

DOCTRINAL WORKS IN THE REFORMED TRADITION

by Various Reformed Authors

A compilation of foundational Reformed doctrinal documents, beginning with the Belgic Confession which originated in the Southern Netherlands. The collection presents the major creeds and confessions that define the Christian Reformed theological tradition.

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The Belgic Confession

The Belgic Confession

Introduction The first of the doctrinal standards of the Christian Reformed Churches is the Confession of Faith. It 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 officebearers of the Churches were required to subscribe. Its excellence as one of the best symbolical statements of Reformed doctrine has been generally recognized.

True Christian Confession - Containing the Summary of the Doctrine of God and of the Eternal Salvation of Man Article 1 - There Is Only One God

We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth that there is only one God, who is a simple and spiritual Being; He is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good, and the overflowing fountain of all good.

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, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many letters leading us to perceive clearly the invisible qualities of God namely His eternal power and deity, 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 Word as far as is necessary for us in this life, to His glory and our salvation.

Article 3 - The Word of God

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

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 1:1-22 and 2 Samuel 1:1-27 and 2 Kings 1:1-18 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther; Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The books of the New Testament: the four gospels, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles; the thirteen letters of the apostle Paul, namely, Romans 1:1-32 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians 1:1-29 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon; the letter to the Hebrews; the seven other letters, namely, James 1:1-27 and 2 Peter 1:1-21; 2 Peter 2:1-22 and 3 John, Jude; and the Revelation to the apostle John.

Article 5 - The Authority of Holy Scripture

We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith. 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, and also because they contain the evidence thereof in themselves; for, even the blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are being fulfilled.

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 Man 1:1 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. 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: yes, even if it be an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul says. Since it is forbidden to add to or take away anything from the Word of God, it is evident that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects.

We may not consider any writings of men, however holy these men may have been, of equal value with the divine Scriptures; nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, since the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and lighter than a breath. We therefore reject with all our heart whatever does not agree with this infallible rule, as the apostles have taught us: Test the spirits to see whether they are of God. Likewise: If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting.

Article 8 - God Is One In Essence, Yet Distinguished in Three Persons

According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God, who is one single essence, in which are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct according to their incommunicable properties; namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is the cause, origin, and beginning of all things visible and invisible. The Son is the Word, the wisdom, and the image of the Father. The Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might who proceeds from the Father and the Son. 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, or without His Holy Spirit. For They are all three co-eternal and co-essential. There is neither first nor last; for They are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy.

Article 9 - Scripture Proof of This Doctrine

All this we know both from the testimonies of Holy Scripture and from the respective works of the three Persons, and especially those we perceive in ourselves. The testimonies of Scripture which lead us to believe this Holy Trinity are written in many places of the Old Testament. It is not necessary to mention them all; it is sufficient to select some with discretion. In the book of Genesis God says: Let Us make man in our image after our likeness So God created man in His own image ...; male and female He created them. Also: Behold, the man has become like one of Us. From God's saying, Let Us make man in Our image, it appears that there are more divine persons than one; and when He says, God created, He indicates that there is one God. It is true, He does not say how many persons there are, but what seems to be somewhat obscure in the Old Testament is very plain in the New Testament. For when our Lord was baptized in the river

Jordan, the voice of the Father was heard, who said, This is My beloved Son; the Son was seen in the water, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form as a dove. For the baptism of all believers Christ prescribed this formula: Baptize all nations into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. In the gospel according to Luke the angel Gabriel thus addressed Mary, the mother of our Lord: The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. Likewise: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. In all these places we are fully taught that there are three persons in one only divine essence.

Although this doctrine far surpasses all human understanding, nevertheless in this life we believe it on the ground of the Word of God, and we expect to enjoy its perfect knowledge and fruit hereafter in heaven.

Moreover, we must observe the distinct offices and works of these three Persons towards us. The Father is called our Creator by His power; the Son is our 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.

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, begotten from eternity, not made, nor created - for then He would be a creature - but of the same essence with the Father, equally-eternal, who reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature, and is equal to Him in all things. He is the Son of God, not only from the time that He assumed our nature but from all eternity, as these testimonies, when compared with each other, teach us: Moses says that God created the world; the apostle John says that all things were made by the Word which he calls God. The letter to the Hebrews says that God made the world through His Son; likewise the apostle Paul says that God created all things through Jesus Christ. Therefore it must necessarily follow that He who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ, did exist at that time when all things were created by Him. Therefore He could say, Truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am, and He prayed, Glorify Thou Me in Thy own presence with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was made. And so He is true, eternal God, the Almighty, whom we invoke, worship, and serve.

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

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, 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. Some of these have fallen from the exalted position in which God created them into everlasting perdition, 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. With all their might, they lie in wait like murderers to ruin the Church and all its members and to destroy everything by their wicked devices. They are therefore by their own wickedness sentenced to eternal damnation and daily expect their horrible torments.

Therefore we detest and reject the error of the Sadducees, who deny that there are any spirits and angels; 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.

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, but that according to His holy will He so rules and governs them that in this world nothing happens without His direction. Yet God is not the Author of the sins which are committed nor can He be charged with them. 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. 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, 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. This doctrine gives us unspeakable consolation, for we learn thereby that nothing can happen to us by chance, but only by the direction of our gracious heavenly Father. He watches over us with fatherly care, keeping all creatures so under His power that not one hair of our head - for they are all numbered - nor one sparrow can fall to the ground without the will of our Father. In this we trust, because we know that He holds in check the devil and all our enemies so that they cannot hurt us without His permission and will.

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.

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 ground and He made and formed him after His own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy. 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. 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.

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. He has nothing left but some small traces, which are sufficient to make man inexcusable. For whatever light is in us has changed into darkness, as Scripture teaches us, The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it; where the apostle John calls mankind darkness.

Therefore we reject all teaching contrary to this concerning the free will of man, since man is but a slave to sin and no one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven. 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? Who will glory in his own will, when he understands that the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God? Who can speak of his knowledge, since the unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God? In short, who dares to claim anything, when he realizes that we are not competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but that our competence is from God? Therefore what the apostle says must justly remain sure and firm: God is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure. 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.

Article 15 - Original Sin

We believe that by the disobedience of Adam original sin has spread throughout the whole human race. It is a corruption of the entire nature of man and a hereditary evil which infects even infants in their mother's womb. 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. It is not abolished nor eradicated even by baptism, for sin continually streams forth like water welling up from this woeful source. 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. This does not mean that the believers may sleep peacefully in their sin, but that the awareness of this corruption may make them often groan as they eagerly wait to be delivered from this body of death. In this regard we reject the error of the Pelagians, who say that this sin is only a matter of imitation.

