MESV

1. God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.

2. This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables: the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man.

3. Beside this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly, holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the new testament.

4. To them also, as a body politic, he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging any other now, further than the general equity thereof may require.

5. The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that, not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Neither doth Christ, in the gospel, any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.

6. Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified, or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof: although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works. So as, a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law; and, not under grace.

7. Neither are the forementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but do sweetly comply with it; the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely, and cheerfully, which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done.

[Chapter 20 – Of Christian liberty, and liberty of conscience](#) [to MESV](#)

1. The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law; and, in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin; from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting

damnation; as also, in their free access to God, and their yielding obedience unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a childlike love and willing mind. All which were common also to believers under the law. But, under the new testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected; and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of.

2. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

3. They who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, do practice any sin, or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty, which is, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

4. And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another, they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And, for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity (whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation), or to the power of godliness; or, such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church, they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against, by the censures of the church.

1. The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

2. Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and to him alone; not to angels, saints, or any other creature: and, since the fall, not without a mediator; nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone.

3. Prayer, with thanksgiving, being one special part of religious worship, is by God required of all men: and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of his Spirit, according to his will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance; and, if vocal, in a known tongue.

4. Prayer is to be made for things lawful; and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter: but not for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death.

5. The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence, singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ, are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God: beside religious oaths, vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in an holy and religious manner.

6. Neither prayer, nor any other part of religious worship, is now, under the gospel, either tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed: but God is to be worshipped everywhere, in spirit and truth; as, in private families daily, and in secret, each one by himself; so, more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or wilfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God, by his Word or providence, calleth thereunto.

7. As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.

8. This Sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

Chapter 22 – Of lawful oaths and vows

to MESV

1. A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, wherein, upon just occasion, the person swearing solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth, or promiseth, and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he sweareth.

2. The name of God only is that by which men ought to swear, and therein it is to be used with all holy fear and reverence. Therefore, to swear vainly, or rashly, by that glorious and dreadful Name; or, to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful, and to be abhorred. Yet, as in matters of weight and moment, an oath is warranted by the Word of God, under the new testament as well as under the old; so a lawful oath, being imposed by lawful authority, in such matters, ought to be taken.

3. Whosoever taketh an oath ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and therein to avouch nothing but what he is fully persuaded is the truth: neither may any man bind himself by oath to anything but what is good and just, and what he believeth so to be, and what he is able and resolved to perform.

4. An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation, or mental reservation. It cannot oblige to sin; but in anything not sinful, being taken, it binds to performance, although to a

man's own hurt. Nor is it to be violated, although made to heretics, or infidels.

5. A vow is of the like nature with a promissory oath, and ought to be made with the like religious care, and to be performed with the like faithfulness.

6. It is not to be made to any creature, but to God alone: and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made voluntarily, out of faith, and conscience of duty, in way of thankfulness for mercy received, or for the obtaining of what we want, whereby we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties; or, to other things, so far and so long as they may fitly conduce thereunto.

7. No man may vow to do anything forbidden in the Word of God, or what would hinder any duty therein commanded, or which is not in his own power, and for the performance whereof he hath no promise of ability from God. In which respects, popish monastical vows of perpetual single life, professed poverty, and regular obedience, are so far from being degrees of higher perfection, that they are superstitious and sinful snares, in which no Christian may entangle himself.

Chapter 23 – Of the civil magistrate

to MESV

1. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates, to be, under him, over the people, for his own glory, and the public good: and, to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evildoers.

2. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto: in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth; so, for that end, they may lawfully, now under the new testament, wage war, upon just and necessary occasion.

3. Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments; or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians

above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, let, or hinder, the due exercise thereof, among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person be suffered, either upon pretence of religion or of infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever: and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance.

4. It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honour their persons, to pay them tribute or other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience' sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted, much less hath the pope any power and jurisdiction over them in their dominions, or over any of their people; and, least of all, to deprive them of their dominions, or lives, if he shall judge them to be heretics, or upon any other pretence whatsoever.

Chapter 24 – Of marriage and divorce

to MESV

1. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time.

2. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with legitimate issue, and of the church with an holy seed; and for preventing of uncleanness.

3. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. And therefore such as profess the true reformed religion should not marry with infidels, papists, or other idolaters: neither should such as are godly be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresies.

4. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden by the Word. Nor can such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful by any law of man or consent of parties, so as those persons may live together as man and wife.

5. Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce: and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.

6. Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage: yet, nothing but adultery, or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage: wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills, and discretion, in their own case.

Chapter 25 – Of the church

to MESV

1. The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

2. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

3. Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.

4. This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced,

ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.

5. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth, to worship God according to his will.

6. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof.

Chapter 26 – Of the communion of saints

to MESV

1. All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

2. Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

3. This communion which the saints have with Christ, doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of his Godhead; or to be equal with Christ in any respect: either of which to affirm is impious and blasphemous. Nor doth their communion one with another, as saints, take away, or infringe the title or propriety which each man hath in his goods and possessions.

Chapter 27 – Of the sacraments

to MESV

1. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ, and his benefits; and to confirm our interest in him: as also, to put a visible difference between

those that belong unto the church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word.

2. There is, in every sacrament, a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified: whence it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.

3. The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it: but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorising the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.

4. There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, baptism, and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any, but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained.

5. The sacraments of the old testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were, for substance, the same with those of the new.

Chapter 28 – Of baptism

to MESV

1. Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptised into the visible church; but also, to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. Which sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his church until the end of the world.

2. The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, wherewith the party is to be baptised, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, by a minister of the gospel, lawfully called thereunto.

3. Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon the person.

4. Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be

baptised.

5. Although it be a great sin to condemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it; or, that all that are baptised are undoubtedly regenerated.

6. The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time.

7. The sacrament of baptism is but once to be administered unto any person.

Chapter 29 – Of the Lord's Supper

to MESV

1. Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, to be observed in his church, unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death; the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto him; and, to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body.

2. In this sacrament, Christ is not offered up to his Father; nor any real sacrifice made at all, for remission of sins of the quick or dead; but only a commemoration of that one offering up of himself, by himself, upon the cross, once for all: and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God, for the same: so that the popish sacrifice of the mass (as they call it) is most abominably injurious to Christ's one, only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of his elect.

3. The Lord Jesus hath, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people; to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use; and to take and break the bread, to take the cup, and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants; but to none who are not then present in the congregation.

4. Private masses, or receiving this sacrament by a priest, or any other, alone; as likewise, the denial of the cup to the people, worshipping the elements, the lifting them up, or carrying them about, for adoration, and the reserving them for any pretended religious use; are all contrary to the nature of this sacrament, and to the institution of Christ.

5. The outward elements in this sacrament, duly set apart to the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to him crucified, as that, truly, yet sacramentally only, they are sometimes called by the name of the things they represent, to wit, the body and blood of Christ; albeit, in substance and nature, they still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before.

6. That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine, into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant, not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense, and reason; overthroweth the nature of the sacrament, and hath been, and is, the cause of manifold superstitions; yea, of gross idolatries.

7. Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.

8. Although ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament; yet, they receive not the thing signified thereby; but, by their unworthy coming thereunto, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation. Wherefore, all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table; and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.

[Chapter 30 – Of church censures](#)

[to MESV](#)

1. The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his church, hath therein appointed a government, in the hand of church officers, distinct from the civil

magistrate.

2. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed; by virtue whereof, they have power, respectively, to retain, and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word, and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners, by the ministry of the gospel; and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.

3. Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren, for deterring of others from the like offences, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer his covenant, and the seals thereof, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

4. For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the church are to proceed by admonition; suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season; and by excommunication from the church; according to the nature of the crime, and demerit of the person.

Chapter 31 – Of synods and councils

to MESV

1. For the better government, and further edification of the church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils: and it belongeth to the overseers and other rulers of the particular churches, by virtue of their office, and the power which Christ hath given them for edification and not for destruction, to appoint such assemblies; and to convene together in them, as often as they shall judge it expedient for the good of the church.

2. It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in his Word.

3. All synods or councils, since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both.

4. Synods and councils are to handle, or conclude nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or, by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate.

Chapter 32 – Of the state of men after death, and of the resurrection of the dead

to
MESV

1. The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Besides these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

2. At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls forever.

3. The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonour: the bodies of the just, by his Spirit, unto honour; and be made conformable to his own glorious body.

Chapter 33 – Of the last judgment

to MESV

1. God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world, in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds;

and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

2. The end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord; but the wicked who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

3. As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin; and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity: so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may be ever prepared to say, Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.

MESV

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Chapter 1 – The Holy Scripture

to WCF

1. Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, to such an extent that men are without excuse, yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will which is necessary for salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at various times and in diverse ways, to reveal himself and to declare his will to his church; and afterward—for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and of the world—to commit this revelation wholly to writing. Therefore the Holy Scripture is most necessary, God's former ways of revealing his will to his people having ceased.

2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the written Word of God, are all the books of the Old and New Testaments, namely:

The Old Testament

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

1 Samuel

2 Samuel

1 Kings

2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
The Song of Songs
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi

The New Testament

The Gospels according to
 Matthew
 Mark
 Luke
 John
The Acts of the Apostles
The Epistles of Paul:
 Romans
 1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon
The Epistle to the Hebrews
The Epistle of James
The first and second Epistles of Peter
The first, second, and third Epistles of John
The Epistle of Jude
The Revelation

All these are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.

3. The books commonly called the Apocrypha, because they are not divinely inspired, are not part of the canon of Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the church of God and are not to be approved, or made use of, in any manner different from other human writings.

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, because of which it ought to be believed and obeyed, does not depend upon the testimony of any man or church, but entirely upon God, its author (who is truth itself); therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to a high and reverent esteem for the Holy Scripture. The heavenly character of its content, the efficacy of its doctrine, the majesty of its style, the agreement of all its parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full disclosure it makes of the only way of man's salvation, its many other incomparable excellencies, and its entire perfection, are arguments by which it gives abundant evidence that it is the Word of God. Nevertheless, our full persuasion and assurance of its infallible truth and divine authority is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory and man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly stated in Scripture or by good and necessary inference may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or by traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word. We also acknowledge that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and the government of the church—circumstances common to human activities and societies—which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

7. Not all things in Scripture are equally plain in themselves or equally clear to all; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly stated and explained in one place or another in Scripture, that not only the educated but also the uneducated may gain a sufficient understanding of them by a proper use of the ordinary means.

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old) and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time it was written was the language most generally known to the nations), being directly inspired by God and by his unique care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authoritative, so that in all controversies of religion the church is finally to appeal to them. But, because these original languages are not understood by all the people of God, who have a right to, and a vital interest in, the Scriptures and are commanded to read and search them in the fear of God, therefore the Scriptures are to be translated into the common language of every nation to which they come; so that, the Word of God dwelling abundantly in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner and by perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures may have hope.

9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself. Therefore, when there is a question about the true and full meaning of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), that meaning must be searched out and ascertained by other places that speak more clearly.

10. The supreme judge by whom all controversies of religion are to be settled and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and claims to private revelations are to be examined, can be only the

Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture. With his decision we are to be satisfied.

Chapter 2 – God and the Holy Trinity

to WCF

1. There is only one living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection. He is a most pure spirit, invisible, with neither body, parts, nor passive properties. He is unchangeable, boundless, eternal, and incomprehensible. He is almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, and most absolute. He works all things according to the counsel of his own unchangeable and most righteous will, for his own glory. He is most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him. He is also most just and terrifying in his judgments, hating all sin, and will by no means acquit the guilty.

2. God has all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness in and of himself. He alone is all-sufficient, in and to himself, not standing in need of any creatures which he has made, nor deriving any glory from them, but rather manifesting his own glory in, by, to, and on them. He alone is the fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things. He has absolute sovereignty over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatever he pleases. In his sight all things are open and manifest; his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent of his creatures; so that nothing to him is contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them.

3. In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Chapter 3 – God’s eternal decree

to WCF

1. God, from all eternity, did—by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will—freely and unchangeably ordain whatever comes to pass. Yet he

ordered all things in such a way that he is not the author of sin, nor does he force his creatures to act against their wills; neither is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

2. Although God knows whatever may or can come to pass under all conceivable conditions, yet he has not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future or as that which would come to pass under such conditions.

3. By God's decree, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined to everlasting life, and others are foreordained to everlasting death.

4. These angels and men, thus predestined and foreordained, are individually and unchangeably designated, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or decreased.

5. Those people who are predestined to life, God—before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and unchangeable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will—has chosen in Christ to everlasting glory. He chose them out of his free grace and love alone, not because he foresaw faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of these, or anything else in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him to do this; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

6. As God has appointed the elect to glory, so he has—by the eternal and most free purpose of his will—foreordained all the means to that end. Therefore, his chosen ones, all of them being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ and are effectually called to faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season. They are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. No others are redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, except the elect only.

7. The rest of mankind God was pleased—according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extends or withholds mercy as he pleases—for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.

8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, so that men, taking heed to the will of God revealed in his Word and yielding obedience to it, may—from the certainty

of their effectual calling—be assured of their eternal election. Thus, this doctrine shall provide reason for praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and for humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all who sincerely obey the gospel.

Chapter 4 – Creation

to WCF

1. It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create—or make out of nothing—the world and everything in it, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.
2. After God had made everything else, he created mankind. He made them male and female, with rational and immortal souls, endowed with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image. They had the law of God written in their hearts and had power to fulfil it. They were, however, under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change. In addition to this law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As long as they obeyed this command, they were happy in their communion with God and had dominion over the creatures.

Chapter 5 – Providence

to WCF

1. God—the great Creator of all things—upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least. He exercises this most wise and holy providence according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and unchangeable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.
2. Although—in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause—all things come to pass unchangeably and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he orders them to occur according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.
3. In his ordinary providence, God makes use of means, yet he is free to work without, above, and against them as he pleases.

4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God manifest themselves so completely in his providence that it extends even to the first fall and all other sins of angels and men—not by a bare permission, but by a permission which has joined with it a most wise and powerful limiting, and otherwise ordering and governing of them in a varied administration, for his own holy purposes. However, the sinfulness comes from the creatures alone and not from God, who, because he is most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God often leaves his own children, for a time, to manifold temptations and to the corruption of their own hearts. He does this to chastise them for their past sins, to humble them by making them aware of the hidden strength of the corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, and then to raise them to a closer, more constant dependence upon himself for their support, to make them more watchful against all future occasions for sinning, and to fulfil various other just and holy purposes.

6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous judge, blinds and hardens because of their past sins, God withholds his grace, by which their minds might have been enlightened and their hearts affected. He also sometimes takes away the gifts which they had, and exposes them to such things as their corrupt nature makes into occasions for sinning. Moreover, he gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, by which they harden themselves even under the same means which God uses to soften others.

7. As, in general, the providence of God reaches to all creatures, so, in a very special way, it cares for his church and disposes all things for its good.

[Chapter 6 – The fall of man, and sin and its punishment](#) [to WCF](#)

1. Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. God was pleased to permit this sin of theirs, according to his wise and holy counsel, because his purpose was, through it, to glorify himself.

2. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.
3. Since they were the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed to—and the same death in sin and corrupted nature were conveyed to—all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.
4. From this original corruption, by which we are utterly disinclined, disabled, and antagonistic to all that is good and wholly inclined to all that is evil, all actual transgressions proceed.
5. During this life, this corruption of nature remains in those who are regenerated. Even though it is pardoned and put to death through Christ, yet both this corruption of nature and all its expressions are in fact really sin.
6. Every sin—both original and actual—is a transgression of the righteous law of God and contrary to it. Therefore, every sin in its own nature brings guilt upon the sinner, on account of which he is bound over to the holy wrath of God and the curse of the law. Consequently, he is subject to death, with all miseries—spiritual, temporal, and eternal.

Chapter 7 – God’s covenant with man

to WCF

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great that, even though rational creatures are responsible to obey him as their Creator, yet they could never experience any enjoyment of him as their blessing and reward except by way of some voluntary condescension on his part, which he has been pleased to express by way of covenant.
2. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works in which life was promised to Adam and, in him, to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.
3. Since man, by his fall, made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was then pleased to make a second covenant, commonly called the covenant of grace. In it God freely offers life and salvation by Jesus Christ to sinners, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved,

and promising to give his Holy Spirit to all those who are ordained to eternal life, to make them willing and able to believe.

4. This covenant of grace is sometimes presented in the Scriptures by the name of a will or testament, with reference to the death of Jesus Christ (the testator) and to the everlasting inheritance—with all that belongs to it—bequeathed in it.

5. In the time of the law, this covenant was administered differently than in the time of the gospel. Under the law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the passover lamb, and other types and ordinances given to the Jewish people, all of which foreshadowed Christ to come. These were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the work of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in their faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they received complete forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. This covenant administration is called the old testament.

6. Under the gospel, Christ (the reality) having been revealed, the ordinances by which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Although these are fewer in number and are administered with more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them the covenant is set forth in greater fullness, clarity, and spiritual efficacy to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles, and is called the new testament. Therefore, there are not two covenants of grace differing in substance, but only one, under various administrations.

Chapter 8 – Christ the mediator

to WCF

1. God was pleased, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the mediator between God and man. As the mediator, he is the prophet, priest, and king, the Head and Saviour of the church, the heir of all things, and the judge of the world. God gave to him, from all eternity, a people to be his seed and to be by him, in time, redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

2. The Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, being truly and eternally God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time had come, take upon himself man's nature, with all its

essential properties and common frailties, yet without sin. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary and of her substance. In this way, two whole natures, the divine and the human, perfect and distinct, were inseparably joined together in one person without being changed, mixed, or confused. This person is truly God and truly man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

3. In his human nature, united to the divine nature, the Lord Jesus was set apart and anointed with the Holy Spirit beyond measure, having in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In him the Father was pleased to have all fullness dwell, so that—being holy, blameless, and undefiled, full of grace and truth—he might be completely equipped to fulfil the office of a mediator and guarantor. He did not take this office to himself but was called to it by his Father, who put all power and judgment into his hand and commanded him to execute it.

4. This office the Lord Jesus most willingly undertook, and in order to discharge its obligations he was born under the law and perfectly fulfilled it. He endured most grievous torments in his soul and most painful sufferings in his body; he was crucified, died, and was buried; he remained under the power of death, yet his body did not undergo decay; and he arose from the dead on the third day with the same body in which he had suffered. In this body he ascended into heaven, where he sits at the right hand of his Father, making intercession, and he shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the age.

5. The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself—which he through the eternal Spirit once offered up to God—has fully satisfied the justice of his Father. He purchased not only reconciliation but also an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father has given to him.

6. Although the work of redemption was not actually accomplished by Christ until after his incarnation, yet the power, efficacy, and benefits of it were applied to the elect in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices by which Christ was revealed and signified to be the seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head, and to be the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

7. In the work of mediation, Christ acts according to both natures. Each nature does what is proper to itself; yet, by reason of the unity of his person, that which is proper to one nature is in Scripture sometimes attributed to the person designated by the other nature.

8. To all those for whom Christ purchased redemption, he certainly and effectually applies and communicates it. He makes intercession for them and reveals to them, in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation. He effectually persuades them by his Spirit to believe and obey, and governs their hearts by his Word and Spirit. He overcomes all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom in such a manner, and by such ways, as are most agreeable to his wonderful and unsearchable administration.

Chapter 9 – Free will

to WCF

1. God has endowed the will of man with such natural liberty that it is neither forced nor—by any absolute necessity of nature—determined to good or evil.

2. Man, in his state of innocence, had freedom and ability to will and to do what was good and well-pleasing to God, and yet not unalterably, so that he might fall from it.

3. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has completely lost all ability to choose any spiritual good that accompanies salvation. Therefore, an unregenerate man, because he is opposed to that good and is dead in sin, is unable by his own strength to convert himself or to prepare himself to be converted.

4. When God converts a sinner and brings him into the state of grace, he frees him from his natural bondage to sin, and by his grace alone he enables him freely to will and to do what is spiritually good. Yet, because of his remaining corruption, he does not perfectly nor only will what is good, but also wills what is evil.

5. The will of man is made perfectly and unchangeably free to do good alone, only in the state of glory.

Chapter 10 – Effectual calling

to WCF

1. All those—and only those—whom God has predestined to life, he is pleased to call effectually in his appointed and accepted time, by his Word and Spirit. He calls them from the state of sin and death—in which they are by nature—to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ. In this calling, God enlightens their minds spiritually and savingly, so that they understand the things of God. He takes away their hearts of stone and gives them hearts of flesh, renews their wills, and by his almighty power turns them to what is good and effectually draws them to Jesus Christ. Yet he does this in such a way that they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

2. This effectual call is from God's free and special grace alone, and not from anything at all that God foresees in man, who is entirely passive in it, until—being made alive and renewed by the Holy Spirit—he is enabled to answer the call and embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

3. Elect infants who die in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when, where, and how he pleases. So also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.

4. Although other persons who are not elected may be called by the ministry of the Word and may experience some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never really come to Christ and therefore cannot be saved. Much less can men not professing to be Christians be saved in any other way, no matter how carefully they may order their lives by the light of nature and by the laws of whatever religion they profess. To assert and maintain that they may be saved in some other way is very pernicious and is to be detested.

Chapter 11 – Justification

to WCF

1. Those whom God effectually calls he also freely justifies, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and by accounting and accepting them as righteous. It is not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone that they are justified. It is not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other act of Christian obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ to them who receive and rest on him and his righteousness by faith. Men do not have this faith of themselves; it is the gift of God.

2. Faith—receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness—is the only instrument of justification; yet it is not the only grace in the person justified, but is always accompanied by all other saving graces. Justifying faith is not dead, but works by love.
3. Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. He made a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, because he was freely given by the Father for them, and because his obedience and satisfaction were freely accepted in their stead, and not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace. It was God's purpose in the justification of sinners to glorify both his exact justice and his rich grace.
4. God, from all eternity, decreed to justify all the elect. In the fullness of time, Christ died for their sins and rose again for their justification. Nevertheless, they are not justified until, in due time, the Holy Spirit actually applies Christ to them.
5. God continues to forgive the sins of those who are justified. Although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God's fatherly displeasure and not have the light of his countenance restored to them until they humble themselves, confess their sin, plead for pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.
6. The justification of believers under the old testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the new testament.

Chapter 12 – Adoption

to WCF

1. All those who are justified God graciously guarantees to make partakers of the grace of adoption in and for his only Son, Jesus Christ. By this act they are taken into the number of God's children and enjoy the liberties and privileges of that relationship; they are given his name; they receive the Spirit of adoption; they have access to the throne of grace with boldness; and they are enabled to cry, "Abba, Father." Like a father, God has compassion on, protects, provides for, and chastens them; yet, they will never be cast off, but are sealed to the day of redemption, and will inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.

Chapter 13 – Sanctification

to WCF

1. Those who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified—truly and personally—through the power of Christ’s death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them. The dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, its various lusts are more and more weakened and put to death, and those called and regenerated are more and more enlivened and strengthened in all saving graces, leading to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.
2. This sanctification, although imperfect in this life, is effected in every part of man’s nature. Some remnants of corruption still persist in every part, and so there arises a continual and irreconcilable war—the flesh warring against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.
3. Although in this war the remaining corruption may strongly prevail for a time, yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate nature overcomes, and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Chapter 14 – Saving faith

to WCF

1. The grace of faith, by which the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily produced through the ministry of the Word. This faith is increased and strengthened by the same means, and also by the administration of the sacraments and prayer.
2. By this faith, a Christian believes to be true whatever is revealed in the Word, because of the authority of God himself speaking in it. He also responds differently to what each particular passage contains—obeying the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.
3. This faith varies in degrees. It may be weak or strong. It may often, and in many ways, be assailed and weakened, but it gains the victory. It

matures in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and the perfecter of our faith.

Chapter 15 – Repentance unto life

to WCF

1. Repentance unto life is a gospel grace, the doctrine of which is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, just as is the doctrine of faith in Christ.
2. By it a sinner—seeing and sensing not only the danger but also the filthiness and hatefulness of his sins, because they are contrary to God’s holy nature and his righteous law—turns from all his sins to God in the realization that God promises mercy in Christ to those who repent, and so grieves for and hates his sins that he determines and endeavours to walk with God in all the ways that he commands.
3. Although repentance is not to be relied on as any payment of the penalty for sin, or any cause of the pardon of sin (which is God’s act of free grace in Christ); yet repentance is so necessary for all sinners, that no one may expect pardon without it.
4. No sin is so small that it does not deserve damnation. Nor is any sin so great that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent.
5. No one should be satisfied with a general repentance; rather, it is everyone’s duty to endeavour to repent of each particular sin, particularly.
6. It is the duty of each one to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for pardon (and whoever confesses his sins, prays for forgiveness, and forsakes those sins shall find mercy). Similarly, anyone who has scandalised a brother, or the church of Christ, ought to be willing by private or public confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended, who are then to be reconciled to him and receive him in love.

Chapter 16 – Good works

to WCF

1. Good works are only such as God has commanded in his holy Word, and not such as, without the warrant of Scripture, are devised by men out of blind zeal or any pretence of good intention.

2. These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and living faith. By them believers show their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, build up their fellow believers, adorn the profession of the gospel, shut the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God. They are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, so that, bearing fruit unto holiness, they may attain the outcome, which is eternal life.

3. Their ability to do good works is not at all from themselves, but entirely from the Spirit of Christ. And—in order that they may be enabled to do these things—besides the graces believers have already received, there must also be an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit working in them both to will and to do God's good pleasure. This truth, however, should not cause believers to become negligent, as though they were not bound to perform any duty without a special moving of the Spirit; rather, they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.

4. Those who attain the greatest heights of obedience possible in this life are so far from being able to go beyond duty and to do more than God requires, that they fall short of much that is their duty to do.

5. We cannot, by our best works, merit forgiveness for sin or eternal life at the hand of God. This is true because of the great disproportion between our best works and the glory to come, and because of the infinite distance between us and God. We cannot benefit God by our best works nor render satisfaction for the debt of our former sins, for when we have done all we can, we have done merely our duty and are unprofitable servants. This is because, insofar as they are good, these deeds proceed from the Spirit; and, insofar as they are done by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

6. Nevertheless, because believers are accepted through Christ, their good works are also accepted in him. They are accepted not because believers are in this life unblamable and unreprouvable in God's sight, but because he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, even though it is accompanied by many weaknesses and imperfections.

7. Although the works done by unregenerate men may in themselves be things which God commands and things which are useful to themselves and others, yet—because they do not come from a heart purified by faith,

are not done in a right manner according to the Word, and are not done for the right purpose, which is to glorify God—they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God or make one suitable to receive his grace. Yet, neglecting them is even more sinful and displeasing to God.

Chapter 17 – The perseverance of the saints

to WCF

1. Those whom God has accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere in it to the end and be eternally saved.
2. The perseverance of the saints does not depend upon their own free will, but on the unchangeableness of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; on the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; on the continuing presence of the Spirit and the seed of God within them; and on the nature of the covenant of grace. These are grounds of the certainty and infallibility of their perseverance.
3. Nevertheless, they may—through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the pervasiveness of the corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means by which they are to be preserved—fall into grievous sins and for a time continue in them. In so doing they incur God’s displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit; some measure of God’s graces and comforts is taken from them; they have their hearts hardened and their consciences wounded; they harm others and give them occasion to sin, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

Chapter 18 – The assurance of grace and salvation

to WCF

1. Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and fleshly presumptions that they are in God’s favour and in a state of salvation, this hope of theirs will perish. Nevertheless, those who truly believe on the Lord Jesus, love him sincerely, and strive to live in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, a hope that shall never make them ashamed.

2. This certainty is not merely a conjectural and probable persuasion grounded on a fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of faith, founded on the divine truth of the promises of salvation, on the evidence in our hearts that the promised graces are present, and on the fact that the Spirit of adoption witnesses with our spirits that we are God's children. The Holy Spirit, by whom we are sealed for the day of redemption, is the pledge of our inheritance.

3. This infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith but that a true believer may wait long and contend with many difficulties before he partakes of it. Yet, because he is enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given to him by God, he may—without any extraordinary revelation—attain this assurance by a proper use of the ordinary means. It is therefore the duty of everyone to be very diligent in making certain that God has called and chosen him. By such diligence his heart may grow in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties which obedience to God requires—the proper fruits of this assurance. Thus it is far from inclining men to carelessness.

4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation shaken, diminished, or temporarily lost in various ways: as by negligence in preserving it, by falling into some special sin which wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit, by some sudden or violent temptation, or by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance and allowing even those who reverence him to walk in darkness and have no light. Yet, true believers are never completely deprived of that seed of God and life of faith, that love for Christ and fellow believers, that sincerity of heart and conscience concerning duty, out of which—by the operation of the Spirit—this assurance may in due time be revived; and by which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.

Chapter 19 – The law of God

to WCF

1. God gave Adam a law, in the form of a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his descendants to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience. He promised life if Adam kept the law and threatened death if he broke it. Moreover, he endowed Adam with power and ability to keep that law.

2. This law, after Adam fell, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness and, as such, was given by God upon Mount Sinai in ten commandments written on two stone tablets. The first four commandments contain our duty to God, the other six our duty to man.

3. In addition to this law, commonly called the moral law, God was pleased to give the people of Israel—as the church under age—ceremonial laws, which contained several typological ordinances. These ordinances consisted partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits, and partly of various instructions of moral duties. All these ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the new testament.

4. To the people of Israel, as a civil entity, he also gave various judicial laws which expired at the time their State expired. Therefore, these judicial laws place no obligation upon anyone now, except as they embody general principles of justice.

5. The moral law binds all people at all times to obedience, both those who are justified and those who are not. The obligation to obey the moral law is not only because of its content, but also because of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. In the gospel, Christ in no way dissolves this obligation, but greatly strengthens it.

6. Although true believers are not under the law as a covenant of works by which they are justified or condemned, nevertheless the law is of great use to them as well as to others. By informing them—as a rule of life—both of the will of God and of their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly. It also reveals to them the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives. Therefore, when they examine themselves in the light of the law, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred of their sin, together with a clearer view of their need of Christ and the perfection of his obedience. The law is also useful to the regenerate because, by forbidding sin, it restrains their corruptions. By its threats it shows them what their sins deserve, and, although they are free from the curse threatened in the law, it shows the afflictions that they may expect because of them in this life. The promises of the law likewise show to the regenerate God's approval of obedience and the blessings they may expect as they obey the law, although these blessings are not due to them by the law as a covenant of works. Therefore, the fact that a man does good rather than evil because the law encourages good and discourages evil is no evidence that the man is under the law rather than under grace.

7. These uses of the law do not conflict with the grace of the gospel, but are in complete harmony with it; for it is the Spirit of Christ who subdues and enables the will of man to do freely and cheerfully those things which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires.

Chapter 20 – Christian liberty and liberty of conscience to WCF

1. The liberty which Christ purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, from the condemning wrath of God, and from the curse of the moral law. Furthermore, it consists in their being delivered from this present evil age, from bondage to Satan and the dominion of sin, from the evil of afflictions, from the sting of death, from the victory of the grave, and from everlasting damnation. It consists also in their free access to God and in yielding obedience to him, not out of slavish fear, but out of a childlike love and willing mind. All of these things were common to believers also under the law. Under the new testament, however, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged: they are free from the yoke of the ceremonial law to which the Jewish church was subjected; they have greater boldness of access to the throne of grace; and they experience in greater measure the gifts of God's free Spirit than believers under the law ordinarily partook of.

2. God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are—in anything—contrary to his Word, or which—in matters of faith or worship—are in addition to it. Therefore, anyone who believes such doctrines or obeys such commands out of conscience betrays true liberty of conscience. The requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, destroys both liberty of conscience and reason.

3. Those who, on the pretext of Christian liberty, practice any sin or cherish any evil desire destroy the purpose of Christian liberty. This purpose is that, having been delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we may serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

4. Because the powers which God has ordained and the liberty which Christ has purchased are not intended by God to destroy each other, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another, those who, in the name of Christian liberty, oppose any lawful power or any lawful exercise of it,

whether civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. Those who declare opinions or maintain practices contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity (whether concerning faith, worship, or manner of life), or the power of godliness; or who are guilty of such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive of the external peace and order which Christ has established in the church, may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against, by the censures of the church.

Chapter 21 – Religious worship and the Sabbath day. to WCF

1. The light of nature shows that there is a God who has lordship and sovereignty over all, that he is good and does good to all, and that he ought therefore to be feared, loved, praised, prayed to, trusted in, and served with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God has been instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations or devisings of men, or the suggestions of Satan, or under any visible representation, or any other way not commanded in Holy Scripture.
2. Religious worship is to be given to God alone—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is not to be given to angels, saints, or any other creature. And since the fall, worship is not to be given except through a mediator, nor is it to be given through any mediator other than Christ.
3. Prayer with thanksgiving is a special part of religious worship and is required by God of all men. In order that prayer may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of his Spirit, and according to his will. Prayer is to be offered with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance. If vocal, it must be offered in a language that is understood.
4. Prayer is to be made for things that are lawful and for all kinds of men now alive or who will live at a later time. But it is wrong to pray for the dead or for those known to have committed the sin unto death.
5. The various elements of the ordinary religious worship of God are the reading of the Scriptures with reverence; the sound preaching and conscientious hearing of the Word in obedience to God, with

understanding, faith, and reverence; the singing of psalms with grace in the heart; and the proper administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ. Also, on special occasions and at appropriate times, there are other elements of worship, namely, religious oaths, vows, solemn fasts, and thanksgivings. These are to be used in a holy and devout manner.

6. Under the gospel, neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship is now limited to—or made more acceptable by—any particular place where it is performed or toward which it is directed. On the contrary, God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and truth. He should be worshipped daily in families, and privately by individuals, and with greater solemnity in public worship services. Such worship services are not to be carelessly or wilfully neglected or forsaken when God by his Word or his providence calls people to them.

7. As it is the law of nature that, in general, a proper proportion of time ought to be set apart for the worship of God, so God in his Word—by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages—has specifically appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath to be kept holy to him. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, the appointed Sabbath was the last day of the week. Beginning with the resurrection of Christ, the Sabbath was changed to the first day of the week, which in Scripture is called the Lord's day, a day to be continued until the end of the age as the Christian Sabbath.