Article 16 - Divine Election

We believe that, when the entire offspring of Adam plunged into perdition and ruin by the transgression of the first man, 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 counsel He has elected in Jesus Christ our Lord by His pure goodness, without any consideration of their works. Just, in leaving the others in the fall and perdition into which they have plunged themselves.

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. He comforted him with the promise that He would give him His Son, born of woman, to bruise the head of the serpent and to

make man blessed.

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 prophets when, at the time appointed by Him, 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. He truly assumed a real human nature with all its infirmities, without sin, 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. 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.

He is a fruit of the loins of David; born of the seed of David according to the flesh; a fruit of the womb of the virgin Mary; born of woman; a branch of David; a shoot from the stump of Jesse; sprung from the tribe of Judah; descended from the Jews according to the flesh; of the seed of Abraham, since the Son was concerned with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in every respect, yet without sin. In this way He is in truth our Immanuel, that is, God with us.

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, 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, filling heaven and earth. 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. Even though, by His resurrection, He has given immortality to His human nature, He has not changed its reality, since our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of His body.

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. Meanwhile His divinity always remained united with His human nature, even when He was lying in the grave. And the divine nature always remained in Him just as it was in Him when He was a little child, even though it did not manifest itself as such for a little while. For this reason we profess Him to be true God and true man: true God in order to conquer death by His power; and true man that He might die for us according to the infirmity of His flesh.

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, to make satisfaction in that same nature; and to bear the punishment of sin by His most bitter passion and death. God therefore manifested His justice against His Son when He laid our iniquity on Him, 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 justification that through Him we might obtain immortality and life eternal.

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. He presented Himself in our place before His Father, appeasing God's wrath by His full satisfaction, offering Himself on the tree of the cross, where He poured out His precious blood to purge away our sins, as the prophets had foretold. For it is written, Upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole and with His stripes we are healed. Like a lamb He was led to the slaughter. He was numbered with the transgressors, and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, though he had first declared Him innocent. He restored what He had not stolen. He died as the righteous for the unrighteous. He suffered in body and soul, feeling the horrible punishment caused by our sins, and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. Finally, He exclaimed, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? 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. We count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus our Lord. We find comfort in His wounds and have no need to seek or invent any other means of reconciliation with God than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which the believers are perfected for all times. 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.

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. This faith embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, makes Him our own, and does not seek anything besides Him. 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. 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 alone, or by faith apart from works of law. Meanwhile, strictly speaking, we do not mean that faith as such justifies us, 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. 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.

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 there our righteousness before God consists, as David and teach us. They pronounce a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works. The apostle also says that

we are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Therefore we always hold to this firm foundation. We give all the glory to God, humble ourselves before Him, and acknowledge ourselves to be what we are. We do not claim anything for ourselves or our merits, but rely and rest on the only obedience of Jesus Christ crucified; His obedience is ours when we believe in Him. 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. 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. Therefore everyone must say with David, O Lord, enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for no man living is righteous before Thee.

Article 24 - Man's 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, regenerates him and makes him a new man. It makes him live a new life and frees him from the slavery of sin. Therefore it is not true that this justifying faith makes man indifferent to living a good and holy life. On the contrary, without it no one would ever do anything out of love for God, but only out of self-love or fear of being condemned. It is therefore impossible for this holy faith to be inactive in man, for we do not speak of an empty faith but of what Scripture calls faith working through love. 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. Otherwise they could not be good any more than the fruit of a tree can be good unless the tree itself is good.

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, since it is He who is at work in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Let us keep in mind what is written: So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty." Meanwhile we do not deny that God rewards good works, 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. Even if we could show one good work, the remembrance of one sin is enough to make God reject it. We would then always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences would be constantly tormented, if they did not rely on the merit of the death and passion of our Saviour.

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

and to His glory.

Article 26 - Christ's Intercession

We believe that we have no access to God except through the only Mediator and Advocate Jesus Christ the righteous. For this purpose He became man, uniting together the divine and human nature, that we men might not be barred from but have access to the divine majesty. 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. Though He was in the form of God, He emptied Himself, taking the form of man and of a servant for us, and was made like His brethren in every respect. 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? 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 Father and who has all authority in heaven and on earth? Moreover, who will be heard more readily than God's own well-beloved Son?

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, 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, whose righteousness is ours by faith.

Therefore with good reason, to take away from us this foolish fear or rather distrust, the author of Hebrews says to us that Jesus Christ was made like His brethren in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered and been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted. Further, to encourage us more to go to Him, he says: Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. The same letter says: Therefore brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, etc. Also, Christ holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently He is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. What more is needed? Christ Himself says: I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me. 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, as we are taught in the Lord's prayer. We rest assured that we shall obtain all we ask of the Father in His Name.

Article 27 - The Catholic or Universal Church

We believe and profess one catholic or universal Church, which is a holy congregation and assembly of the true Christian believers, who expect their entire salvation in Jesus Christ, are washed by His blood, and are sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit. 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. This holy Church is preserved by God against the fury of the whole world, although for a while it may look very small and as extinct in the eyes of man. Thus during the perilous reign of Ahab, the Lord kept for Himself seven thousand persons who had not bowed their knees to Baal.

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. However, it is joined and united with heart and will, in one and the same Spirit, by the power of faith.

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, that no one ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself, no matter what his state or quality may be. But all and everyone are obliged to join it and unite with it, maintaining the unity of the Church. They must submit themselves to its instruction and discipline, bend their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ, and serve the edification of the brothers and sisters, according to the talents which God has given them as members of the same body. 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 Church and to join this assembly 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.

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

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. 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. We are speaking of the body and the communion of the true Church which must be distinguished from all sects that call themselves the Church. The true Church is to be recognized by the following marks: It practises the pure preaching of the gospel. It maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them. It exercises Church discipline for correcting and punishing sins. In short, it governs itself according to the pure Word of God, rejecting all things contrary to it and regarding Jesus Christ as the only Head. Hereby the true Church can certainly be known and no one has the right to separate from it.

Those who are of the Church may be recognized by the marks of Christians. They believe in Jesus Christ the only Saviour, flee from sin and pursue righteousness, love the true God and their neighbour without turning to the right or left, and crucify their flesh and its works. Although great weakness remains in them, they fight against it by the Spirit all the days of their life. 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. 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. 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.

These two Churches are easily recognized and distinguished from each other.

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. There should be ministers or pastors to preach the Word of God and to administer the sacraments; there should also be elders and deacons who, together with the pastors, form the council of the Church. By these means they preserve the true religion; they see to it that the true doctrine takes its course, that evil men are disciplined in a spiritual way and are restrained, and also that the poor and all the afflicted are helped and comforted according to their need. By these means everything will be done well and in good order when faithful men are chosen in agreement with the rule that the apostle Paul gave to Timothy.