8. This Sabbath is then kept holy to the Lord when men, after due preparation of their hearts and arranging of their common affairs beforehand, not only observe a holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts concerning their everyday occupations and recreations, but also devote the whole time to the public and private exercises of God's worship and to the duties of necessity and mercy.

Chapter 22 – Lawful oaths and vows

to WCF

1. A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, in which—on an appropriate occasion—the person taking the oath solemnly calls upon God to witness what he asserts or promises and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he swears.

2. The name of God is the only name by which men should swear, and they should do so with all holy fear and reverence. Therefore, to swear vainly or rashly by that glorious and fearful name, or to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful and to be abhorred. Yet since, in matters of weight and great importance, an oath is warranted by the Word of God under the new testament as well as under the old, therefore, a lawful oath ought to be taken when imposed in such matters by lawful authority.
3. Whoever takes an oath ought to consider seriously the great importance of such a solemn act, and in doing so should affirm nothing but what he himself is fully convinced is the truth. A person may bind himself by oath only to what is good and just, what he believes to be such, and what he is able and resolved to perform.
4. The oath is to be taken in the plain and usual sense of the words, without equivocation or mental reservation. It cannot oblige a person to sin, but when it is taken in matters which are not sinful, it obligates performance of the oath even though it may hurt. The oath is not to be violated even though it is made to heretics or unbelievers.
5. A vow is similar in nature to a promissory oath and ought to be made with the same religious care and be performed with the same faithfulness.
6. A vow is to be made only to God and not to any created being. In order for it to be acceptable, it is to be made voluntarily, out of faith and conviction of duty, either from thankfulness for mercy or from the desire to obtain what we lack. By taking a vow we bind ourselves more strictly to necessary duties, or to other things to the extent that they contribute to the performance of these duties.
7. No one may vow to do anything forbidden in the Word of God or anything which would hinder the performance of any duty it commands. No one may vow to do anything for which he has no ability and for which he has no promise of ability from God. With respect to these things, Roman Catholic monastic vows of perpetual single life, professed poverty, and regular obedience—far from being steps to higher perfection—are in fact superstitious and sinful snares, in which no Christian may entangle himself.

1. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil authorities to be, under him, over the people for his own glory and the public good. For this purpose he has armed them with the power of the sword for the defence and encouragement of those who are good, and for the punishment of those who do evil.

2. It is lawful for Christians to hold public office when called to it. In such office they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth. For that purpose they may now, under the new testament, lawfully wage war upon just and necessary occasion.

3. Civil authorities may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, nor should they interfere in any way in matters of faith. Yet, as caring fathers, it is the duty of civil authorities to protect the church of our common Lord without giving preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest—doing so in such a way that all church authorities shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of carrying out every part of their sacred functions without violence or danger. As Jesus Christ has appointed a regular government and discipline in his church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, prevent, or hinder their proper exercise among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil authorities to protect the person and good name of all their people in such an effective manner that no person be allowed, either in the name of religion or of unbelief, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatever. They should also take care that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without interference or disturbance.

4. It is the duty of people to pray for those in authority, to honour them, to pay them taxes or other revenue, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority for the sake of conscience. Neither unbelief nor difference in religion makes void the just and legal authority of officeholders nor frees the people—church authorities included—from their due obedience to them. Much less does the pope have any power or jurisdiction over civil authorities in their domains or over any of their people, nor can he deprive them of their domains or lives if he shall judge them to be heretics or on any other pretence whatever.

1. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman. It is not lawful for any man to have more than one wife, or for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time.
2. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with legitimate offspring and of the church with godly children, and for the prevention of sexual immorality.
3. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry who are able to give their intelligent consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. Therefore, those who profess the true reformed religion should not marry unbelievers, Roman Catholics, or other idolaters; nor should Christians be unequally yoked by marrying those who are notoriously wicked in their way of living or hold to damnable heresies.
4. Marriage ought not to take place between persons who are within the degrees of close relationship by blood or by marriage forbidden by the Word. Such incestuous marriages can never be made lawful—so that such persons may live together as man and wife—by any law of man or by the consent of the parties involved.
5. Adultery or fornication committed after engagement, if detected before marriage, gives valid reason to the innocent party to break the engagement. In the case of adultery after marriage it is lawful for the innocent party to seek a divorce and after the divorce to remarry just as if the offending party were dead.
6. Although the corruption of mankind is such that people are apt to seek arguments to justify unwarranted separation of those whom God has joined together in marriage, nothing but adultery or such wilful desertion as cannot be remedied by the church or the civil authorities is sufficient cause to dissolve the bond of marriage. In such cases a public and orderly procedure is to be observed, and the persons concerned are not to be left to their own wills and discretion in their own case.

1. The catholic (that is, universal) church, which is invisible, consists of all the elect who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ its

head. This church is his bride, his body, and the fullness of him who fills all in all.

2. The visible church, which is also catholic (that is, universal) under the gospel (that is, not confined to one nation, as it was before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children. It is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

3. To this universal, visible church Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the age. For this purpose he makes these means effectual by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise.

4. This universal church has been sometimes more and sometimes less visible. Particular churches, which are members of this universal church, are more or less pure to the extent to which the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, the ordinances are administered, and public worship is performed more or less purely in them.

5. The purest churches on earth are subject to both mixture and error, and some have so degenerated that they have become no churches of Christ at all, but rather synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall always be a church on earth to worship God according to his will.

6. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the pope of Rome be its head in any sense.

Chapter 26 – The communion of saints

to WCF

1. All saints—who are united to Jesus Christ their head by his Spirit and by faith—have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. And, being united to one another in love, they participate in each other's gifts and graces and are obligated to perform those public and private duties which lead to their mutual good, both inwardly and outwardly.

2. It is the duty of professing saints to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God and in performing such other spiritual services as help them to edify one another. It is their duty also to come to

the aid of one another in material things according to their various abilities and necessities. As God affords opportunity, this communion is to be extended to all those in every place who call on the name of the Lord Jesus.

3. The communion which the saints have with Christ does not make them in any way partakers of the substance of his Godhead, or in any respect equal with Christ. To affirm either is irreverent and blasphemous. Nor does their fellowship with one another as saints take away or infringe upon any person's title to, or right to, his own goods and possessions.

Chapter 27 – The sacraments

to WCF

1. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace. They were directly instituted by God to represent Christ and his benefits and to confirm our relationship to him. They are also intended to make a visible distinction between those who belong to the church and the rest of the world, and solemnly to bind Christians to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word.

2. In every sacrament there is a spiritual relationship, or sacramental union, between the visible sign and the reality signified by it, and so it happens that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.

3. The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments, rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them. Neither does the efficacy of a sacrament depend on the piety or intention of him who administers it, but rather on the work of the Spirit and on the word of institution, which contains (together with a precept authorising its use) a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.

4. There are only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither sacrament may be administered by any person except a minister of the Word, lawfully ordained.

5. With regard to the spiritual realities signified and exhibited, the sacraments of the old testament were essentially the same as those of the new testament.

1. Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, by which the person baptised is solemnly admitted into the visible church. Baptism is also for him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of forgiveness of sins, and of his surrender to God through Jesus Christ to walk in newness of life. By Christ's own appointment, this sacrament is to be continued in his church until the end of the age.
2. The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, with which the person is to be baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is to be performed by a minister of the gospel, lawfully called to that office.
3. Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary. Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water on the person.
4. Not only those who personally profess faith in and obedience to Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents, are to be baptised.
5. Although it is a great sin to despise or neglect this ordinance, nevertheless, grace and salvation are not so inseparably connected with it that a person cannot be regenerated or saved without it. Neither is it true that all who are baptised are undoubtedly regenerated.
6. The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time when it is administered. Nevertheless, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Spirit to all (whether adults or infants) to whom that grace belongs, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time.
7. The sacrament of baptism is to be administered only once to any person.

1. Our Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, called the Lord's Supper. It is to be observed in his church until the end of the age for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death, for the sealing of all the benefits of that death unto true believers, for their spiritual

nourishment and growth in him, for their increased commitment to perform all the duties which they owe to him, and for a bond and pledge of their fellowship with him and with each other as members of his mystical body.

2. In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor is any real sacrifice made at all for the forgiveness of the sins of the living or the dead. Instead, this sacrament is only a commemoration of that one sacrifice by which Christ offered himself on the cross once for all. The sacrament is a spiritual offering of the highest praise to God for that sacrifice. So, the Roman Catholic sacrifice of the mass (as they call it) is a detestable insult to Christ's one and only sacrifice, which is the only propitiation for all the sins of his elect.

3. In this ordinance the Lord Jesus has appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people; to pray and consecrate the elements of bread and wine, and so set them apart from a common to a holy use; and to take and break the bread, take the cup, and give both to the communicants, and to partake with the congregation. But they are not to give the elements to any who are not then present in the congregation.

4. Private masses—or receiving this sacrament from a priest or anyone else, alone—are contrary to the nature of the sacrament and to the institution of Christ. For the same reasons it is forbidden to deny the cup to the members of the congregation, to worship the elements, to lift them up or carry them around for adoration, or to reserve them for any supposedly religious use.

5. The visible elements in this sacrament, when they are properly set apart for the uses ordained by Christ, have such a relationship to Christ crucified that they are sometimes called—truly, but only sacramentally—by the name of the things they represent, namely, the body and blood of Christ. This is true even though in substance and nature they still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before use.

6. The doctrine which teaches that the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by the consecration of a priest, or in any other way, is repugnant not only to Scripture but even to common sense and reason. It overthrows the nature of the sacrament and has been and is the cause of many superstitions and gross idolatries.

7. Worthy receivers of this sacrament, outwardly partaking of its visible elements, also inwardly by faith—really and indeed, yet not physically but spiritually—receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all the benefits of his death. The body and blood of Christ are not physically in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet in this ordinance the body and blood of Christ are present to the faith of believers in as real a spiritual sense as the bread and wine are to their physical senses.

8. Even if ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament, yet they do not receive that which is signified by the elements. Rather, by their unworthy coming to the sacrament, they are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation. Therefore, all ignorant and ungodly people, because they are unfit to enjoy fellowship with the Lord, are also unworthy to participate in the Lord's Supper. As long as they remain unworthy, they cannot be admitted to the Lord's table or partake of the holy mysteries without great sin against Christ.

Chapter 30 – Church discipline

to WCF

1. The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his church, has appointed a government in it, to be administered by church officers, distinct from the civil authorities.

2. To these church officers he has committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven. For this reason they have authority to retain and to remit sins, to shut the kingdom against the unrepentant both by the Word and by censures, and to open it to repentant sinners by the ministry of the gospel and by releasing from censures, as the occasion requires.

3. Church discipline is necessary for reclaiming and gaining fellow Christians who are guilty of offences, for deterring others from committing similar offences, for purging the leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honour of Christ and the holy profession of the gospel, and for averting the wrath of God which might justly fall on the church if it should allow his covenant and its seals to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

4. For the better attaining of these purposes, the officers of the church are to proceed by admonition, by suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's

Supper for a time, and by excommunication from the church, according to the nature of the offence and the degree of the person's guilt.

Chapter 31 – Synods and councils

to WCF

1. For the better governing and further edifying of the church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils. Overseers and other rulers of particular churches, by virtue of their office and the power which Christ has given them for edification and not for destruction, have authority to appoint such assemblies and to convene together in them as often as they judge it expedient for the good of the church.
2. Synods and councils have authority ministerially to decide controversies of faith and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God and the government of his church, and to receive and authoritatively act on complaints of maladministration in the church. If the decrees and decisions of these synods and councils are in accordance with the Word of God, they are to be received with reverence and submission, not only because of their agreement with the Word, but also because of the authority by which they are decided, as being an ordinance that God has appointed in his Word.
3. Since apostolic times, all synods and councils, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred. Therefore, they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but are to be used as a help in regard to both.
4. Synods and councils are to handle or conclude nothing but what pertains to the church. They are not to intermeddle in civil affairs which concern the state, except by way of humble petition in extraordinary cases, or by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if they are required to do so by the civil authority.

Chapter 32 – The state of men after death, and the resurrection of the dead

to WCF

1. After death, the bodies of men decay and return to dust, but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal existence, return

immediately to God, who gave them. The souls of the righteous are then made perfect in holiness and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory as they wait for the full redemption of their bodies. The souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness as they are kept for the judgment of the great day. Scripture recognises no other place except these two for the souls which have been separated from their bodies.

2. At the last day those who are alive shall not die but shall be changed. All the dead shall be raised up with their selfsame bodies, and no other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again with their souls forever.

3. By the power of Christ the bodies of the unjust shall be raised to dishonour. The bodies of the just shall be raised to honour by his Spirit and brought into conformity with Christ's own glorious body.

Chapter 33 – The last judgment

to WCF

1. God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment has been given by the Father. In that day not only shall the apostate angels be judged, but also shall all people who have ever lived on earth appear before the judgment seat of Christ in order to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds, and to receive judgment according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

2. God's purpose in appointing this day is to manifest the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and the glory of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. On that day the righteous shall go into everlasting life and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord; but the wicked, who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

3. As Christ would have us to be absolutely convinced that there will be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin and to give greater consolation to the godly in their adversity, so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, may always

be watchful—because they do not know at what hour the Lord will come—and may always be prepared to say, “Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly. Amen.”

LITURGICAL FORMS
OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

Baptism of the children of believers: **form 1**

Instruction

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, what the Lord has revealed to us in his Word about holy baptism can be summarised as follows.

First: Baptism teaches that we and our children are sinful from the time of conception and birth. This means that we are all under the judgment of God and for that reason cannot be members of his kingdom unless we are born again. Baptism, whether by immersion or sprinkling, teaches that sin has made us so impure that we must undergo a cleansing which only God can accomplish. Therefore, we ought to be displeased with ourselves, humble ourselves and turn to God who alone can save us from our sin.

Second: Baptism is a sign and seal that our sins are washed away through Jesus Christ. After rising from the dead, Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.¹

Baptism into the name of the Father assures us that he makes an everlasting covenant of grace with us and adopts us as his children and heirs. Therefore, he surrounds us with his goodness and protects us from evil or turns it to our profit.

Baptism into the name of the Son assures us that we have been washed in his blood from all our sins. Christ joins us to himself so that we share in his death and resurrection. Through this union with Christ we are liberated from our sins and regarded as righteous before God.

Baptism into the name of the Holy Spirit assures us that the Spirit of God will dwell in our hearts. While living within us, the Spirit will continually work to strengthen and deepen our union with Christ. He will make real in our lives Christ's work of washing away our sins. He will also help us each day to live the new life we have in Christ. As a result of his work within us, we shall one day be presented without the stain of sin among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

Third: Because all covenants have two sides, we who are baptised must trust this one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If we reject him, we break the covenant God made with us and our baptism will testify against us. We must therefore abandon the sinful way of life and love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. If we fall into sin, we must not despair of God's grace, nor use our weakness as an excuse to keep on sinning. "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."²

Our children should not be denied the sacrament of baptism because of their inability to understand its meaning. God's gracious attitude towards the children of believers is revealed in what he said to Abraham, the father of all believers: "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you."³ The Apostle Peter also testifies to this with these words, "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."⁴ Therefore God formerly commanded that children be circumcised as a seal of the covenant and as a declaration that righteousness comes by faith. Jesus himself embraced little children, and blessed them;⁵ and the apostle Paul said that children of believers are holy.⁶ Since baptism has replaced circumcision, our children should be baptised as heirs of God's kingdom and of his covenant. Their parents are responsible for teaching them the meaning of baptism. As the children mature, they are under obligation to respond to the privileges of the covenant by trusting in God and demonstrating by their lives that they belong to him.

Prayer of preparation

Let us turn to God, asking that in this baptism his name may be glorified, we may be comforted, and the church may be edified.

Almighty, eternal God, long ago you severely punished an unbelieving and unrepentant world by sending a flood. But you showed your great mercy when you saved and protected believing Noah and his family. Baptism was again signified when you drowned the obstinate Pharaoh and his whole army in the Red Sea and brought your people Israel through the sea on dry ground.

We pray, O Lord, that you will always govern this child and all our children by your Holy Spirit. We pray that in your boundless mercy you will look upon this, your child, with favour by bringing _____ *him/her* into union with your Son, Jesus Christ, through your Holy Spirit. May _____ *he/she* be buried with Christ into death and be raised with him to new life. Give _____ *him/her* true faith, firm hope and ardent love so that _____ *he/she* may joyfully bear _____ *his/her* cross as _____ *he/she* daily follows Christ.

Give this child, together with all our children, the full assurance of your grace so that when they leave this life and its constant struggle against the power of sin they may appear before the judgment seat of Christ without fear.

We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one only God, lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Vows

The minister addresses the parents:

Since you have presented your child for holy baptism, you are asked to answer the following questions before God and his people:

First: Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, accept the promises of God, and affirm the truth of the Christian faith which is taught in the Bible and confessed in this church of Christ?

Second: Do you believe that your child, though sinful by nature, is received by God in Christ as a member of his covenant and his church, and therefore ought to be baptised?

Third: Do you promise, in reliance on the Holy Spirit and with the help of the Christian community, to do all in your power to instruct this child in the truth of the Christian faith and to lead _____ *him/her* by your example to follow Jesus Christ?

The parents respond: We do, God helping us.

The minister addresses the congregation:

|

Do you, the people of the Lord,
promise to receive _____ *name*
in love; and as the Lord gives you
opportunity pray for
_____ *him/her*, help care for
_____ *his/her* instruction in the
faith, and encourage and sustain
_____ *him/her* in the fellowship of
believers?

Or: I charge you, people of God,
receive _____ *name* in love;
and as the Lord gives you
opportunity pray for
_____ *him/her*, help care for
_____ *his/her* instruction in the
faith, and encourage and sustain
_____ *him/her* in the fellowship
of believers.

_____ *name*, I baptise you into the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer of thanksgiving

Almighty God and merciful Father, we thank you and praise your name for
having forgiven our sins through the blood of your dear Son, Jesus Christ.
We thank you for uniting us with Christ through your Holy Spirit and
adopting us as your children, and we thank you for sealing and confirming
these blessings to us in the sacrament of baptism.

We pray, O Lord, that you will always govern this child and all our
children by your Holy Spirit. Enable them to respond in faith to the gospel.
May they, through your guidance, be so nurtured in the Christian faith and
godliness as to grow and develop in Jesus Christ. Help them see your
fatherly goodness and mercy which surrounds us all. Make them
champions of righteousness under the direction of Jesus Christ, our only
teacher, king and high priest. Give them the courage to fight against and
overcome sin, the devil and his whole dominion. May their lives become
an eternal song of praise to you, the one only true God, Father, Son and
Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ Matthew 28:19.

² 1 John 1:9.

³ Genesis 17:7.

⁴ Acts 2:39.

⁵ Mark 10:16.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 7:14.

Baptism of the children of believers: **form 2**

The institution

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us hear our Lord's command concerning the sacrament of holy baptism. After he had risen victorious from the grave, Jesus said to his disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."¹ In obedience to this command the church baptises believers and their children.

The promises

Let us hear the promises of God which are confirmed in baptism.

The Lord made this great promise to Abraham: "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you."²

In later years, though Israel was unfaithful, God renewed his promise through the prophet: "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord: I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people ... for I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."³

In the fullness of time God came in Jesus Christ to give pardon and peace through his blood shed on the cross, the "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."⁴

After Jesus had risen from the dead, the apostles proclaimed: "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”⁵

Anticipating the fulfilment of God’s promises, Paul assures us, “If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.”⁶

These are the unfailing promises of our Lord.

The instruction

Let us also recall the teaching of Scripture concerning the sacrament of baptism.

The water of baptism signifies the washing away of our sin by the blood of Christ and the renewal of our lives by the Holy Spirit.⁷ It also signifies that we are buried with Christ.⁸ From this we learn that our sin has been condemned by God, and that we are to hate it and consider ourselves as having died to it. Moreover, the water of baptism signifies that we are raised with Christ.⁹ From this we learn that we are to walk with Christ in newness of life. All this tells us that God has adopted us as his children, “and if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.”¹⁰

God graciously includes our children in his covenant, with its promises and obligations.¹¹ Jesus himself embraced little children, and blessed them;¹² and the apostle Paul said that children of believers are holy.¹³ So, just as the children of the old covenant received the sign of circumcision, our children are given the sign of baptism. We are therefore always to teach our little ones that they have been set apart to God and are to live for him.

Thus in baptism God seals the promises he gave when he made his covenant with us, calling us and our children to put our trust for life and death in Christ our Saviour, deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him in obedience and love. If however we turn away from God we become covenant breakers and our baptism will testify against us.

Prayer of preparation

Father in heaven, we pray that you will never destroy us in our sin as you did with the flood, but save us as you did believing Noah and his family. Spare us as you did the Israelites who walked safely through the sea.

May Christ, who died for our sins and was raised again as the Lord of life, always keep us and our little ones in the grip of his hand.

Holy Father, may your Spirit separate us from sin and openly mark us with a faith that can stand the light of day, and endure the dark of night.

Prepare us now, O Lord, to respond with glad hope to your promises so that we, and all entrusted to our care, may drink deeply from the well of living water.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Vows

The minister addresses the parents:

Since you have presented your child for holy baptism, you are asked to answer the following questions before God and his people:

First: Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, accept the promises of God, and affirm the truth of the Christian faith which is taught in the Bible and confessed in this church of Christ?

Second: Do you believe that your child, though sinful by nature, is received by God in Christ as a member of his covenant and his church, and therefore ought to be baptised?

Third: Do you promise, in reliance on the Holy Spirit and with the help of the Christian community, to do all in your power to instruct this child in the truth of the Christian faith and to lead _____ *him/her* by your example to follow Jesus Christ?

The parents respond: We do, God helping us.

The minister addresses the congregation:

Do you, the people of the Lord,
promise to receive _____ *name*

Or: I charge you, people of God,
receive _____ *name* in love;

in love; and as the Lord gives you
opportunity pray for
_____ *him/her*, help care for
_____ *his/her* instruction in the
faith, and encourage and sustain
_____ *him/her* in the fellowship of
believers?

and as the Lord gives you
opportunity pray for
_____ *him/her*, help care for
_____ *his/her* instruction in the
faith, and encourage and sustain
_____ *him/her* in the fellowship
of believers.

The sacrament

The minister may say:

Our Lord said: “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”¹⁴

In administering the sacrament the minister shall say:

_____ *name*, I baptise you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

A triumphant hymn

Baptismal prayer

Lord our God, you are forever faithful to your promise. Thank you for assuring us again that you will forgive us and receive us as your children in Christ.

Grant wisdom and love to these parents as they carry out the vows they have just made.

We pray for this child and all our children. Enable them to respond in faith to the gospel. Fill them with your Spirit and make their lives fruitful. Uphold them in their hour of trial, and when Christ returns let them celebrate with all the people of God your greatness and goodness forever in the joy of your new creation. Amen.

¹ Matthew 28:18–20.

² Genesis 17:7.

³ Jeremiah 31:33, 34.

⁴ Matthew 26:28.

⁵ Acts 2:38, 39.

⁶ 2 Timothy 2:11, 12.

⁷ Titus 3:5.

⁸ Romans 6:4.

⁹ Colossians 2:12.

¹⁰ Romans 8:17.

¹¹ Genesis 17:7; Acts 2:39.

¹² Mark 10:16.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 7:14.

¹⁴ Mark 10:14.

Baptism of the children of believers:

form 3

Address to the congregation

Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, baptism is a sacrament ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a sign and seal that the person baptised is included in the covenant of grace. It teaches that we and our children are sinful from the time of conception and birth; it witnesses and seals to us the forgiveness of sins and the gift of all the blessings of salvation through union with Christ. Baptism with water signifies and seals that we are cleansed from sin by the shed blood of Christ, through the work of his Spirit. It also signifies and seals that we have died to sin and have been raised to live a new life through our union with Jesus in his death and resurrection. These gifts of salvation are graciously provided by the triune God; therefore we are baptised into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Since those who are baptised are called to take up the obligations of the covenant, baptism summons us to renounce the devil, the world and our sinful nature and to walk humbly with our God in devotion to his commandments.

Although our young children do not yet understand these things, they are nevertheless to be baptised. For the promise of the covenant is made to believers and to their children, as God declared to Abraham: “I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.”¹ The children of the faithful are in the new covenant no less than they were in the old. They have a right to the seal of the covenant and to the outward privileges of the church. For the covenant of grace is the same in substance in both Old and New Testament times; however God’s grace and salvation are more clearly seen in the New. Jesus himself embraced little children, and blessed them;² and the apostle Paul said that children of believers are holy.³ So by baptism, the children of the covenant are distinguished from the world, solemnly received into the visible church and are called to respond in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The vows

The minister addresses the parents:

Since you have presented your child for holy baptism, you are asked to answer the following questions before God and his people:

First: Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, accept the promises of God, and affirm the truth of the Christian faith which is taught in the Bible and confessed in this church of Christ?

Second: Do you believe that your child, though sinful by nature, is received by God in Christ as a member of his covenant and his church, and therefore ought to be baptised?

Third: Do you promise, in reliance on the Holy Spirit and with the help of the Christian community, to do all in your power to instruct this child in the truth of the Christian faith and to lead _____ *him/her* by your example to follow Jesus Christ?

The parents respond: We do, God helping us.

The minister addresses the congregation:

Do you, the people of the Lord, promise to receive _____ *name* in love; and as the Lord gives you opportunity pray for _____ *him/her*, help care for _____ *his/her* instruction in the faith, and encourage and sustain _____ *him/her* in the fellowship of believers?

Or: I charge you, people of God, receive _____ *name* in love; and as the Lord gives you opportunity pray for _____ *him/her*, help care for _____ *his/her* instruction in the faith, and encourage and sustain _____ *him/her* in the fellowship of believers.

The sacrament

_____ *name*, I baptise you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer of thanksgiving

Almighty God, we thank you for forgiving our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. Thank you for uniting us with Christ through your Holy Spirit and adopting us as your children, and thank you for sealing and confirming these blessings to us in the sacrament of baptism.

We pray for these parents. Grant them wisdom and patience. Enable them to keep the promises they have just made. May they lead and guide their children by their instruction and example.

We pray for this child and all the children of our congregation. May they grow and develop physically and spiritually. Fill them with your Spirit so they may respond to your promises with faith, hope and love.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

¹ Genesis 17:7.

² Mark 10:16.

³ 1 Corinthians 7:14.

Profession of faith

The minister shall invite those professing their faith to come forward.

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, today we are privileged to hear the public profession of faith of _____ names. When they were baptised they received the sign and seal of God's covenant promises and were received into the church. Now they wish to share fully in the life of this congregation. So today they will publicly accept and confirm what was sealed in their baptism, confess with their mouth Jesus as Lord, and offer themselves to God as his willing servants.

To those wishing to profess their faith:

We thank God that he has worked in your hearts and has given you the desire to profess your faith.

In the presence of God and his people, we ask you to respond to the following questions:¹

1. Do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God, the supreme authority for doctrine and life, and that its teaching is faithfully summarised in the creeds and confessions of this church?
2. Do you humble yourself before God and repent of your sins, and do you joyfully trust in and love Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as your Lord and Saviour?
3. Do you accept the gracious promises of God sealed to you in your baptism and do you affirm your union with Christ and his church which your baptism signifies?
4. Do you resolve to forsake the world, put to death your old nature, and lead a godly life?
5. Do you promise to honour the office bearers of the church and, if you should become unfaithful in doctrine or life, submit to their admonition and discipline?
6. Do you desire to use the gifts the Holy Spirit has given you to build up the body of Christ?

Answer: I do, God helping me.

Minister: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ I now welcome you to all the privileges of full communion. I welcome you to full participation in the life of the church. I welcome you to its responsibilities, its joys and its sufferings.

I urge that you, by the diligent use of the means of grace, and with the help of God, continue in the profession you have just made. “May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”²

Optional: The 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, dead, and buried;
he descended into hell³
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.

I believe a holy catholic⁴ church, the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you that through your Word and Spirit
_____ *names* have come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and

Saviour. May they never cease to wonder at what you have done for them in Christ, always giving thanks for what you continue to do in their hearts and lives by your Spirit.

Please carry on the good work you have begun in them. Help them to continue firmly in the faith and to bear witness to your love. May the Holy Spirit shape their lives so they become more holy and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Help them to resist the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. Take them, good Shepherd, into your care, that they may persevere to the end.

May we, with all your people, live together in the joy and power of your Holy Spirit and in the hope of the second coming of our Lord, in whose name we pray.

Amen.

¹ A response may be asked for after each question. Alternatively, the questions may be changed into statements and said by those professing their faith. Opportunity may also be given for them to testify to the grace of God in their lives.

² Hebrews 13:20–21.

³ That is, on the cross Jesus suffered the agony of hell which our sins deserved (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q. 44).

⁴ That is, God's people through all times and places (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q. 54).

Baptism of adults

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is always a joy for the church to receive new believers into its fellowship. At our last session meeting _____ *name* declared _____ *his/her* faith in Christ and expressed _____ *his/her* desire to receive the sacrament of baptism. Today we rejoice that _____ *he/she* will confess _____ *his/her* faith before us all and be baptised.

Instruction

What the Lord has revealed to us in his Word about holy baptism can be summarised as follows.

First: Baptism teaches that we are sinful from the time of conception and birth. This means that we are all under the judgment of God and for that reason cannot be members of his kingdom unless we are born again. Baptism, whether by immersion or sprinkling, teaches that sin has made us so impure that we must undergo a cleansing which only God can accomplish. Therefore, we ought to be displeased with ourselves, humble ourselves and turn to God, who alone can save us from our sin.

Second: Baptism is a sign and seal that our sins are washed away through Jesus Christ. After rising from the dead, Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism into the name of the Father assures us that he makes an everlasting covenant of grace with us and adopts us as his children and heirs. Therefore, he surrounds us with his goodness and protects us from evil or turns it to our profit.

Baptism into the name of the Son assures us that we have been washed in his blood from all our sins. Christ joins us to himself so that we share in his death and resurrection. Through this union with Christ we are liberated from our sins and regarded as righteous before God.

Baptism into the name of the Holy Spirit assures us that the Spirit of God will dwell in our hearts. While living within us, the Spirit will continually

work to strengthen and deepen our union with Christ. He will make real in our lives Christ's work of washing away our sins. He will also help us each day to live the new life we have in Christ. As a result of his work within us, we shall one day be presented, without the stain of sin, among the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

Third: Because all covenants have two sides, we who are baptised must trust this one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If we reject him, we break the covenant God made with us, and our baptism will testify against us. We must therefore abandon the sinful way of life and love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. If we fall into sin, we must not despair of God's grace, nor use our weakness as an excuse to keep on sinning. "If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."¹

Our Lord Jesus Christ commissioned his apostles to make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.² In obedience to this command, we now proceed to the baptism of _____ *name*.

Vows

_____ *name*, will you please stand, and in the presence of God and his people respond to the following questions:

1. Do you believe that the Bible is the Word of God, the supreme authority for doctrine and life, and that its teaching is faithfully summarised in the creeds and confessions of this church?
2. Do you humble yourself before God and repent of your sins, and do you joyfully trust in and love Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as your Lord and Saviour?
3. Do you wish to be baptised in the name of the triune God, and will you receive your baptism as a sign and seal that God accepts you in Christ, forgives all your sins and incorporates you into his church?
4. Do you resolve to forsake the world, put to death your old nature, and lead a godly life?
5. Do you promise to honour the office bearers of the church and, if you should become unfaithful in doctrine or life, submit to their

admonition and discipline?

6. Do you desire to use the gifts the Holy Spirit has given you to build up the body of Christ?

The confessor responds: I do, God helping me.

The minister addresses the congregation:

I charge you, people of God, receive _____ *name* into this fellowship as a communicant member of the body of Christ. Encourage _____ *him/her* in the faith and help _____ *him/her* in doing the work of the Lord.

In administering the sacrament the minister shall say:

_____ *name*, I baptise you into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Reception

Minister: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I now welcome you to all the privileges of full communion. I welcome you to full participation in the life of the church. I welcome you to its responsibilities, its joys and its sufferings. "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."³

Baptismal prayer

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for Jesus Christ, for the new life given in him, and for the one faith, one hope and one baptism which your people have shared through the ages. We rejoice that _____ *name* now belongs to your church and that we have received _____ *him/her* as a member of this congregation. Guide _____ *him/her* in the way of Christ and sustain us all in the fellowship and service of our Lord. Amen.

The 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, dead, and buried;
he descended into hell⁴
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.

I believe a holy catholic⁵ church, the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

A triumphant hymn

¹ 1 John 1:9.

² Matthew 28:19.

³ Hebrews 13:20, 21.

⁴ That is, on the cross Jesus suffered the agony of hell which our sins deserved (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q. 44).

⁵ That is, God's people through all times and places (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q. 54).

Lord's Supper: preparatory form A

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, listen to the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper as they have been handed down by the apostle Paul:

“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.”¹

In obedience to these words, and in fellowship with the church universal, we shall commemorate the death of our Saviour in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the coming Lord's Day. However, to do so to our spiritual benefit we must first examine ourselves as the apostle has admonished.

Let each of us consider our sin and guilt. God's wrath against sin is so great that he has punished it in the bitter and shameful death of his beloved Son. Let each of us, therefore, examine whether our hearts are filled with the godly sorrow that brings repentance leading to salvation.²

Let us search our hearts to see whether we truly believe in Jesus Christ as our only saviour, and accept the gracious promise of God that through the death of Jesus all our sins are now forgiven, and we are clothed with the perfect righteousness of the Son of God.

Finally, let us examine our consciences to see whether we are committed to serve Jesus Christ as Lord, and in all things to live by his commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ... and ... your neighbour as yourself.”³

As we examine ourselves in this way, let us be assured that God graciously receives and welcomes to the table of his Son all who walk in this repentance and faith.

However, any who are still unrepentant or unbelieving eat and drink judgment to themselves if they partake.⁴ The Lord warns them through his apostle to abstain from this holy supper. As long as they wilfully continue in their sins they have no part in the kingdom of God.

However, this solemn warning is not intended to discourage the contrite hearts of believers, for we do not come to the supper on our own merit. On the contrary, we come testifying that we seek our salvation in Jesus Christ. By this testimony, we humbly confess that we are sinners and worthy of death. But we also confess that we believe the sure promise of God: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”⁵ This promise assures us that no sin or weakness which still remains in us against our will can hinder us from being received by God in grace and accounted worthy partakers of his heavenly food and drink.

With this assurance, let us come to the sacramental feast with a quiet conscience and a heart filled with faith, proclaiming the Lord’s death until he comes again.