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. 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. Ministers of the Word, in whatever place they are, have equal power and authority, for they are all servants of Jesus Christ, the only universal Bishop and the only Head of the Church. 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, and as much as possible be at peace with them without grumbling or arguing.

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

Article 33 - The Sacraments

We believe that our gracious God, mindful of our insensitivity and infirmity, 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. He has added these to the Word of the gospel 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. Therefore the signs are not void and meaningless so that they deceive us. For Jesus Christ is their truth; apart from Him they would be nothing. Moreover, we are satisfied with the number of sacraments which Christ our Master has instituted for us, namely, two: the sacrament of baptism and the holy supper of Jesus Christ.

Article 34 - The Sacrament of Baptism

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law, has by His shed blood put an end to every other shedding of blood that one could or would make as an expiation or satisfaction for sins. He has abolished circumcision, which involved blood, and has instituted in its place the sacrament of baptism. 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 Him whose mark and emblem we bear. This serves as a testimony to us that He will be our God and gracious Father for ever. For that reason He has commanded all those who are His to be baptized with plain water, into the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. By this He signifies to us that as water washes away the dirt of the body when poured on us, and as water is seen on the body of the baptized when sprinkled on him, so the blood of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, does the same thing internally to the soul. It washes and cleanses our soul from sin and regenerates us from children of wrath into children of God. This is not brought about by the water as such but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God, which is our Red Sea, 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, 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.

We believe, therefore, that anyone who aspires to eternal life ought to be baptized only once. Baptism should never be repeated, for we cannot be born twice. Moreover, baptism benefits us not only when the water is on us and when we receive it, but throughout our whole life. For that reason we reject the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with a single baptism received only once, and who also condemn the baptism of the little children of believers. We believe that these children ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as infants were circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises which are now made to our children. Indeed, Christ shed His blood to wash the children of believers just as much as He shed it for adults. 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. This was a sacrament of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. Because baptism has the same meaning for our children as circumcision had for the people of Israel, Paul calls baptism the circumcision of Christ.

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 supper 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. One is physical and temporal, which they received in their first birth and it 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 gospel 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, namely, Jesus Christ, who nourishes and sustains the spiritual life of the believers when He is eaten by them, that is, spiritually appropriated and received by faith. 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. 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, as the hand and mouth of our soul, the true body and true blood of Christ, our only Saviour, in our souls for our spiritual life.

It is beyond any doubt that Jesus Christ did not commend His sacraments to us in vain. Therefore He works in us all that He represents to us by these holy signs. We do not understand the manner in which this is done, just as we do not comprehend the hidden activity of the Spirit of God. 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; 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. 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. 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. He is communicated exclusively to the believers.

Finally, we receive this holy sacrament in the congregation of the people of God with humility and reverence as we together commemorate the death of Christ our Saviour with thanksgiving and we confess our faith and Christian religion. 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. 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 damnable inventions which men have mixed with the sacraments. We declare that we should be content with the ordinance taught by Christ and His apostles and should speak about it as they have spoken.

Article 36 - The Civil Government

We believe that, because of the depravity of mankind, our gracious God has ordained kings, princes, and civil officers. He wants the world to be governed by laws and policies, in order that the licentiousness of men be restrained and that everything be conducted among them in good order. 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. 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 that¹ the kingdom of Christ may come, the Word of the gospel may be preached everywhere, 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 things which do not disagree with the Word of God. We ought to pray for them, that God may direct them in all their ways and that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. 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, introduce a communion of goods, and confound the decency that God has established among men.

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 come and the number of the elect is complete, our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, bodily and visibly, as He ascended, with great glory and majesty. He will declare Himself Judge of the living and the dead and set this old world afire in order to purge it. 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. They will be summoned with the archangel's call and with the sound of the trumpet of God.

Those who will have died before that time will arise out of the earth, as their spirits are once again united with their own bodies in which they lived. Those who will then be still alive will not die as the others but will be changed in the twinkling of an eye from perishable to imperishable. Then the books will be opened and the dead will be judged according to what they have done in this world, whether good or evil. Indeed, all people will render account for every careless word they utter, which the world regards as mere jest and amusement. The secrets and hypocrisies of men will then be publicly uncovered in the sight of all. And so for good reason the thought of this judgment is horrible and dreadful to the wicked and evildoers 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. Their innocence will be known to all and they will see the terrible vengeance that God will bring upon the wicked who persecuted, oppressed, and tormented them in this world. The wicked will be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences and will become immortal, but only to be tormented in the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 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 and His elect angels. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and their cause - at present condemned as heretical and evil by many judges and civil authorities - will be recognized as the cause of the Son of God. As a gracious reward, the Lord will cause them to possess such a glory as the heart of man could never conceive. 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!

The Canons of Dort

The Canons of Dort

Introduction The third of our doctrinal standards is the Canons of Dort, also called the Five Articles Against the Remonstrants. These are statements of doctrine adopted by the great Reformed Synod of Dort in 1618-1619. This Synod had a truly international character, since it was composed not only of the delegates of the Reformed Church of The Netherlands but also of twenty seven delegates from foreign countries. The Synod of Dort was held in view of the serious disturbance in the Reformed Church caused by the rise and spread of Arminianism. Arminius, a theological professor at the University of Leyden, departed from the Reformed faith in his teaching concerning five important points. He taught 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, and the opposite views were embodied in what is now called the Canons of Dort or the Five Articles Against the Remonstrants. In these Canons the Synod set forth the Reformed doctrine on these points, namely, unconditional election, limited atonement, total depravity, invincible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

Each of the Canons consists of a positive and a negative part, the former being an exposition of the Reformed doctrine on the subject, and the latter a repudiation of the corresponding Arminian error. Although in form there are only four chapters, occasioned by the combination of the third and fourth heads of doctrine into one, we speak properly of five Canons, and the third chapter is always designated as Chapter III-IV. All office-bearers of our Churches are required to subscribe to these Canons as well as to the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism.

First Head of Doctrine - Divine Election and Reprobation Article 1 - All Mankind Condemnable Before God

Since all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and deserve eternal death, God would have done injustice to no one if He had willed 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: that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God (Romans 3:19). All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23); and, the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

Article 2 - The Sending of the Son of God But in this the love of God was made manifest, that He sent His only-begotten Son into the world, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life (1 John 4:9; John 3:16).

Article 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. By their ministry men are called to repentance and to faith in Christ crucified. For how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? (Romans 10:14, Romans 10:15) Article 4 - A Twofold Outcome The wrath of

God remains upon those who do not believe this gospel. 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.

Article 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. 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 is not your own doing, it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). Similarly, It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should . . . believe in Him (Php 1:29).

Article 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. For all His works He knows from eternity (Acts 15:18), and He accomplishes all things according to the counsel 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.

Article 7 - Election Defined

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God whereby, before the foundation of the world, out of the whole human race, which had fallen by its own fault out of its original integrity into sin and perdition, He has, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His will, out of mere grace, chosen in Christ to salvation a definite number of persons, neither better nor more worthy than others, but with them involved 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, finally to glorify them, for the demonstration of His mercy and the praise of the riches of his glorious grace. As it is written: God chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. He destined us in love to be His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 1:5, Ephesians 1:6). And elsewhere, Those whom He predestined He also called; and those whom He called He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified (Romans 8:30).

Article 8 - One Decree of Election

There are not various decrees of this election, but it 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. 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 (Ephesians 1:4, Ephesians 1:5;

Ephesians 2:10).

Article 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 of 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. This the apostle teaches when he says, He chose us (not because we were, but) that we should be holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:4).

Article 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, Though they (the children) were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, and so on, she (namely, Rebecca), was told, "The elder will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." (Romans 9:11, Romans 9:12, Romans 9:13) And, as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:48).

Article 11 - Election Unchangeable As God Himself is most wise, unchangeable, allknowing and almighty, so His election can neither be undone and redone, nor changed, revoked, or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number be diminished.

Article 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, but by observing in themselves, 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, and a hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Article 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, and for fervently loving Him in turn who first so greatly loved them. It is therefore not true at all 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.

Article 14 - How Election Is to Be Taught This doctrine of divine election, according to the most wise counsel of God, was preached by the prophets, by Christ Himself, and by the apostles, under the Old as well as the New Testament, and was then committed to writing in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, also today this doctrine should be taught in the Church of God, 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 (Acts 20:27; Romans 11:33, Romans 11:34; Romans 12:3; Hebrews 6:17, Hebrews 6:18).

Article 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. 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, and not to give them saving faith and the grace of conversion. These, having been left in their own ways 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, for the declaration of 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 an awesome, blameless, and just judge and avenger thereof.

Article 16 - Responses to the Doctrine of Reprobation

Some do not yet clearly discern in themselves a living faith in Christ, an assured confidence of heart, peace of conscience, a zeal for childlike obedience, and a glorying in God through Christ; 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 reverently and humbly. Others seriously desire to be converted to God, to please Him only, and to be delivered from the body of death. 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 quench the smoking flax nor to break the bruised reed.

Still others disregard God and the Saviour Jesus Christ and have completely given themselves over to the cares of the world and the lusts of the flesh. For them this doctrine of reprobation is rightly fearsome as long as they are not seriously converted.

Article 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. 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 (Genesis 17:7; Acts 2:39; 1 Corinthians 7:14).

Article 18 - Not Protest But Adoration To those who argue against this grace of undeserved election and the severity of righteous reprobation, we reply with this word of the apostle: But who are you, a man, to answer 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? (Matthew 20:15)

We, however, with reverent adoration of these mysteries, exclaim with the apostle: O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counsel? Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory for ever. Amen (Romans 11:33-36).

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

Paragraph 1

Error: 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. In time He grants to these elect, above others, both faith in Christ and perseverance. I have manifested Thy Name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world, John 17:6. And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed, Acts 13:48. Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him, Ephesians 1:4.

Paragraph 2

Error: 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 whom He predestined He also called; and those whom He called He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified, Romans 8:30.

Paragraph 3

Error: The good pleasure and purpose of God of which Scripture speaks in the doctrine of election is not that He chose certain persons and not others, but that He out of all possible conditions (such as the works of the law) chose or selected the act of faith, which in itself is without merit as the condition for salvation. In His grace He would 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, Who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of His own purpose and the grace which He granted us in Christ Jesus ages ago, 2 Timothy 1:9.

Paragraph 4

Error: 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 in Ephesians 2:3-9, Among these

we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by faith you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast.

Paragraph 5

Error: 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. They are necessary conditions and causes required and foreseen as accomplished in those who would be fully elected.

Refutation: This error militates against all of Scripture, which constantly impresses the following upon us: Election is not because of works but because of His call, Romans 9:11; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed, Acts 13:48; He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him, Ephesians 1:4; you did not choose Me, but I chose you, John 15:16; but if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace, Romans 11:6; in this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son, 1 John 4:10.

Paragraph 6

Error: 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 Scripture: The elect can not be led astray, Matthew 24:24; this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, John 6:39; those whom He predestined He also called; and those whom He called He also justified; and those whom He justified He also glorified, Romans 8:30.

Paragraph 7

Error: 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, Ephesians 1:1-23. With the disciples of Christ they rejoice that their names are written in heaven, Luke 10:20. They put the consciousness of their election over against the fiery darts of the devil, when they exclaim: Who shall bring any charge against God's

elect? Romans 8:33.

Paragraph 8

Error: 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, He has mercy upon whomever He wills, and He hardens the heart of whomever He wills, Romans 9:18. It also declares, To you has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given, Matthew 13:11. Likewise, I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was Thy gracious will, Matthew 11:25, Matthew 11:26.

Paragraph 9

Error: 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, Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it; yet the Lord set His heart in love upon your fathers and chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as at this day, Deuteronomy 10:14, Deuteronomy 10:15. And Christ says, Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes, Matthew 11:21.

Second Head of Doctrine - The Death of Christ and the Redemption of Man by It Article 1 - The Justice of God Requires Punishment

God is not only supremely merciful but also supremely just. And as He Himself has revealed in His Word, His justice requires that our sins, committed against His infinite majesty, should be punished 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.

Article 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 Son as our Surety. For us or in our place He was made sin and a curse on the cross so that He might make satisfaction on our behalf.

Article 3 - The Infinite Value of the Death of Christ This death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sins, of infinite value and worth, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.

Article 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, but also the only-begotten Son of God, 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 God which we by our sins had deserved.

Article 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. This promise ought to be announced and proclaimed universally and without discrimination to all peoples and to all men to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe.

Article 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 unbelief does not happen because of any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross, but through their own fault.

Article 7 - Why Others Do Believe But to those who truly believe and are by the death of Christ freed from their sins and saved from perdition, this benefit comes only through God's grace, given to them from eternity in Christ. God owes this grace to no one.

Article 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. It was His most gracious will and intent to give them alone justifying faith and thereby to bring them unfailingly to salvation. This means: God willed that Christ through the blood of the cross (by which He confirmed the new covenant) should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and tongue all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and were given to Him by the Father. God further willed that Christ should give to them faith, 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, both original and actual, both those committed after faith and before faith; and that He should guard them faithfully to the end and at last present them to Himself in splendour without any spot or wrinkle.