Prayer

Let us turn to God in prayer:

Almighty God, our Father, by whose law all men are tried and by whose gospel we have hope, we look to you for aid.

Help us examine ourselves in the light of your law and give us hope through the gospel of Christ. You know our misery and weakness; have mercy and compassion upon us. Enable each of us, in the light of your holy Word, to search our hearts and acknowledge our sin. Help us also to see the fruit of your gracious work in our lives. Strengthen us by your Holy Spirit, so that we may live in sincere repentance and true faith.

We are thankful that you welcome us to the table of your Son. Graciously remove whatever may prevent our coming to the table. Let no love of sin or untruth, no pride or lust, no hatred or envy, no remnant of unbelief

remain in us to hinder our glad response as we remember the atoning death of our Saviour.

Hear us, we pray, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹ 1 Corinthians 11:23–29.

² 2 Corinthians 7:10.

³ Matthew 22:37, 39.

⁴ The reading of the following explanatory statement is optional:

... such as all who trust in any form of superstition; all who honour images or pray to saints; all who despise God's Word or the holy sacraments; all who take God's name in vain; all who desecrate the Lord's Day; all who are disobedient to those in authority over them; all drunkards, gamblers, murderers, thieves, adulterers, liars and unchaste persons.

⁵ 1 John 1:9.

Lord's Supper: preparatory form B

Beloved in Jesus Christ, since we hope next Lord's Day to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, God calls us to prepare ourselves by examining our hearts and lives. For the apostle Paul has written: "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup."¹

So, let us examine our lives to be sure that we humbly acknowledge God's displeasure with our ongoing sin, and sincerely turn away from all that is wrong.

Let us examine our hearts to be sure that we trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation, believing our sins are forgiven because of our Lord's sacrifice on the cross.

Let us examine our consciences to be sure that we resolve to live in faith and obedience before our Lord, and in love and peace with our neighbours.

Since it is necessary for us to come to the sacrament in good conscience, we urge any of you who lack this confidence to seek from the minister, an elder or a mature believer such counsel as may quiet your conscience or lead to the conversion of your life.

Anyone who is unrepentant, who does not trust in Jesus Christ, or who has no desire to lead a godly life, should refrain from the holy sacrament. If you are living in disobedience to Christ, or in hostility with your neighbour, you must repent of your sin and seek reconciliation. If you fail to do this, you partake of the sacrament unworthily and the Scriptures warn that you eat and drink judgment on yourself.²

This solemn warning is not designed, however, to discourage penitent sinners. We do not come to the supper trusting in our own righteousness, but rather testifying that we are sinners who look to Jesus Christ for our salvation. God will surely receive at the table of his Son all who are truly sorry for their sins, believe in Jesus Christ as their saviour, and desire to do his will. If this describes the condition of your heart, accept the invitation and come with gladness to the table of your Lord.

Prayer

Let us seek God's gracious help in prayer:

Almighty God, thank you for the gospel of salvation and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Please grant us the grace to prepare our hearts. Assure all who sincerely believe in your Son and truly repent of their sins that you will receive and bless them in the supper of their Lord.

However, grant a restraining fear to those who have not repented and have not put their trust in the Lord Jesus. Have mercy upon them, and grant them the gift of faith so that they may repent of their sins and seek grace and salvation in your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We confess, Father, that all of us have offended your majesty and deserve your judgment. We have sinned in thought, word and deed. Truly there is no good in us. Be merciful, O God, and pardon us as you have promised. For you are "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love."³ Let us come to the sacrament in the joy of your forgiving love. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

¹ 1 Corinthians 11:27–28.

² 1 Corinthians 11:29.

³ Psalm 103:8.

Lord's Supper: form 1

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, on the night in which he was delivered up to be crucified, the Lord Jesus instituted the sacrament of holy communion, saying, "Do this in remembrance of me."¹ In obedience to that command we now celebrate this memorial feast. We therefore invite all who have confessed Christ as their Lord, and who have truly examined themselves according to the admonition of the Apostle Paul, to come in contriteness of heart and assurance of faith to commune with Christ by partaking of this holy supper.

As we now draw near, let us consider the purposes for which the Lord has instituted his supper, namely, that we should keep it in remembrance of him, and that through this sacrament he should nourish and refresh us to eternal life.

To observe this holy supper in remembrance of him is to proclaim our Lord's death until he comes again. As we partake of this supper, therefore, we remember that our Lord Jesus Christ is the saviour promised in the Old Testament; that he is the eternal and only begotten Son of God; that he assumed our human nature, in which he fulfilled for us all obedience and the righteousness of God's law; and that he bore for us the wrath of God under which we should have perished everlastingly. We remember that he was bound that we might be loosed from our sins; that he was innocently condemned to death that we might be acquitted at the judgment seat of God; that he became a curse for us to fill us with his blessing; and that he humbled himself on the cross to hell's deep agony, which wrung from him the cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"² that God might never forsake us. We remember also that he was raised for our justification, that he is exalted at God's right hand, and that he shall come again to judge the living and the dead. And we remember that the shedding of his blood has confirmed for us the new and eternal covenant of grace.

As we commemorate the death of Jesus Christ, we are assured that he truly nourishes and refreshes us with his crucified body and shed blood to everlasting life. This he promises in the institution of the supper, saying of the bread, "This is my body"³ and of the wine, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."⁴ With

these words our Lord directs our faith to his perfect sacrifice, once offered on the cross, as the only basis of our salvation. He also assures us that by his death he has taken away our sin, the cause of our eternal death, and has obtained for us the life-giving Spirit. By this Spirit, who dwells in Christ as in the head and in us as his members, Christ brings us into true communion with himself and makes us share in all his riches, eternal life, righteousness and glory. By this same Spirit he unites us with all true believers in one body in true brotherly love, as the holy apostle says: “Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”⁵

And since it is said to us, “Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes,”⁶ we are assured by this holy supper that our Lord Jesus will come again to receive us to himself and that we shall sit down with him and drink the fruit of the vine with him in the newness of our Father’s kingdom.⁷

Prayer

That we may now obtain these blessings, let us ask God for his grace.

Merciful God and Father, your grace abounds beyond all our sins. In this supper, in which we commemorate the death of your dear Son, please work in our hearts so that we may yield ourselves ever more fully to Jesus Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, nourish and refresh us with the body and blood of Jesus Christ, that we may no longer live in our sins, but he in us, and we in him.

Confirm us in the covenant of grace, that we may be assured that you will forever be our gracious Father, forgiving our sins and abundantly providing us with all things necessary for body and soul, as your dear children and heirs.

Grant us your grace that we may cheerfully take up our cross, deny ourselves, confess our Saviour, and stand firm in all temptations and trials. Increase our longing for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven.

Answer us, O God and merciful Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, belong all praise and adoration, now and evermore. Amen.

While the table is being prepared an appropriate psalm or hymn may be sung.

The Apostles' Creed

As we now come to the table of the Lord, let us confess our Christian faith together using the words of the 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, dead, and buried;
he descended into hell⁸
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.

I believe a holy catholic⁹ church, the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

At this point the minister should indicate who may partake of the sacrament according to synodical regulations and local practice.

That we may be nourished with Christ, the true bread from heaven, let us lift up our hearts to Christ Jesus, our Advocate, at the right hand of his heavenly Father. Let us firmly believe all his promises, trusting that God will, through the working of the Holy Spirit, nourish and refresh us with Christ's body and blood, as surely as we receive the bread and wine in remembrance of him.

In breaking and serving the bread, the minister shall say:

The bread which we break is a communion of the body of Christ. Take, eat, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

In serving the cup the minister shall say:

The cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks is a communion of the blood of Christ. Take, drink, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was poured out for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

While the elements are being distributed, the minister may read fitting passages from Scripture, or a hymn may be sung.

After the communion the minister shall say:

Brothers and sisters, since the Lord has now nourished our souls at his table, let us jointly praise his holy name with thanksgiving, and let everyone say in his heart:

Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—
 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
 who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and
 compassion.

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever;
 he does not treat us as our sins deserve
 or repay us according to our iniquities.

For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
 so great is his love for those who fear him;
 as far as the east is from the west,
 so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion on his children,
 so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding,
 who obey his word.

Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.
Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion.

Praise the Lord, O my soul.¹⁰

To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!¹¹

Amen.

Thanksgiving

Let us pray.

Merciful God and Father, we thank you with all our hearts that in your boundless grace you have given us your only begotten Son.

We thank you that by true faith we share in Christ's benefits. And since you have through your Son Jesus Christ ordained the holy supper to strengthen our faith, we pray that through your Holy Spirit this remembrance of our Lord and proclamation of his death may truly increase our faith and enrich our fellowship with Christ. Also bring others into this blessed fellowship, so that all your children may be gathered in to share with us the joy of your salvation.

Hear us, heavenly Father, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

¹ Luke 22:19.

² Matthew 27:46.

³ Matthew 26:26.

⁴ Matthew 26:28.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 10:17.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:26.

⁷ Matthew 26:29.

⁸ That is, on the cross Jesus suffered the agony of hell which our sins deserved (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q. 44).

⁹ That is, God's people through all times and places (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q. 54).

¹⁰ Psalm 103:1–4, 8–13, 20–22.

¹¹ Revelation 5:13.

Lord's Supper: form 2

Beloved in the Lord, it is our joyful privilege and solemn duty to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Hear the words of the apostle Paul with respect to this supper: "I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."¹

Use one or more of the following four parts:

Part A—Remembering Christ's sacrifice

When Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me,"² he ordained this holy supper as a perpetual memorial of his death. The apostle Paul also teaches us that as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup we "proclaim the Lord's death."³ As we eat and drink we declare that our Lord Jesus was sent by the Father into the world, took upon himself our flesh and blood, and bore the wrath of God on the cross for us. We also confess that he came to earth to bring us to heaven, he was condemned to die that we might be pardoned, he died for us that we might live through him, and he was once forsaken by God that we might forever be accepted by him.

The sacrament thus confirms God's abiding love and covenant faithfulness. It is a seal of God's promises and assures us that we belong to his family. Let us therefore eat and drink, believing that God will always love us, accept us as his children, and keep all his promises to us for the sake of Jesus Christ his Son.

Part B—Union with Christ

[Moreover] As we eat the bread and drink the cup, we are fed with our Lord's crucified body and shed blood by his Spirit, through whom the body and blood of our Lord give life-giving nourishment to our souls.

Thus Christ unites us with himself and so imparts the precious benefits of his sacrifice to all who partake in faith.

The holy sacrament is also a means of grace that unites us with one another in the bond of the Spirit. For the apostle says that “we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”⁴ Thus, even as Christ unites us with himself, he strengthens the bond of communion between us, his children.

Part C—Christ’s return

The remembrance of our Lord’s death [also] revives in us the hope of his return. Since he commanded us to do this until he comes, the Lord assures us that he will come again to take us to himself. As we share now in the Lord’s Supper, we are assured that we shall one day see him face to face, and rejoice in the glory of his appearing. Our Lord Jesus will surely do what he has promised.

Part D—Confessional teaching

Appropriate segments of teaching regarding the Lord’s Supper from our confessions may be used (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 75–79, 81–82; Belgic Confession 33, 35; Westminster Confession of Faith 27, 29).

Invitation

For all who live in rebellion against God and in unbelief, this bread and wine will only bring further condemnation. If you do not yet confess Jesus Christ and seek to live under his gracious reign, the Scriptures warn you to abstain.⁵

However, all who repent and believe are invited to this sacred meal, not because you are worthy in yourself, but because you are clothed in Christ’s perfect righteousness. Do not allow the weakness of your faith or your failures in the Christian life to keep you from this table, for it is given to us because of our weakness and because of our failures—in order to increase our faith by feeding us with the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Let us draw near to his table, then, believing that he will strengthen us in faith, unite us in love, and establish us more firmly in the hope of his

coming. “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”⁶

Prayer

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we thank you for all the blessings of your grace. Above all we thank you for the most precious gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. We praise you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, for the gospel of reconciliation, for the church universal, for the ministry and the sacraments of the church, and the gift of eternal life.

Gracious Father, by your Spirit feed our souls with the crucified body and shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grant us the full assurance of your grace and fill our hearts with humble gratitude for your rich mercy. Unite us more fully with Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and with each other. Enable us, in newness of life, to pledge ourselves in service to Christ and others. Invigorate our hearts with living hope as we look forward to the coming of our Saviour in glory.

Answer us, O God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray, saying:

Version A

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power and the glory,
forever and ever.

Version B

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will
be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
forever and ever.

Amen.

| Amen.

Optional: As we draw near to the table of our Lord, let us confess our Christian faith:

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

And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary;
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
he descended into hell⁷
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.

I believe a holy catholic⁸ church, the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

At this point the minister should indicate who may partake of the sacraments according to synodical regulations and local practice.

Having approached the table, the minister shall say:

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”⁹ And elsewhere, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty ... Whoever comes to me I will never drive away.”¹⁰ Jesus also encouraged us with these words: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”¹¹

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us lift up our hearts to the Lord; let us lift them up to the God of our salvation.

As he breaks the bread, the minister shall say:

“The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’”¹²

At the appropriate time, the minister shall say:

Take, eat, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

As he takes the cup, the minister shall say:

“Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’”¹³

At the appropriate time, the minister shall say:

Take, drink, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

When the communion is completed, the minister may read an appropriate passage of Scripture, such as the following:

Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—
who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and
compassion.”¹⁴

God deserves the greatest praise. And so we say with the psalmist: “Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.”¹⁵

With all of God’s people, here and everywhere, we declare: “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”¹⁶ And, “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!”¹⁷
Amen.

One day every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them will sing: “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!”¹⁸

Prayer

Let us pray:

Almighty God, we offer you our most humble and hearty thanks that you have shown mercy to us. Thank you for giving us your Son to be our saviour.

We praise you for giving us this opportunity to declare his death and share it through the holy sacrament. We praise you for uniting us more fully with the body of Christ, and for assuring us that we are heirs of your heavenly kingdom.

May our commemoration of his death increase our faith, renew our hope, and strengthen our love. Enable us always to live for him who gave his life for us.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

¹ 1 Corinthians 11:23–26.

² Luke 22:19.

³ 1 Corinthians 11:26.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 10:17.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:27–32.

⁶ Revelation 1:5b–6.

⁷ That is, on the cross Jesus suffered the agony of hell which our sins deserved (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q. 44).

⁸ That is, God’s people through all times and places (cf. Heidelberg Catechism Q. 54).

⁹ Matthew 11:28–29.

¹⁰ John 6:35, 37b.

¹¹ Matthew 5:6.

¹² 1 Corinthians 11:23b, 24.

¹³ Matthew 26:27–28.

¹⁴ Psalm 103:1–4.

¹⁵ Psalm 145:21b.

¹⁶ Revelation 4:11.

¹⁷ Revelation 5:12.

¹⁸ Revelation 5:13.

Lord's Supper: form 3

In this service our Lord Jesus Christ offers us the opportunity of coming to his table to declare his death.

First hear, however, what is written in the gospels concerning the institution of the holy supper. On the night he was betrayed, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."¹ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."²

The Lord's Supper was given to us by Jesus Christ himself, and is to be observed until he comes again. It is a remembrance of his sacrifice, once for all, in his death. The bread and the wine represent the crucified body and the shed blood of the Saviour; they are received by true believers as signs and seals of all the benefits of his sacrifice on the cross. Those benefits include the forgiveness of sins, our nourishment and growth in faith, and communion with Christ and with all who believe in him. Furthermore, as signs and seals of the covenant of grace, they guarantee that God is faithful and will fulfil all his promises. They also summon us to deeper gratitude for our salvation, to renewed dedication to Christ, and to more faithful obedience.

Those who do not trust in Jesus for their salvation and have not repented of their sin, but live in disobedience to the Lord, are warned not to take part in the Lord's Supper, lest they eat and drink judgment on themselves.³

Nevertheless, this warning is not designed to keep the humble and contrite from the table of the Lord, as if the supper were for those who are free from sin. On the contrary, we come as guilty sinners. We confess that we are dependent for pardon on the sacrifice of Christ and base our hope of eternal life on his perfect obedience and righteousness. We come resolved to deny ourselves, crucify our old nature, and follow Christ as is fitting for those who bear his name.

So that we may partake to the glory of God and grow in the grace of Christ, let us set our hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.⁴

Prayer

So let us pray:

Merciful God and Father, work in our hearts by your Holy Spirit as we celebrate this supper, so that, more and more, in true faith, we may give ourselves to our Lord Jesus Christ. Feed our contrite hearts with him, our only heavenly bread. Strengthen our faith. Gracious Father, care for us, your children and heirs. Supply all our needs, in both body and soul. Grant us your grace to turn from our sin; to live in him, as he lives in us. Help us to take up our cross, deny ourselves and follow the Lord Jesus. While living in a broken world, we long for his return when all will be put right and made new. We pray, heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus, who was delivered up for our transgressions and raised for our justification, knowing that he is always praying for us in your presence. Amen.

Now lift up your hearts to heaven where Jesus Christ is, at the right hand of the Father. Believe that you shall be fed and refreshed with his body and blood by the working of the Holy Spirit, as you receive the bread and the wine in remembrance of him.

At this point the minister should indicate who may partake of the sacraments according to synodical regulations and local practice.