Article 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. In due time the elect will be gathered together into one, and there will always be a Church of believers, 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) and celebrate His praises here and through all eternity.

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:

Paragraph 1

Error: 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, John 10:27. And the prophet Isaiah says concerning the Saviour: When He makes Himself an offering for sin, He shall see His offspring, He shall prolong His days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in His hand, Isaiah 53:10. Finally, this contradicts the article of faith concerning the catholic Christian church.

Paragraph 2

Error: It was not the purpose of the death of Christ 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 is repugnant to Scripture which teaches that Christ hath become the surety and mediator of a better, that is, the new covenant, and that a testament is of force where there hath been death, Hebrews 7:22; Hebrews 9:15, Hebrews 9:17.

Paragraph 3

Error: 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 might happen that either no one or all men would fulfil them.

Refutation: Those who teach this error think contemptuously of the death of Christ, in no wise acknowledge its most important fruit or benefit, and bring back out of hell the Pelagian error.

Paragraph 4

Error: 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 by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by His blood, to be received by faith, Romans 3:24, Romans 3:25. Those who teach this error proclaim, as did the impious Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole Church.

Paragraph 5

Error: 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 militates against Scripture, which teaches that we are by nature children of wrath, Ephesians 2:3.

Paragraph 6

Error: As far as God is concerned, He has been minded to apply to all men equally the benefits acquired by the death of Christ; however, some obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life and others do not. This difference depends on their own free will, which applies itself to the grace that is offered without distinction, 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.

Paragraph 7

Error: 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 shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus who died, Romans 8:33, Romans 8:34, namely, for them. And the Saviour assures us: I lay down My life for the sheep, John 10:15. And: This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends, John 15:12, John 15:13.

The Canons of Dort, continued

The Canons of Dort

Continued Third And Fourth Heads of Doctrine - The Corruption of Man, His Conversion to God, and the Manner in Which It Occurs Article 1 - The Effect of the Fall In the beginning man was created in the image of God. He was adorned in his mind with 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. But rebelling against God through the instigation of the devil and through his own free will, he deprived himself of these excellent gifts, and instead brought upon himself blindness, horrible darkness, vanity, and perverseness of judgment in his mind; malice, rebelliousness, and stubbornness in his will and heart; and impurity in all his affections.

Article 2 - Corruption Propagated

Since after the fall man became corrupt, he as a corrupt father brought forth corrupt children. Thus the corruption has spread from Adam to all his descendants, with the exception of Christ alone, not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old maintained, but by the propagation of a vicious nature, according to the righteous judgment of God.

Article 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. And without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they neither will nor can return to God, reform their depraved nature, or prepare themselves for its reformation.

Article 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, about natural things, and about the difference between what is honourable and shameful, and shows some regard for virtue and outward order. But he is so far 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. By doing this, he makes himself inexcusable before God.

Article 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.

Article 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, which is the gospel of the Messiah, by which it has pleased God to save men who believe, both under the old and new dispensation.

Article 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 more. The cause of this very 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. 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. 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 God but by no means inquisitively to pry into them.

Article 8 - The Earnest Call by the Gospel But as many as are called by the gospel are earnestly called, 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. He also earnestly promises rest of soul and eternal life to all who come to Him and believe.

Article 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. Some of them do not care and do not receive the word of life. Others do indeed receive it, but not 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 pleasure of this world, and bring forth no fruit. This our Saviour teaches in the parable of the seed, Matthew 13:1-58.

Article 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. He has chosen His own in Christ from eternity and calls them effectually in time. He gives them faith and repentance; He delivers them from the power of darkness and transfers them to the kingdom of His Son. All this He does that they may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light, and may boast not of themselves but of the Lord, according to the testimony of the apostles in various places.

Article 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. By the efficacious working of the same regenerating Spirit He also penetrates into the innermost recesses of man. He opens the closed and softens the hard heart, circumcises that which was uncircumcised, and instils new qualities into the will. He makes the will, which was dead, alive;

which was bad, good; which was unwilling, willing; and which was stubborn, obedient. He moves and strengthens it so that, like a good tree, it may be able to produce the fruit of good works.

Article 12 - The Divine Character of Regeneration This conversion is that regeneration, new creation, resurrection from the dead, making alive, so highly spoken of in the Scriptures, which God works in us without us. But this regeneration is by no means brought about only by outward preaching, 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 resurrection of the dead. Hence all those in whose hearts God works in this amazing way are certainly, unfailingly, and effectually regenerated and do actually believe. Therefore the will so renewed is not only acted upon and moved by God but, acted upon by God, the will itself also acts. Hence also man himself is rightly said to believe and repent through the grace he has received.

Article 13 - Regeneration Is Incomprehensible As long as they are 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.

Article 14 - Faith a Gift of God

Faith is therefore a gift of God, 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. It is not 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 brings about in man both the will to believe and the act of believing, and indeed all things in all.

Article 15 - Christian 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? 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. 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. Further, about those who outwardly profess their faith and amend their lives we are to judge and speak in the most favourable way, 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. But we must by no means act haughtily towards them, as if we had distinguished ourselves.

Article 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. So also this divine grace of regeneration does not act upon men as stocks and blocks 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. 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 unless the admirable Author of all good should 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.

Article 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. So also the aforementioned supernatural working of God whereby He regenerates us, in no way excludes or overthrows the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. For this reason the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them, in the fear of the Lord 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. 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 kept very close together. For grace is conferred through admonitions, 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 the more directly His works proceed. To God alone all glory, both for the means and for their saving fruit and efficacy, is due throughout eternity. Amen.

Rejection of Errors

Having explained the true doctrine of the corruption of man and his conversion to God, Synod rejects the following errors:

Paragraph 1

Error: It is improper to say that original sin as such is sufficient to condemn the whole human race or to deserve temporal and eternal punishment.

Refutation: This contradicts the apostle, who declares: Sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned, Romans 5:12. And in Romans 5:16: The judgment following one trespass brought condemnation. Also Romans 6:23: The wages of sin is death.

Paragraph 2

Error: The spiritual gifts or the good qualities and virtues, such as goodness, holiness, righteousness, could not belong to the will of man when he was first created, and can therefore not 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 in Ephesians 4:24, when he connects it with righteousness and holiness, which undoubtedly belong to the will.

Paragraph 3

Error: 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 through the darkness of the understanding and the unorderliness 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 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 in Jeremiah 17:9, The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt. And the apostle Paul writes: Among these (the sons of disobedience) we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of the body and mind, Ephesians 2:3.

Paragraph 4

Error: 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 militate against the express testimony of Scripture: You were dead through your trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2:1, Ephesians 2:5. And every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually, Genesis 6:5 and Genesis 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, Psalms 51:19 and Matthew 5:6.

Paragraph 5

Error: The corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (which for the Arminians 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 efficiently the means necessary for the knowledge of Christ, for faith and repentance.

Refutation: Both the experience of all ages and Scripture testify that this is untrue. He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation, they do not know His ordinances, Psalms 147:19, Psalms 147:20. In past generations He allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways, Acts 14:16. And Paul and his companions were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them, Acts 16:6, Acts 16:7.

Paragraph 6

Error: 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 said to be 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 within them, and I will write it upon their hearts, Jeremiah 31:33. And: I will pour water on the

thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, Isaiah 44:3. And: God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us, Romans 5:5. This also militates against the constant practice of the Church, which prays by the mouth of the prophet: Bring me back that I may be restored, Jeremiah 31:18.

Paragraph 7

Error: 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 suasion. 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 suasion yet another, far more powerful and divine manner of the working of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of man: A new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh, Ezekiel 36:26.

Paragraph 8

Error: In regenerating man God does not use the powers of His omnipotence so as to forcefully and infallibly 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 efficiency 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 that we believe according to the working of His great might, Ephesians 1:19, pray that our God may fulfil every good resolve and work of faith by His power, 2 Thessalonians 1:11, and declare that His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, 2 Peter 1:3.

Paragraph 9

Error: 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 efficiently help the will of man unto conversion until the will of man moves itself and determines to do this.

Refutation: The ancient Church has long ago condemned this doctrine of the Pelagians according to the words of the apostle: So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy, Romans 9:16. Also: For who sees anything different in you? What have you that you did not receive? 1 Corinthians 4:7. And: God is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure, Php 2:13.

Fifth Head of Doctrine - The Perseverance of the Saints Article 1 - The Regenerate Not Free from Indwelling Sin

Those whom God according to His purpose calls 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, but not entirely in this life from the flesh and from the body of sin.

Article 2 - Daily Sins of Weakness

Therefore daily sins of weakness spring up and defects cling to even the best works of the saints. 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, and to long for the goal of perfection until at last, delivered from this body of death, they reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

Article 3 - God Preserves His Own

Because of these remains of indwelling sin and also because of the temptations of the world and of Satan, those who have been converted could not persevere in that grace if left to their own strength. 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.

Article 4 - Saints May Fall into Serious Sins The power of God whereby He confirms and preserves true believers in grace is so great 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. When they do not watch and pray, 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.

Article 5 - The Effects of Such Serious Sins By such gross sins, however, they greatly offend God, incur deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, suspend the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes for a while lose the sense of God's favour - until they return to the right way through sincere repentance and God's fatherly face again shines upon them.

Article 6 - God Will Not Permit His Elect to Be Lost But God, who is rich in mercy, according to the unchangeable purpose of His election, does not completely withdraw His Holy Spirit from His own even in their deplorable fall. Neither does He permit them to sink so deep that they fall away from the grace of adoption and the state of justification, or commit the sin unto death or the sin against the Holy Spirit and, totally deserted by Him, plunge themselves into eternal ruin.

Article 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. Further, through His Word and Spirit He effectually renews them to repentance. As a result they grieve from the heart with a godly sorrow for the sins they have committed; 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. And from now on they more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Article 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 back from faith and grace nor persist in their backslidings and are finally lost. As far as they are concerned, this could not only easily happen but would undoubtedly happen. But as far as God is concerned, this cannot possibly happen, since His counsel cannot be changed, His promise cannot fail, the calling according to His purpose cannot be revoked, the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ cannot be nullified, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit can neither be frustrated nor destroyed.

Article 9 - The Assurance of This Preservation

Believers themselves can be certain and are certain of this preservation of the elect to salvation and the perseverance of true believers in the faith. This assurance is according to the measure of their faith, by which they surely 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.

Article 10 - The Ground 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 (Romans 8:16); and, finally, by the serious and holy pursuit of a good conscience and of good works. And if the elect of God did not have in this world the solid comfort of obtaining the victory and this unailing pledge of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.

Article 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 persevering. But God, the Father of all comfort, will not let them be tempted beyond their strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit will again revive in them the certainty of persevering.

Article 12 - This Assurance Does Not Lead to Complacency So far, however, is this certainty of perseverance from making true believers proud and complacent that, on the contrary, it is the true root of humility, childlike reverence, genuine godliness, patience in every conflict, fervent prayers, constancy in the cross and in the confession of the truth, and lasting joy in God. Further, the consideration of this benefit is for them an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as is evident from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

Article 13 - This Assurance Does Not Lead to Carelessness This renewed confidence does not produce carelessness or neglect of godliness in those who have been restored after their fall; rather, it renders them more careful and diligent to discern the ways of the Lord so that by walking in them they may retain the certainty of persevering. They do this lest, because of their abuse of His fatherly goodness, the reconciled God should again turn away His face from them (the contemplation of which is to the godly sweeter than life, and the withdrawal of it more bitter than death), and they should fall into more severe torments of soul.

Article 14 - The Use of Means Included 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, by meditation upon it, by its exhortations, threatenings, and promises, and by the use of the sacraments.

Article 15 - This Doctrine Hated by Satan But Loved by the Church This doctrine of the perseverance of true believers and saints, and of the certainty of it, which God has most abundantly revealed in His Word, for the glory of His Name and for the consolation of the godly, and which He impresses on the hearts of believers, the flesh does not really understand. Satan hates it, the world ridicules it, the ignorant and hypocrites abuse it, and the heretics oppose it. The Bride of Christ, however, has always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it as a treasure of inestimable value, and God, against whom no counsel can avail and no strength can prevail, will see to it that she continues to do so to the end. To God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and glory forever. Amen.

Rejection of Errors Having explained the true doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, Synod rejects the following errors:

Paragraph 1

Error: The perseverance of the true believers is not a fruit of election or a gift of God obtained by the death of Christ. It is 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 out of election and is given to the elect in virtue of the death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ: The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, Romans 11:7. Also: He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with Him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Romans 8:32-35.

Paragraph 2

Error: God does indeed provide the believer with sufficient powers to persevere, and is ready to preserve these in him if he will do his duty. But though all these things have been established which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God will use to preserve faith, even then it still always depends on the decision of the 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 militates against the consistent consensus of the evangelical doctrine, which takes from man all cause of boasting, and ascribes all the praise for this benefit to the grace of God alone. It is also contrary to the apostle, who declares that it is God who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:8.