Communion

The bread which we break is a communion of the body of Christ. Take, eat, remember and believe that the body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

The cup of blessing for which we give thanks is a communion of the blood of Christ. Take, drink, remember and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the complete forgiveness of all our sins.

Let us now together pray the Lord's Prayer:

Version A

Version B

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

¹ Matthew 26:26.

² Matthew 26:27–29.

³ 1 Corinthians 11:27–32.

⁴ Colossians 3:1.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will
be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

Excommunication

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, we have previously made known to you that _____ *name*, a member of this church, has been leading an immoral and ungodly life and/or has been holding and teaching false doctrine. By _____ *his/her* sin _____ *he/she* has given great offence to the church of Christ. According to the command of our Lord, we have carefully and repeatedly warned _____ *him/her* of _____ *his/her* sin and its consequences, both alone and in the presence of one or two witnesses.¹ We have urged _____ *him/her* to repent. But it is with deep sorrow of heart that we announce to you that so far we have observed no evidence of true repentance and reformation of life. On the contrary, _____ *he/she* has hardened _____ *his/her* heart and continues in stubbornness and disobedience.

We are now duty bound, by the command of our Lord, to proceed to _____ *his/her* excommunication. We do this in order that _____ *he/she* may be made ashamed of _____ *his/her* sin, that this erring member of the church may not endanger the whole body, and that the name of God may not be blasphemed among us through _____ *him/her*.

We, therefore, the elders of this church, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, declare that _____ *name* is excommunicated from the church of Christ. Jesus said, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven."² As long as _____ *name* continues without repentance, _____ *he/she* is excluded from the communion of the saints, from the use of the sacraments, and from all the spiritual blessings and benefits that God gives to his church. Further, we exhort you to treat _____ *him/her* as an unbeliever.³ As a result, may _____ *he/she* be led to a deep sense of _____ *his/her* offence against God. Admonish and pray for _____ *him/her*, so that _____ *he/she* may be brought to repentance, and restored to the communion of the church.

Brothers and sisters, let us be humble, remembering that we also are surrounded by temptations. Observe how cunningly Satan leads men to destruction. He prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.⁴ So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall.⁵ Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.⁶ Beloved

Christians, let your fellowship be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit. Be completely humble and gentle,⁷ steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord.⁸

Prayer

O righteous God, most merciful Father, we grieve over our sins before your most high majesty. For Christ's sake, be gracious to us and forgive our sins. Work a godly sorrow for sin in our hearts, so that we may fear the judgments which you send upon the proud and rebellious. Look upon us in your mercy and enable us to continue in true faith, and to walk before you in true holiness. Since you take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live, we pray that _____ *name* may be brought to repentance. May we soon have cause to rejoice over _____ *name*, that your name may be praised, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who has taught us to pray:

Version A

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

Version B

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will
be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

¹ Matthew 18:15–16.

² Matthew 18:18.

³ Matthew 18:17.

⁴ 1 Peter 5:8.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 10:12.

⁶ Matthew 26:41.

⁷ Ephesians 4:2.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Readmission

Preliminary announcement

The following announcement is to be made to the congregation at least two weeks prior to the public readmission. If anyone has an objection, he is to bring it to the session in the time allocated.

Beloved in the Lord, some time ago _____ *name* was excommunicated from the church of Jesus Christ. It gives us great joy to announce that _____ *he/she* has repented of _____ *his/her* sin, and has requested to be readmitted to the communion of the saints. Unless one of you has a valid reason why this ought not to be done, we wish to inform you that on _____ *date* we shall receive _____ *him/her* again as a member of the church. We thank the Lord for his mercy shown to _____ *him/her* and pray that God will continue this work of grace in _____ *his/her* heart and life.

Afterwards, if no lawful objections are presented, the minister shall proceed to the readmission of the excommunicated sinner using the following form:

Form

Beloved Christians, we recently informed you of the repentance of _____ *name*, so that _____ *he/she* might be received again into the church of Christ. Having received no objections, it is with joy that we will now proceed with _____ *his/her* readmission.

Since God declares in his Word that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his way and live, the church always hopes for the restoration of the backslidden sinner, and is open to receive the penitent. The apostle Paul commanded that the man who had been excluded from the Corinthian church, and had then come to repentance, should be forgiven and comforted.¹ The Lord Jesus, who said, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven,” also assured us, “Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”² For this reason we are given authority to assure anyone who truly repents that

_____ *he/she* is certainly received by God in grace, as Christ has said, “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven.”³

Our Lord Jesus told his disciples that “there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”⁴ He went on to say that “in the same way ... there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”⁵ _____ *name*, today we rejoice with the angels in heaven over your change of heart and life. It is with joy and thankfulness to God that we welcome you back into the fellowship of the church.

In order that you may be readmitted as a member of this church, please come forward and respond to three questions:

_____ *name*, do you declare with all your heart, here before God and his church, that you are sincerely sorry for the sin on account of which you were excluded from the church?

Secondly, do you also truly believe that the Lord has forgiven your sins for Christ’s sake?

And thirdly, do you therefore desire to be readmitted to the church of Christ, promising from now on to live a godly life according to the command of the Lord?

What is your answer?

Answer: With all my heart, I do.

Then the minister shall further say:

We, then, being assembled here in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, declare you, _____ *name*, to be released from the state of excommunication. We receive you again into the church of the Lord. We declare that you are now received into the communion of Christ. You may now partake of the sacraments. You now share in all the spiritual blessings and benefits which God promises and gives to his church. May the eternal God preserve you to the end, through his one and only Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Therefore be assured in your heart, my beloved _____ *brother/sister*, that the Lord has received you in grace. Be diligent to guard yourself against

the subtlety of Satan and the wickedness of the world. Love and serve Christ in gratitude for your salvation.

And you, beloved Christians, receive your _____ *brother/sister* with Christian love; be glad, for _____ *he/she* was dead and is alive again; _____ *he/she* was lost and is found; rejoice with the angels of heaven over this sinner who repents; regard _____ *him/her* no longer as a stranger, but as a fellow citizen with the saints and a member of the household of God.

Prayer

Let us pray.

Gracious God and Father, we thank you through Jesus Christ that you have heard our prayers. Where there was death you have given life; where there was rebellion you have given repentance; where there was mourning you have given joy! In your goodness and by the power of your Holy Spirit you have brought _____ *name* back to the fold of your people.

We pray that you will continue your work of grace in the heart of our _____ *brother/sister*. May _____ *he/she* become more and more assured of your grace, rejoice in his salvation, delight to serve you and walk in your ways to the end. May we learn from this example that with you there is forgiveness and therefore you are feared. May all of us serve you with childlike fear and obedience all the days of our life, until we receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray:

Version A

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,

Version B

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will
be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,

and the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

the power and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.

¹ 2 Corinthians 2:5ff.

² Matthew 16:19.

³ John 20:23.

⁴ Luke 15:7.

⁵ Luke 15:10.

Ordination or installation of ministers of the Word

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

It is our privilege to witness the ordination/installation of our brother _____ *name* to the office of minister of the Word in this church.

Instruction

The Scriptures teach us that Jesus Christ, through his Word and Spirit, gathers, protects and preserves his church, and gives her teaching and care so that she may grow in faith, hope and love. All of us are called to serve in the church, but to some Christ has given special office. The Apostle Paul declares that Christ “gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”¹

Ministers are called by God to preach the gospel and to regard the faithful proclamation of the Word as their first responsibility.² They are ambassadors of Christ,³ and their preaching calls sinners to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. As shepherds of the flock, they also preach the gospel to nurture the congregation in the Christian faith and to strengthen it against error.⁴

The minister of the Word is called to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which Christ has given the church as visible signs and seals of God’s covenant with his people.

The minister of the Word is called to prayer. In speaking of their calling, the apostles say: “We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word”.⁵ It is the calling of ministers to lead the people of God in making “requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving ... for everyone.”⁶

The minister of the Word is called, together with the other elders, to rule over the people of God, giving guidance and counsel as necessary for the Christian life, exhorting them to contend earnestly for the faith,⁷ and instructing them in sound doctrine. They are appointed to shepherd the church of Christ, which he purchased with his own blood. They watch over the church of God to keep her in good order and discipline, supervising public worship and faithfully exercising the keys of the kingdom.

Ministers must watch their life and doctrine closely,⁸ striving continually to be filled with the Holy Spirit,⁹ and fanning into flame the gift of God which is in them.¹⁰

From all this it is clear that the ministry of the Word is a most responsible task and no one can do it faithfully in his own strength. Therefore, we look to our gracious Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is able to equip his servants for the work to which he has called them.

We rejoice that in his faithful love the Lord Jesus has provided a minister to serve as pastor and teacher of this congregation. With thankfulness, we receive this servant of the Lord from the hand of the Chief Shepherd.

Vows

Brother _____ *name*, so that the church may hear that you are willing to take up your office, please stand, and in the presence of God and his church answer the following questions:

1. Do you believe that, in the call of this congregation, you are called by God himself to serve in this holy office?
2. Do you believe that the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and do you reject every doctrine in conflict with them?
3. Do you believe that the whole system of doctrine as taught in the creeds and confessions of this church fully agrees with the Word of God?
4. Do you promise to carry out the work of your office faithfully, to love the church and all its members, to live a life worthy of your

calling, and to submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church?

Answer: I do, God helping me.

In the case of ordination, other office bearers present may be invited to come forward for the laying on of hands.

The officiating minister shall then say:

May God, our heavenly Father, who has called you to this holy office, guide you by his Word, equip you with his Holy Spirit, and so direct your ministry that his church may increase, his kingdom be extended, and his name be praised. Amen.

Charges

To the minister:

I charge you, brother and fellow-servant in Christ: preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. Endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.¹¹ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of truth.¹² Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.¹³ Keep watch over yourself and all the flock. Be a shepherd of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.¹⁴ Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity.¹⁵ Pray continually for the church. Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord,¹⁶ but be willing to suffer for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling.¹⁷ And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.¹⁸

To the congregation:

And I charge you, people of God: receive your minister in the Lord with all joy and hold him in honour.¹⁹ Receive the Word which he shall preach to you, not as the word of man but, as it actually is, the Word of God.²⁰ Submit to those whom God has placed over you, for they keep watch over you as men who must give an account. May they do this with joy and not

with sorrow, for that would be of no advantage to you.²¹ Pray for your minister, encourage him in his calling, and faithfully work with him to glorify God, to build up his church, and to draw the lost to Christ.

Prayer

Our merciful Father in heaven, thank you for providing faithful and gifted servants to build up the body of Christ. As our brother _____ *name* assumes the responsibilities of his office, we pray that you will fill him with the Holy Spirit.

Equip him with wisdom and give him strength for his task. May he work faithfully in your church. Under his guidance let your people grow in every spiritual grace, in vibrant faith and in committed service that promotes your reign in the world.

Deliver him from an attitude towards his office that is casual or self-assured. In his work grant him a humble dependence upon your grace, that he may come to you with all his needs.

Through his ministry preserve your church in peace, and may she grow in number and in holiness. Give him courage to fulfil his calling against every difficulty, and grant him power through your Spirit to be steadfast to the end.

May your people receive him as having been sent by you. May they receive his preaching and teaching with all reverence and, believing in Christ, become partakers of eternal life.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

¹ Ephesians 4:11–13.

² Timothy 4:1–2.

³ 2 Corinthians 5:20.

⁴ Titus 1:9.

⁵ Acts 6:4.

⁶ 1 Timothy 2:1.

⁷ Jude 3.

⁸ 1 Timothy 4:16.

⁹ Ephesians 5:18.

¹⁰ 2 Timothy 1:6.

¹¹ 2 Timothy 4:2, 5.

¹² 2 Timothy 2:15.

¹³ 1 Timothy 4:13.

¹⁴ Acts 20:28.

¹⁵ 1 Timothy 4:12.

¹⁶ 2 Timothy 1:8; Romans 1:16.

¹⁷ 2 Timothy 1:8–9.

¹⁸ 1 Peter 5:4.

¹⁹ Philippians 2:29.

²⁰ 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

²¹ Hebrews 13:17.

Ordination or installation of elders and deacons

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is our privilege to witness the ordination/installation of our brother _____ *name* to the office of elder and _____ *name* to the office of deacon.

Elders

The Scriptures direct that elders be appointed in every church.¹ The Word of God distinguishes between elders who labour particularly in preaching and teaching as ministers of the Word, and elders who are charged with the supervision of the church.²

The elders of the church are called to rule over the church as representatives of the Lord Jesus who, as the Chief Shepherd, has appointed overseers and shepherds to keep watch over all the flock. The elders are to love the church of Christ and encourage the members to attend faithfully to the means of grace, the proclamation of the Word and participation in the sacraments. They are faithfully to administer Christian discipline, admonishing those who do not live in obedience to the Lord and, lovingly and patiently, calling the stubborn and rebellious to repentance.

Elders are called to maintain public worship for the glory of God, and to build up the church in the knowledge and love of Christ. They are to provide for biblical preaching and teaching, carefully overseeing the ministry of the Word and the sacraments. They are to safeguard the church against false teaching. Those who serve well are assured that “when the Chief Shepherd appears, [they] will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.”³

Deacons

The office of deacon was instituted in the days of the apostles, who appointed suitable men to provide relief for the needy, leaving the apostles free to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.⁴

The Scriptures clearly teach that the Lord has regard for the afflicted who cry out with no one to help them. He takes pity on the weak and needy.⁵ Christ himself has compassion on the hungry and the thirsty, the stranger and the poor, the sick and those suffering for their faith. Believers who come to their aid are seen as doing this work for Christ.⁶ Through the ministry of mercy, therefore, deacons express the love of Christ. Their work ought to be governed by a spirit of compassion and kindness, love and cheerfulness. They should encourage believers to “do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”⁷

To this end deacons should urge the congregation to take an active part in the ministry of mercy and support the diaconate with generous giving and prayer. In the collection and disbursement of gifts required for their ministry, deacons should act with integrity, discretion and wisdom, comforting those whom they help with the Word of God and with prayer.

In their ministry of compassion, deacons should encourage God’s people in the hope of things to come, and remind them that “our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.”⁸ “Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.”⁹

Elders and deacons

Office bearers are set apart by God to fulfil their spiritual calling in the church. They cannot do it faithfully in their own strength so must look to their faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ, who is able to equip his servants for the holy work to which he has called them. We rejoice that in his faithful love the Lord Jesus has provided these men to serve in our church. With thankfulness, we receive these servants of the Lord from the hand of the Chief Shepherd.

Vows

Brothers _____ *names*, so that the church may hear that you are willing to take up your office, please stand, and in the presence of God and his church answer the following questions:

1. Do you believe that, in the call of this congregation, you are called by God himself to serve in this holy office?

2. Do you believe that the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and do you reject every doctrine in conflict with them?
3. Do you believe that the whole system of doctrine as taught in the creeds and confessions of this church fully agrees with the Word of God?
4. Do you promise to carry out the work of your office faithfully, to love the church and all its members, to live a life worthy of your calling, and to submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church?

Answer (to be given by each individually): I do, God helping me.

In the case of ordination, other office bearers present may be invited to come forward for the laying on of hands.

The officiating minister shall then say:

May God, our heavenly Father, who has called you to this holy office, guide you by his Word, equip you with his Holy Spirit, and so bless your ministry that his church may increase, his kingdom be extended, and his name be praised. Amen.

Charges

To the elders:

I charge you, dear brothers and fellow-servants in Christ: be diligent in the leadership of the church which is committed to you jointly with the other elders. Be shepherds of God's flock which is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be.¹⁰ Do not lord it over those entrusted to your care, but be an example to them.¹¹ Pray continually for the church. Be faithful watchmen over the house of God, ensuring that pure doctrine and godly living are maintained.¹² Be diligent in these matters; watch your life and doctrine closely; persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.¹³

To the congregation:

And I charge you, people of God: respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard because of their work. Live in peace with each other.¹⁴ Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.¹⁵ Pray for them, encourage them in their calling, and faithfully work with them to glorify God, to build up his church, and to draw the lost to Christ.

To the deacons:

I charge you, brothers and fellow-servants in Christ: do your work with the same compassion as the Lord showed to those in need.¹⁶ When showing mercy, do it cheerfully.¹⁷ Help the needy and afflicted, and have pity on the weak.¹⁸ Comfort and encourage, with material support and the Word of God, with prayer and good advice. Encourage God's people to carry each other's burdens and in this way fulfil the law of Christ.¹⁹ Pray continually for the church.

To the congregation:

And I charge you, people of God: acknowledge the deacons as ministers of God's mercy and provide them with generous contributions.²⁰ Excel in this grace of giving, showing thereby the sincerity of your love. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.²¹ Pray for them and encourage them as servants of the Lord.

Prayer

Our merciful Father in heaven,

We thank you for providing faithful and gifted servants to build up the body of Christ. As these brothers assume the responsibilities of their offices, we pray that you will fill them with the Holy Spirit. May we, your people, receive them as having been sent by you.

We ask that you will equip them with wisdom and give them strength for their tasks. May they be faithful workers in your vineyard. Under their guidance let your church grow in every spiritual grace, in faith which is

open and unashamed, and in the committed service that promotes the reign of Jesus Christ in the world.

Deliver them from an attitude toward their offices that is casual or self-assured. In their work grant them a humble dependence upon your grace that they may come to you with all their needs.

Through their ministry preserve your church in peace and may she grow in number and in holiness. Give them courage to fulfil their callings against every difficulty, and grant them power through your Spirit to be steadfast to the end.