Paragraph 3

Error: 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 makes powerless the grace of justification and regeneration and the continuous preservation by Christ, contrary to the expressed words of the apostle Paul: God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God, Romans 5:8, Romans 5:9. And contrary to the apostle John: No one born of God commits sins; for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is 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, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand, John 10:28, John 10:29.

Paragraph 4 Error: True regenerate believers can commit the sin unto death or the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Refutation: After the apostle John had spoken in the fifth chapter of his first letter, 1 John 5:16 and 1 John 5:17, of those who sin unto death and he had forbidden to pray for them, he immediately added 1 John 5:18: We know that any one born of God does not sin (namely, with that kind of sin), but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

Paragraph 5 Error: Without a special revelation we can have no certainty of future perseverance in this life.

Refutation: By this doctrine the sure comfort of the true believers in this life is taken away, and the doubts of the followers of the pope are again introduced into the Church. The Holy Scriptures, however, always deduce this assurance, not from a special and extraordinary revelation, but from the very marks of 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 in Christ Jesus our Lord, Romans 8:39. And John writes: All who keep his commandments abide in Him, and He in them. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us, 1 John 3:24.

Paragraph 6

Error: 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 doctrine 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 express words in his first letter: Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure, 1 John 3:2, 1 John 3:3. Furthermore, it is refuted by the example of the saints both of the Old and New Testament who, although they were certain of their perseverance and salvation, nevertheless continued in prayer and other exercises of godliness.

Paragraph 7

Error: 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 on 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 various measures, constantly and steadfastly.

Paragraph 8 Error: 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 incorruptible. It is contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: You have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, 1 Peter 1:23.

Paragraph 9 Error: Christ has prayed nowhere that believers should infallibly 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 has not prayed for the apostles only, but also for all who through their word would believe: Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name, and I do not pray that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil one, John 17:11, John 17:15, John 17:20.

Conclusion This is the clear, simple, and upright declaration of the orthodox doctrine with respect to the five articles disputed in The Netherlands; and this is the rejection of the errors by which the Churches have for some time been disturbed. The Synod judges this declaration and rejection to be taken from the Word of God and to be in agreement with the Confessions of the Reformed Churches. Hereby it becomes evident that some acted very improperly and against all truth, fairness, and love by wanting to persuade the public of the following:

- 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.
- 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.
- It makes God the author of sin, an unjust tyrant and hypocrite; and is nothing more than a renewed Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, and Mohammedanism.
- 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.
- The same doctrine 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.
- 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.

- Many innocent children of the believers are torn from their mothers' breasts and tyrannically thrown into hell, so that neither baptism nor the prayers of the Church at their baptism can be of any help to them. And there is much more 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 this declaration of the orthodox doctrine, confirmed by the unanimous consent of all and each of the members of the entire Synod.

Moreover, the Synod warns the slanderers themselves to consider the severe judgment of God which awaits them, for bearing false witness against the Confessions of so many Churches, for disturbing the consciences of the weak, and for trying to make many suspicious of the community of the true believers.

Finally, this Synod exhorts all their fellow servants in the gospel of Christ to conduct themselves in a God-fearing and pious manner when they deal with this doctrine in schools and Churches. In teaching it, both by the spoken and written word, 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 the Scripture, according to the analogy of faith. And they must abstain from all those phrases which exceed the prescribed limits of the genuine meaning of the Holy Scriptures and which may provide shameless sophists with a good opportunity to attack or even slander the doctrine of the Reformed Churches. 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, bring to the truth those who err, shut the mouths of the slanderers of the sound doctrine, and equip the faithful ministers of His Word with the Spirit of wisdom and discretion, that whatever they say may tend to the glory of God and the edification of those who hear them. Amen.

The Heidelberg Catechism

The Heidelberg Catechism This version authorized by the Canadian and American Reformed Churches

Introduction The second of our Doctrinal Standards is the Catechism. It is called the Heidelberg Catechism because it originated in Heidelberg, the capital of the German Electorate of the Palatinate, at the behest of the Elector, Frederick III. In order that the Calvinistic Reformation might gain the ascendancy in his domain, this pious ruler charged Zacharias Ursinus, professor at the Heidelberg University, and Caspar Olevianus, the court preacher, with the preparation of a manual for catechetical instruction. The result was a new Catechism, which, after having been approved by the Elector himself and by a gathering of prominent Calvinists, was published in the beginning of the year 1563. Its immediate popularity was indicated by the fact that the same year three more editions had to be printed. Moreover, the book was made to serve a new purpose, namely, to be used as a manual for doctrinal preaching on the Lord's Day. In the third edition the questions and answers were grouped into 52 sections, called Lord's Days, that the entire Catechism might be explained to the churches once a year. In the Netherlands this Heidelberg Catechism became generally and favorably 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 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 16th century adopted it as one of the Forms of Unity, the office-bearers being required to subscribe to it and the ministers to explain it to the churches. These requirements were strongly emphasized by the great Synod of Dort in 1618-19, and are still in force in the Christian Reformed Church and some other Reformed communions. At the present day the Heidelberg Catechism still has the distinction of being the most influential and the most generally accepted of the several Catechisms of Reformation times.

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

A. That I am not my own,[1] but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death,[2] 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 all the power of the devil.[5] He also preserves me in such a way[6] that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head;[7] indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.[8] Therefore, by His Holy Spirit He also assures me of eternal life[9] and makes me heartily 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; 1 John 2:2. [5] John 8:34-36; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8. [6] John 6:39-40; John 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; 2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14. [10] Romans 8:14.

Question 2 Q. What do you need to know in order to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

A. First, how great my sins and misery are;[1] second, how I am delivered from all my sins and misery;[2] third, how I am to be thankful to God for such deliverance.[3]

[1] Romans 3:9-10; 1 John 1:10. [2] John 17:3; Acts 4:12; Acts 10:43. [3] Matthew 5:16; Romans 6:13; Ephesians 5:8-10; 1 Peter 2:9-10.

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

A. From the law of God.[1] [1] Romans 3:20;

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

A. Christ teaches us this in a summary in Matthew 22:1-46: You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.[1] This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.[2] [1] Deuteronomy 6:5. [2] Leviticus 19:18.

Question 5 Q. Can you keep all this perfectly?

A. No,[1] I am inclined by nature to hate God and my neighbour.[2]

[1] Romans 3:10, Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8, 1 John 1:10. [2] Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:23; Romans 8:7; Ephesians 2:3; Titus 3:3.

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

A. No, on the contrary, God created man good[1] and in His image,[2] that is, in true righteousness and holiness,[3] so that he might rightly know God His Creator,[4] heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal blessedness to praise and glorify Him.[5] [1] Genesis 1:31. [2] Genesis 1:26-27. [3] Ephesians 4:24. [4] Colossians 3:10. [5] Psalms 8:1-9.