We pray all this in Jesus' name, Amen.

¹ Titus 1:5.

² 1 Timothy 5:17.

³ 1 Peter 5:4.

⁴ Acts 6:1–6.

⁵ Psalm 72:12–13.

⁶ Matthew 25:31ff.

⁷ Galatians 6:10.

⁸ Romans 8:18ff.

⁹ 1 Timothy 3:13.

¹⁰ 1 Peter 5:2.

¹¹ 1 Peter 5:3.

¹² Acts 20:28.

¹³ 1 Timothy 4:16.

¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13.

¹⁵ Hebrews 13:17.

¹⁶ Matthew 14:14.

¹⁷ Romans 12:8.

¹⁸ Psalm 72:12–13.

¹⁹ Galatians 6:2.

²⁰ Romans 12:8.

²¹ 2 Corinthians 8:7–9.

Marriage

Note: This form is provided to give guidance to pastors conducting a Christian wedding.

Processional

At the time and place for the marriage the persons to be married shall take their place before the minister, the bridegroom having the bride to his left. The music of the processional shall be fitting, reflecting both the solemnity and the joy of the occasion.

Introduction

Dear friends, we gather in God's presence to witness the marriage of _____ *name* and _____ *name*, to share their joy on this occasion, and to pray God's blessing on them, both now and in the years to come.

Song of praise

Prayer

Almighty God, our gracious heavenly Father, you are the God of nature and of grace; the creator, preserver and redeemer of mankind; and the source of life and love, of joy and peace. We thank you for instituting marriage, and designing it to represent the spiritual union of Christ and his church. We praise you for creating us male and female, so that we may find companionship and joy in each other.

We have come together in your presence to witness this marriage. Grant that we would view neither this occasion, nor the promises made, lightly or irreverently. We acknowledge that we are dependent on your love and grace. Guard and keep our hearts and minds for the sake of our blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Instruction

God himself instituted marriage at the beginning in the Garden of Eden, before sin entered the world. He said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”¹ God then made woman out of man’s own body and brought her to the man. The Scriptures say, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”²

Our Lord Jesus confirmed marriage to be a divine ordinance and an unbreakable bond when he said, “Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”³ Husbands and wives are called to be faithful to one another until they are parted by death.

The apostle Paul describes the union of husband and wife as profoundly significant, depicting the union between Christ and his bride, the church.⁴ The Scriptures define the pattern for marriage with these words: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,”⁵ and “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.”⁶

Marriage is given so that husband and wife may serve the Lord together, seeking first the kingdom of God in all they do. Marriage is the foundation for a stable society and for ordered family life, where children may be born and raised in accordance with God’s will, in the community of his people, to his praise and glory. In marriage, a husband and wife are to comfort and help one another, living faithfully together in prosperity and adversity. Marriage is given also that they may love and know one another with all tenderness and delight, through the joy of their physical union.

Husband and wife will find mutual happiness in marriage as they follow the law of Christ; helping one another in all that is good, forgiving one another as God has forgiven them, and loving one another as they have been loved by Christ. Living in this way, their marriage will increasingly reflect the unity of Christ and his church, and anticipate the wedding feast of Christ and his bride.

_____ *name* and _____ *name*, having heard God’s instruction, do you believe it is God’s purpose for you to enter into this marriage and do you commit yourselves to fulfil your obligations to each other?

Answer: I do.

Solemnisation

*Question to the father of the bride:*⁷

Today the father of the bride will give his daughter in marriage, and the bride and groom will make solemn promises to each other. To this end I ask:

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

Answer: I do.

Exchange of vows

I now invite you to exchange your vows.

The couple now join hands and exchange their vows.

Bridegroom's vow

I _____ *full name* take you _____ *full name*
as my wife in Christian marriage.⁸

In the presence of God and before these witnesses,
I promise to love and cherish you,
comfort and honour you,
lead and provide for you,
for better for worse,
for richer for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
and be faithful to you,
as long as we both shall live.

Bride's vow

I _____ *full name* take you _____ *full name*
as my husband in Christian marriage.⁸

In the presence of God and before these witnesses,
I promise to love and cherish you,
comfort and honour you,
and submit to you in all things lawful,
for better for worse,
for richer for poorer,

in sickness and in health,
and be faithful to you,
as long as we both shall live.

Exchange of rings (*bridegroom then bride*)

I give you this ring as a symbol of my constant faithfulness and abiding love.

Declaration

According to the will of God, and the laws of New Zealand, I now declare that you, _____ *name* and _____ *name*, are husband and wife, in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, what God has joined together let man not separate. From now on you walk the pathway of life together. May the God of all grace bind you together in true love and faithfulness, and grant you his blessing.

Optional: You may now kiss the bride.

Prayer

Father in heaven, we thank you that today we have witnessed the joining of this couple in marriage.

We thank you for granting them the gift of saving faith; and that because of this, all the privileges of belonging to your church are theirs.

In your good providence you have brought them together. Grant them your wisdom. Work in them the grace of your Holy Spirit. Guide them in the way of righteousness and peace. May they love and serve you with one mind and heart all their days.

Give them steadfastness to keep the vows they have made; help them to be loyal and faithful to each other; may they support and encourage each other throughout their lives, bearing each other's burdens, and sharing each other's joys. Help them to be honest and patient with one another.

May their home be open to friends and to strangers alike. May they shine as lights in the world. May they be diligent in their work, active in the church, and useful citizens of your kingdom. May their life together bring joy to them, blessing to others and glory and honour to you. If it is your

will to grant them children, we pray that they may be wise and loving parents.

Keep them faithful to the Saviour to the end of their days. May this bride and groom, and their children after them, celebrate forever the marriage supper of the Lamb in the world to come with all the saints of God.

For we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Optional: Presentation from the session

Song

Scripture reading and sermon

Prayer

Song

Signing of the register

Presentation

The minister may conclude the service saying: It now gives me great pleasure to present to you, for the first time, Mr and Mrs _____ *surname*.

Recessional

¹ Genesis 2:18.

² Genesis 2:24.

³ Matthew 19:6.

⁴ Ephesians 5:25–33.

⁵ Ephesians 5:25.

⁶ Ephesians 5:22–23.

⁷ This helpfully highlights the biblical emphasis of a father giving his daughter in marriage. Where this question is inappropriate, an alternative question may be addressed to the parents of the bride and groom. “Do all of you rejoice in the step your children are about to take, and do you declare that you prayerfully stand behind them in their marriage?” Answer: We do.

⁸ This wording fulfils the legal requirements of the Marriage Act 1955.

Funeral

Note: This form is provided to give guidance to pastors conducting a Christian funeral.

Welcome

The minister may welcome family members, friends and brothers and sisters in Christ. After thanking those present for their support of the family, he shall continue:

We have come together before God in this service on the occasion of the death of _____ *name of deceased*, to thank God for _____ *his/her* life and witness among us, and for all God has done in and through _____ *him/her*.

We have also come together to comfort _____ *his wife/her husband* and family and friends with the words of the Scriptures, and with the hope that we share in Jesus Christ.

Opening Scripture sentences

The death of a loved one causes us to reflect on life and death. Listen to these words from the Scriptures:

“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.”¹

“For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.”²

Those who have put their trust in Christ may draw comfort from these words:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”³

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”⁴

Other possible Scriptures: Psalm 103:13, 14; 116:15; 124:8;
2 Corinthians 1:3ff.

The following elements of worship may then be used; the order is merely a guide.

Sing a psalm or hymn

Prayer

Almighty and gracious God, our Father in heaven, you are our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Lead us, we pray, to put our trust entirely in you. We come to you in the name of your one and only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who died for our sins and rose from the dead. Grant us peace and pardon, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Seeing that we have in Jesus a high priest who can sympathise with our weaknesses, we approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help us in this, our time of need.

We thank you for the precious promises of your Word. We praise you for the light of the gospel. We acknowledge your sovereign will and your infinite compassion. Look on us in our sorrow. Enable us to hear your Word, so that through patience, and the comfort of the Scriptures, we may have hope. Help us to hold firm our confidence in your forgiving mercy. Give us the assurance of eternal life, through the Lord Jesus, who bore our sins in his own body on the cross, who rose from the dead, and who is exalted at your right hand.

Amen.

An Old Testament Scripture reading:

Psalm 23; Psalm 27:1–5; Psalm 73:23–26; Psalm 90; Psalm 103;
Psalm 139.

Sing a psalm or hymn

A New Testament Scripture reading:

John 10:9–11, 27–30; John 14:1–3, 15–20, 25–27; Romans 5:1–11;
Romans 8:1–11; Romans 8:28–39; 1 Corinthians 15:20–28, 35–38, 50–58;

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11; 1 Peter 1:3–9;
Revelation 21:1–4, 22–27; Revelation 22:1–7.

Prayer

Almighty and most merciful God, we come to you again in prayer, acknowledging your sovereign power and your right as our Creator to give life, and to take it away, as it seems good to you. Help us to remember all your mercies, and your saving power revealed to us in Jesus Christ. We thank you for your grace given to _____ *name of deceased* in bringing _____ *him/her* to a saving faith in Christ.

We pray for those who are sad and grieving. May they accept your will. Enable them to trust in you as their God. Grant them the comfort of Christ. Uphold and strengthen them in this time of sorrow.

We pray that all of us who remain here may continue faithful to the end, following Jesus Christ, so that one day we may receive the crown of righteousness that will not fade away. May we be received into heaven, with all your elect, to adore you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

A psalm or hymn

Text and sermon

Prayer

A psalm or hymn

Benediction

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, now and forevermore.

Doxology or threefold amen

After the service opportunity may be given to members of the family and friends to speak about the life and faith of the deceased. Alternatively,

this opportunity may be given during the service; encourage those speaking to be brief.

¹ Job 1:21.

² 1 Timothy 6:7.

³ John 3:16.

⁴ John 11:25–26.

Committal or graveside service

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:12–22

The minister may invite those gathered to recite together the words of the Apostles' Creed or Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

Prayer

Almighty and merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, grant that we may realise the brevity and uncertainty of human life. Enable us to live before you in godly fear all our days. Help us to look for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We pray that you will comfort the sorrowing and support them in their grief. Raise us up each one from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Grant us faith in Christ, so that when we depart from this life, we may rest in him. At the resurrection may we be found acceptable in your sight, not through our own works, but in and through the merit of our Lord Jesus, who died on the cross and rose again.

Let us now pray the words that our Lord Jesus taught us to pray, saying:

Version A

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 trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power and the glory,
forever and ever.

Version B

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will
be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
forever and ever.

Amen.

| Amen.

Committal

As (or after) the casket is lowered the minister shall say:

Since it has pleased our good and gracious Lord to call into his glory our beloved

_____brother/sister _____name, we now commit _____his/her body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died, was buried, and rose again for us; and at whose coming in glorious majesty the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed, and made like his glorious body, according to the working of his power.

To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Read: Psalm 23

The Lord's blessing¹

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;

The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. Amen.

As soon as the service comes to an end the minister shall invite those gathered to drop flowers or to cast sand into the grave (if the family so desires) and to speak a personal word of comfort to the bereaved. He shall lead the way by doing so himself.

¹ Numbers 6:24–26.

CHURCH ORDER
OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

Church Order¹

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Introduction

Purpose of the Church Order

[Article 1](#)

In accordance with the apostolic injunction (1 Corinthians 14:40) that in the church of Christ all things are to be done decently and in order, the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, in this *Church Order*, regulate their organisation and activities, so that they may fulfil their calling according to the Scriptures and the Reformed confessions.

The main subjects treated in this Order are the church's offices, assemblies, worship and discipline.

Offices of the church

Two kinds of offices

[Article 2](#)

The ordinary and perpetual offices of the church, as instituted by the authority of Christ for the church, may be classified under two heads, as elders and deacons.

Eligibility for office

[Article 3](#)

Only communicant members of the church who meet the biblical requirements for office bearers are eligible for office. No one shall hold

and exercise an office in the church without a lawful call and ordination or installation.

Legal call to the office

[Article 4](#)

The call to an office shall be executed by the session as follows:

1. Prior to making nomination, the session shall ordinarily give the congregation an opportunity to place names in nomination.
2. From these names and/or nominations made by the session, twice the number to be elected shall ordinarily be presented to the congregation.
3. The names of those being presented by the session shall be announced to the congregation on two successive Lord's Days to allow for lawful objections.
4. After prayer the election by the congregation shall take place under supervision of the session.
5. The right to vote shall be limited to communicant members in good standing.

Ordination/installation

[Article 5](#)

All office bearers shall be ordained or installed in public worship services with the use of the prescribed forms.

Duration of office

[Article 6](#)

Elders and deacons shall ordinarily serve a term of three years or more, according to local regulations.

Re-election or extension of office

[Article 7](#)

Retiring elders and deacons shall be succeeded by others unless the circumstances and the well-being of any church render re-election or extension of time advisable.

Installation only

[Article 8](#)

When any office bearer has already been ordained, upon re-election to the same office, he shall be installed only.

Form of Subscription

[Article 9](#)

When office bearers are ordained or installed, they shall be required to sign the synodically accepted Form of Subscription.

Ministers of the Word

Who is eligible for call

[Article 10](#)

The following shall be eligible for call as ministers of the Word and sacraments:

1. Those who have followed the synodically prescribed course of study, and have subsequently been declared candidates by presbytery;²
2. Those who are already in the ministry of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand or a sister church;
3. Ministers of other denominations who have been declared eligible for call by presbytery;
4. Those who have been declared candidates according to Article 12 of this Church Order.

Colloquium doctum

[Article 11](#)

No minister shall be received from any other denomination without a colloquium doctum prior to his installation (a colloquium doctum is understood to be a thorough investigation of the theological training and ministerial record and a careful examination regarding soundness in the Reformed faith, exemplariness of life, and motives for seeking the ministry in the Reformed Churches of New Zealand).³

Exemptions in the case of exceptional gifts

[Article 12](#)

Persons who have not pursued the regular study in preparation for the ministry of the Word shall not be admitted to the ministry, unless there is assurance of their exceptional gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, common sense and discretion, as also gifts of public address.

When such persons present themselves for the ministry, the presbytery, with the consent of synod, shall first examine them, and further deal with

them as it shall deem edifying, according to the general regulations of the churches.

Credentials necessary to move elsewhere

[Article 13](#)

A minister once lawfully called may not leave the congregation with which he is connected to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the session and knowledge of the presbytery.

Likewise, no other church may receive him until he has presented a proper certificate of dismissal from the church and the presbytery where he served.

Proper support, no rash dismissal

[Article 14](#)

The session, as representing the congregation, shall provide for the proper support of its ministers and shall not dismiss them from service without the knowledge and approbation of the presbytery and synodical examiners.

Secular vocation

[Article 15](#)

Ministers of the Word may not enter upon a secular vocation except for such weighty reasons as shall receive the approval of presbytery.

Temporary or permanent release from service to a congregation

[Article 16](#)

1. A minister who for weighty reasons desires a temporary release from service to the congregation must have his application for release approved by his session, which continues to have supervision over him.

2. A minister who is not eligible for retirement or worthy of discipline may for weighty reasons be released from service in a congregation through action initiated by himself or by his session. Such release shall be given only with the approval of presbytery, with concurring advice of the synodical examiners, and in accordance with synodical regulations.

- a. The session shall provide for the support of a released minister in such a way and for such a time as shall receive the approval of presbytery.
- b. A minister of the Word who has been released from service in a congregation shall be eligible for call for a period of two years, after which time the presbytery, with the concurring advice of the

synodical examiners, shall declare him to be released from ministerial office.

(2 a & b were formerly Art. 16B – Acts of Synod 2005, Art. 99, Section 5.)

Emeriti ministers' title retained

[Article 17](#)

Ministers who by reason of sickness or otherwise are rendered incapable of performing the duties of their office, shall nevertheless retain the honour and title of a minister, and the church which they have served shall provide honourably for them (likewise, for the orphans and widows of ministers) out of the common fund of the churches, according to the general regulations of the churches.

Preaching elsewhere without consent

[Article 18](#)

A minister shall not be permitted to conduct worship services in the locality of a Reformed church other than his own without the consent of the session of that church.

A minister shall not conduct a worship service in a non-sister church without informing the session of the local Reformed church.

Duties in regular service

[Article 19](#)

The task of the minister is: to expound the Holy Scriptures, to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors, to administer the sacraments, to continue in prayer, to watch over his brethren, the elders and deacons as well as the congregation, to catechise the youth, and with the other elders to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in order.

Licensed students to exhort in public

[Article 20](#)

Only students who are licensed according to synodical regulations shall be permitted to exhort in the public worship services.

Students conducting worship services

[Article 21](#)

Students who have received permission, according to the rule in this matter, and persons who have, according to Article 12, been judged competent to be prepared for the ministry of the Word, shall, for their own

training and for the sake of becoming known to the congregations, be allowed to conduct worship services under proper supervision.

Christian education

[Article 22](#)

The session shall encourage the parents to make every possible effort to ensure that the children of believers receive proper Christian education and catechetical instruction.

Ruling elders

Duties of elders

[Article 23](#)

The task of the elders is to rule in the name of the ascended King, and as servants of the great Shepherd, care for the flock.

They shall therefore: ensure that the gospel is preached every Sunday, see to it that the sacraments are faithfully administered, exercise Christian discipline, resist false doctrine and error, visit the members of the congregation at least annually in order that they may comfort, instruct and encourage each one according to need, visit the sick and the bereaved, promote evangelism, see to it that everything is done decently and in order and that their fellow office bearers faithfully discharge their respective offices, having particular regard to the doctrine and conduct of the minister of the Word.

Deacons

Duties of deacons

[Article 24](#)

The task of the deacons is: to diligently collect alms and other contributions of charity, to faithfully and diligently distribute the same to the poor as their needs may require after mutual counsel, to visit and comfort the distressed, to encourage the congregation to show Christian mercy to those in need at home and abroad, and to render an account to the session.

Assemblies of the church: general

Three kinds of assemblies

[Article 25](#)

The assemblies of the church are: the session, the presbytery and the synod.

Legal matters to consider

[Article 26](#)

In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be determined in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common.

In all assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be dealt with.

Decisions by common consent preferred

[Article 27](#)

Decisions of ecclesiastical assemblies shall be reached only upon due consideration and whenever possible by common consent; if unanimity on an issue cannot be reached, the minority shall abide by the judgment of the majority.

Appeal to major assemblies

[Article 28](#)

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to a major assembly.

Compliance on matters of conscience

[Article 29](#)

Assemblies may not compel compliance on the part of a minority in matters of conscience not clearly defined in the Word of God and the Forms of Unity.

Devotionals

[Article 30](#)

All assemblies shall begin and end their sessions with prayer.

Credentials and instructions

[Article 31](#)

Those who are delegated to the assemblies shall bring with them their credentials and instructions, signed by those sending them, and they shall have a vote in all matters, except such as particularly concern their own persons or churches.

Advisory members

[Article 32](#)

All office bearers may be seated at major assemblies as advisory members, but only those delegated shall have the right to vote.

Duty of the clerk

[Article 33](#)

In all assemblies there shall be not only a moderator, but also a clerk to keep a faithful record of all important matters.

Duties of the moderator

[Article 34](#)

The task of the moderator is to state and explain the business to be transacted, and to see that good order is maintained. In the case of major assemblies this function shall cease when the assembly is dismissed.

Authority of major assemblies

[Article 35](#)

Each assembly exercises, in keeping with its own character and domain, the ecclesiastical authority entrusted to the church by Christ; the authority of sessions being original, that of major assemblies being delegated.

The presbytery has the same authority over the session as the synod has over the presbytery.

Assemblies of the church: session

Constituency of session

[Article 36](#)

In all churches there shall be a session, composed of elders (ruling and teaching) who shall meet regularly according to local regulations, but at least once a month.

According to local regulations, the deacons may meet with the session and shall invariably do so whenever the total number of elders is less than three.

Formation of a session

[Article 37](#)

In places where the session is to be constituted for the first time, this shall only take place with the advice of the presbytery.

Where there is no session

[Article 38](#)

Where as yet no session can be constituted, groups of believers shall be placed under the care of a neighbouring session.

Vacant church: counsellor

[Article 39](#)

When a church is without a minister, the session shall request presbytery to designate a minister of a neighbouring church as counsellor. The session shall consult the counsellor on all important matters, especially regarding the calling of a minister. The counsellor shall attend the session meetings whenever requested to do so.

Meetings of deacons

[Article 40](#)

The deacons shall meet regularly according to local regulations but at least once per month to transact the business pertaining to their office.

Co-operation of the congregation

[Article 41](#)

The session, besides seeking the co-operation of the congregation in the election of office bearers, may also invite its judgment about other matters, except those which pertain to the supervision and discipline of the congregation.

Congregational meeting

[Article 42](#)

The session shall call a meeting at least annually of all members entitled to vote. Such a meeting shall be conducted by the session.

Authority remains with the session

[Article 43](#)

Although full consideration shall be given to the judgment expressed by the congregation, the authority of making and carrying out final decisions remains with the session as the governing body of the church.

Congregational judgment on property

[Article 44](#)

In matters of acquiring and disposing of property, the session shall not act against the judgment expressed by the majority of the congregation.

Assemblies of the church: presbytery

Constituency of presbytery

[Article 45](#)

The presbytery meetings shall consist of neighbouring churches that respectively delegate, with proper credentials, at least two office bearers (ordinarily a minister and an elder) to meet at such time and place as was determined at the previous presbytery meeting.

Regularity of meetings

[Article 46](#)

Presbytery meetings shall ordinarily be held at least once in four months.

The task of presbytery

[Article 47](#)

At least annually the moderator shall present the following questions to the delegates of each church:

1. Are the session meetings regularly held in your church and are they held according to the needs of the congregation?
2. Are all the office bearers individually and collectively striving earnestly to serve the congregation?
3. Is church discipline faithfully exercised?
4. Does the session diligently promote the cause of Christian education (including Christian day schools)?
5. Does the session diligently promote the cause of missions, both at home and abroad?
6. Does the session seek presbytery's advice on any matter?

Church visitation

[Article 48](#)

Presbytery shall make provision for church visitation at least once per year. Each church shall be visited by two elders (one of whom shall ordinarily be a minister). The synodically approved questionnaire shall be followed in general and a report of each visit rendered to presbytery (Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 114).

Assemblies of the church: synod

Constituency and meetings of synod

[Article 49](#)

The churches shall meet in general synod at least once every three years.

The calling church

[Article 50](#)

At the close of each synod the time and place of the next synod shall be fixed and a particular church designated to convene it. The calling church,

by request of a majority of the other churches, may reset the time and/or place.

Synodical committees

[Article 51](#)

Synod shall appoint such committees as it deems expedient to execute its decisions.

Delegates to synod

[Article 52](#)

Each church shall be represented in synod by two elders (one of whom shall ordinarily be a minister). Under exceptional circumstances one delegate may be a deacon.

Supervision of public worship

The call to corporate worship

[Article 53](#)

The session shall call the congregation for corporate worship ordinarily twice on the Lord's Day. Corporate worship services on other days than the Lord's Day are left to the freedom of the churches.

Supervision of worship services

[Article 54](#)

The worship services shall be conducted under the supervision of the session and shall be in keeping with synodical regulations.

Sermons for reading services

[Article 55](#)

In reading services only sermons approved by the sessions shall be used.

Exposition of confessional standards

[Article 56](#)

Ordinarily at one of the services on each Lord's Day the Word shall be expounded as summarised in the confessional standards.

The administration of the sacraments

[Article 57](#)

The sacraments shall be administered by the authority of the session in a public worship service (ordinarily by a minister of the Word) with the use of the prescribed forms.

Baptism

[Article 58](#)

The covenant of God shall be sealed by holy baptism unto children of believers, including children legally adopted by members of the congregation. The session shall see to it that baptism is requested and administered as soon as feasible.

Public profession of faith

[Article 59](#)

Members by baptism and adults who have not been baptised shall be admitted to communicant membership upon public profession of faith with the use of the prescribed form. Before the profession of faith, the session shall examine them concerning motives, doctrine and conduct. Those who have not been baptised shall receive holy baptism upon profession of faith.

Certificates of membership

[Article 60](#)

Communicant members coming from other Reformed Churches of New Zealand shall be admitted to communicant membership upon the presentation of certificates of membership attesting their soundness in doctrine and life. The same rule shall apply to those coming from other denominations with which the Reformed Churches of New Zealand maintain sister church relationships.

Guests at the Lord's table

[Article 61](#)

Persons belonging to denominations other than sister churches may be admitted as guests at the Lord's table only if the session has ascertained that they profess the true religion and walk uprightly.

Admitting members from non-sister churches

[Article 62](#)

Persons coming from denominations other than sister churches shall be admitted to communicant membership only after the session has examined them concerning doctrine and conduct.

The session shall determine in each case whether or not public profession of faith shall be required.

Lawful objections to profession of faith candidates

[Article 63](#)

The names of those who wish to make a public profession of faith shall be announced to the congregation at least one Lord's Day beforehand, so that lawful objections may be raised, should any exist.

Lord's Supper

[Article 64](#)

The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least once every three months.

Marriages and funerals

[Article 65](#)

Ministers shall not solemnise any marriage which is not approved beforehand by the session of the church. Upon request, the session should provide for the preaching of the Word of God at the funeral of deceased members of the congregation (Acts of Synod 2011, Art. 124-7).

Psalms and hymns

[Article 66](#)

In the worship services of the church only the 150 Psalms and the collection of hymns for church use, approved and adopted by synod, shall be sung.

However, while the singing of Psalms in divine worship is a requirement, the use of the approved hymns is left to the freedom of the churches.

Christian discipline: general

The purpose of discipline

[Article 67](#)

The purpose of Christian discipline is:

1. to vindicate the honour of the Lord,
2. to maintain the purity of the church, and
3. to promote the welfare of the believer.

Who is subject to Christian discipline

[Article 68](#)

All members of the church are subject to Christian discipline respecting both doctrine and life. Likewise, all members are responsible to watch over and admonish one another in love.

The means of Christian discipline

[Article 69](#)

Christian discipline is exercised exclusively by spiritual means, which are:

1. **Admonition:** Tenderly and solemnly confronting the offender with his sin, warning him of his danger and exhorting him to repentance and to greater fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. **Rebuke:** A form of censure more severe than admonition, which consists in setting forth the serious character of the offence, reproving the offender, and exhorting him to repentance and to more perfect fidelity to Christ.
3. **Suspension:** Depriving of the privileges of membership in the church, or office, or of both, either for a definite or an indefinite time.

Suspension of an officer-bearer from the privileges of membership shall always be accompanied by suspension from office, but the latter does not necessarily involve the former.

4. **Deposition:** Depriving an office bearer of his office.
5. **Excommunication:** A solemn declaration by a church assembly that it no longer regards the offender as a member of the body of Christ.

Disciplinary steps only after investigation

[Article 70](#)

Disciplinary measures shall be applied only after an adequate investigation has been made and the accused has been given ample opportunity to present his case.

Private and public offences

[Article 71](#)

Christian discipline is concerned with offences that are either private or public.

Private offences

[Article 72](#)

Private offences are those which are known to an individual only or, at most, to a very few individuals. In these cases the rule prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18:15–17 shall be followed.

Public offences

[Article 73](#)

Such private sins as have been dealt with according to the previous article shall be deemed to have assumed the character of public offences if the admonition and rebuke of the session also is despised.

What is a public offence

[Article 74](#)

Public offences are such as have become widely known.

Reconciliation of the offender

[Article 75](#)

Those who have committed a public offence shall be reconciled to the church by the session upon sufficient evidence of repentance. In case of extremely grave offence a session may demand public confession of the sin. This shall not take place without the concurrence of presbytery.

Suspension of members

[Article 76](#)

Communicant members who obstinately reject the admonition and rebuke of session shall be suspended from the privileges of communicant membership.

Excommunication of members

[Article 77](#)

Communicant members who have been suspended and persist in disregarding the admonition and rebuke of the session, shall finally be excommunicated with the use of the prescribed form.

Announcement before excommunication

[Article 78](#)

The session, before excommunicating anyone, shall make three announcements in which the obstinacy of the sinner and the nature of his offence are explained, and the congregation is urged to pray for him and to admonish him.

1. In the first announcement neither the name of the sinner nor the sin shall be mentioned;
2. In the second announcement (with the concurrence of the presbytery) the name of the sinner and the sin shall be made known;
3. In the third announcement, the congregation shall be informed that, unless the sinner repents, he will be excommunicated at a specified date.

Reconciliation of the excommunicant

[Article 79](#)

When anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the church, the session, having satisfied itself as to the sincerity of his repentance, shall announce this fact to the congregation. If no valid objections are presented, he shall be restored to the fellowship of the church, with the use of the prescribed form.

Rebuke of baptised members

[Article 80](#)

Mature members by baptism who are delinquent in doctrine or life shall be rebuked, and if they persist, shall be excluded from the church of Christ.

Return into the membership of baptised members

[Article 81](#)

Members by baptism who have been excluded from the church and who later repent of their sin shall be received again into the church only upon public profession of faith.

Discipline of office bearers

Suspension and deposition from office

[Article 82](#)

Office bearers, besides being subject to general discipline with all other members of the church, are also subject to special discipline which consists of suspension and deposition from office.

Special discipline of office bearers

[Article 83](#)

Special discipline shall be applied to office bearers if they violate the Form of Subscription, are guilty of neglect or abuse of office or in any other way seriously deviate from sound doctrine and godly conduct.

Concurrence of suspension from nearest session

[Article 84](#)

Suspension from office shall ordinarily precede deposition and shall be imposed by the session only with concurrence of the session of the nearest church in the same presbytery.

Deposition with concurrence of presbytery

[Article 85](#)

If the suspended office bearer does not give heed to repeated admonition and rebuke on the part of both the session and the presbytery, the session shall depose him with the concurrence of presbytery.

Deposition of a minister

[Article 86](#)

In case of a minister such a deposition shall not take place without the consent of presbytery and all the synodical examiners.

Suspension lifted upon repentance

[Article 87](#)

The suspension of an office bearer shall be lifted either upon sufficient evidence of repentance or by successful appeal.

Prerogative of assembly

[Article 88](#)

The lifting of suspension upon sufficient evidence of repentance is the prerogative of the assembly which imposed the suspension.

Restoration of deposed office bearer

[Article 89](#)

A deposed office bearer shall not be restored unless he gives sufficient evidence of repentance and it be evident that this restoration will be for the good of the church.

Censura morum

[Article 90](#)

Office bearers shall, before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, exercise Christian censure (censura morum) among themselves and in a brotherly spirit admonish one another with regard to the discharge of their office.

Administration

Certificate of membership

[Article 91](#)

Communicant members who move to another Reformed church are entitled to a certificate, issued by the session, concerning their doctrine and life.

Who receives the certificate

[Article 92](#)

Certificates of membership shall ordinarily be given to the member concerned, and in addition a notice shall be sent to the church nearest to their residence.

Certificate of membership by baptism

[Article 93](#)

Members by baptism who move to another Reformed church shall be granted a certificate of membership by baptism, to which such notations as are necessary shall be attached. Such certificates shall, as a rule, be mailed to the church of their residence.

Those who move without requesting a certificate

[Article 94](#)

In cases of communicant members and members by baptism, who move to another area without requesting a certificate, notice shall be sent to the nearest Reformed church.

Lording over one another

[Article 95](#)

No church shall in any way lord it over another church and no office bearer shall lord it over another office bearer.

Revision of the Church Order

[Article 96](#)

This Church Order, having been adopted by common consent, shall be faithfully observed, and any revision thereof shall be made only by synod.

¹This is the 2014 RCNZ Church Order

² Theological candidates are eligible for call who have successfully completed the prescribed course of study at the Reformed Theological College, Geelong, Australia, or its equivalent (Acts 1989, Art. 19.b).

³ The colloquium doctum for ministers coming from sister churches is to be understood as not being the equivalent of a final examination, but is to focus on soundness of doctrine, sanctity of life and knowledge and appreciation of the practice and usage of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (Acts 1989, Art. 19.d).

Form of Subscription

We, the undersigned, office bearers of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, do hereby, sincerely and in good conscience before the Lord, declare by this our subscription that we heartily believe and are persuaded that the whole system of doctrine as taught in the Belgic and Westminster Confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort, does fully agree with the Word of God.

We therefore promise to teach diligently and to defend faithfully the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same by our public preaching or writing.

We declare moreover that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors.

And if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the session, presbytery or synod, that the same may be examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the session, presbytery or synod, under penalty, in case of refusal, of being by that very fact suspended from our office.

Furthermore, if at any time the session, presbytery or synod may deem it proper to require of us a further explanation of our sentiments respecting any particular doctrine of any of the afore mentioned standards, we do hereby promise to be always willing and ready to comply with such requisition, under the penalty above mentioned, reserving for ourselves however the right of appeal in case we should believe ourselves aggrieved by the sentence of the session or the presbytery, and until a decision is made upon such an appeal, we will acquiesce in the determination and judgment already passed.

Guidelines to the Form of Subscription

Synod 1977 (Acts 1977, Art. 76.6) decided that the following should be appended to the Form of Subscription. Previously synod 1971 (Acts 1971, Art. 45) had declared that subscription by office bearers is understood in the following way:

- a. That the person making subscription subscribes to *all* the doctrines set forth in the confessions, as being doctrines which are the teaching of the Word of God;
- b. That the subscriber so subscribes to all these doctrines, be they understood in the eyes of men as being *major or minor* doctrines of the Christian faith, without any reservation on his part, and that he confesses these doctrines to be his own understanding of the teaching of the Word of God, desires to maintain such, and rejects all other teachings which would contradict the same;
- c. That the subscriber *does not* by his subscription declare that the statements of these doctrines are formulated in the best manner, or with the use of the best words, or that the confessional standards of our denomination cover *all* the teaching of the Scriptures on the matters confessed, or that every teaching of Scripture is dealt with by the confessional standards, or that the confessional standards of our denomination refute all the heresies that now exist (Report 17 section 2, Acts 1969, p. 79 slightly amended);
- d. That only the doctrines intentionally conveyed are binding and not such allusions, or incidental remarks, or propositions which can be derived from the confessions are binding. Nevertheless no one is free ultimately to decide for himself or for the church what is and what is not a doctrine contained in the standards. If such a question should arise the Form of Subscription itself specifies quite clearly that it is the decision of the court of the church that shall be sought, reached and acquiesced in, in every case.