Question 7 Q. From where, then, did man's depraved nature come?

A. From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise,[1] for there our nature became so corrupt[2] that we are all conceived and born in sin.[3] [1] Genesis 3:1-24. [2] Romans 5:12, Romans 5:18-19. [3] Psalms 51:5.

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

A. Yes,[1] unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.[2] [1] Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21; Job 14:4; Isaiah 53:6. [2] John 3:3-5.

Question 9 Q. Is God, then, not unjust by requiring in His law what man cannot do?

A. No, for God so created man that he was able to do it.[1] But man, at the instigation of the devil,[2] in deliberate disobedience[3] robbed himself and all his descendants of these gifts.[4] [1] Genesis 1:31. [2] Genesis 3:13; John 8:44; 1 Timothy 2:13-14. [3] Genesis 3:6. [4] Romans 5:12, Romans 5:18-19.

Question 10 Q. Will God allow such disobedience and apostasy to go unpunished?

A. Certainly not. He is terribly displeased with our original sin as well as our actual sins. Therefore He will punish them by a just judgment both now and eternally,[1] as He has declared:[2] Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them (Galatians 3:10).

[1] Exodus 34:7; Psalms 5:4-6; Psalms 7:10; Nahum 1:2; Romans 1:18; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 5:6; Hebrews 9:27. [2] Deuteronomy 27:26.

Question 11 Q. But is God not also merciful?

A. God is indeed merciful,[1] but He is also just.[2] His justice requires that sin committed against the most high majesty of God also be punished with the most severe, that is, with everlasting, punishment of body and soul.[3]

[1] Exodus 20:6; Exodus 34:6-7; Psalms 103:8-9. [2] Exodus 20:5; Exodus 34:7; Deuteronomy 7:9-11; Psalms 5:4-6; Hebrews 10:30-31. [3] Matthew 25:45-46.

Question 12

Q. Since, according to God's righteous judgment we deserve temporal and eternal punishment, how can we escape this punishment and be again received into favour?

A. God demands that His justice be satisfied.[1] Therefore full payment must be made either by ourselves or by another.[2] [1] Exodus 20:5; Exodus 23:7; Romans 2:1-11. [2] Isaiah 53:11; Romans 8:3-4.

Question 13 Q. Can we ourselves make this payment?

A. Certainly not. On the contrary, we daily increase our debt.[1] [1] Psalms 130:3; Matthew 6:12; Romans 2:4-5.

Question 14 Q. Can any mere creature pay for us?

A. No. In the first place, God will not punish another creature for the sin which man has committed.[1] Furthermore, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin and deliver others from it.[2] [1] Ezekiel 18:4, Ezekiel 18:20; Hebrews 2:14-18. [2] Psalms 130:3; Nahum 1:6.

Question 15 Q. What kind of mediator and deliverer must we seek?

A. One who is a true[1] and righteous[2] man, and yet more powerful than all creatures; that is, one who is at the same time true God.[3]

[1] 1 Corinthians 15:21; Hebrews 2:17. [2] Isaiah 53:9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26. [3] Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6; Jeremiah 23:6; John 1:1; Romans 8:3-4.

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

A. He must be a true man because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should pay for sin.[1] He must be a righteous man because one who himself is a sinner cannot pay for others.[2] [1] Romans 5:12, Romans 5:15; 1 Corinthians 15:21; Hebrews 2:14-16. [2] Hebrews 7:26-27; 1 Peter 3:18.

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

A. He must be true God so that by the power of His divine nature[1] He might bear in His human nature the burden of God's wrath,[2] and might obtain for us and restore to us righteousness and life.[3]

[1] Isaiah 9:5. [2] Deuteronomy 4:24; Nahum 1:6; Psalms 130:3. [3] Isaiah 53:5, Isaiah 53:11; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Question 18 Q. But who is that Mediator who at the same time is true God and a true and righteous man?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ,[1] whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.[2] [1] Matthew 1:21-23; Luke 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Timothy 3:16. [2] 1 Corinthians 1:30.

Question 19 Q. From where do you know this?

A. From the holy gospel, which God Himself first revealed in Paradise.[1] Later, He had it proclaimed by the patriarchs[2] and prophets,[3] and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law.[4] Finally, He had it fulfilled through His only Son.[5]

[1] Genesis 3:15. [2] Genesis 12:3; Genesis 22:18; Genesis 49:10. [3] Isaiah 53:1-12; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Micah 7:18-20; Acts 10:43; Hebrews 1:1. [4] Leviticus 1:7; John 5:46; Hebrews 10:1-10. [5] Romans 10:4; Galatians 4:4-5; Colossians 2:17.

Question 20 Q. Are all men, then, saved by Christ just as they perished through Adam?

A. No. Only those are saved who by a true faith are grafted into Christ and accept all His benefits.[1] [1] Matthew 7:14; John 1:12; John 3:16-18; John 3:36; Romans 11:16-21.

Question 21 Q. What is true faith?

A. True faith is a sure knowledge whereby I accept as true all that God has revealed to us in His Word.[1] At the same time it is a firm confidence[2] that not only to others, but also to me,[3] God has granted forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation,[4] out of mere grace, only for the sake of Christ's merits.[5] This faith the Holy Spirit works in my heart by the gospel.[6]

[1] John 17:3; John 17:17; Hebrews 11:1-3; James 2:19. [2] Romans 4:18-21; Romans 5:1; Romans 10:10; Hebrews 4:16. [3] Galatians 2:20. [4] Romans 1:17; Hebrews 10:10. [5] Romans 1:1-26; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-10. [6] Acts 16:14; Romans 1:16; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:21.

Question 22 Q. What, then, must a Christian believe?

A. All that is promised us in the gospel,[1] which the articles of our catholic and undoubted Christian faith teach us in a summary.

[1] Matthew 28:19; John 20:30-31.

Question 23 Q. What are these articles?

- A. 1. I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
2. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord;
3. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary;
4. suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell;
5. On the third day He arose from the dead;
6. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
7. from there He will come to judge the living and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit;
9. I believe a holy catholic Christian church, the communion of saints;
10. the forgiveness of sins;
11. the resurrection of the body;
12. and the life everlasting.

Question 24 Q. How are these articles divided?

A. Into three parts: the first is about God the Father and our creation; the second about God the Son and our redemption; the third about God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification.

Question 25 Q. Since there is only one God,[1] why do you speak of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

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

[1] Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 45:5; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6. [2] Genesis 1:2-3; Isaiah 61:1; Isaiah 63:8-10; Matthew 3:16-17; Matthew 28:18-19; Luke 4:18; John 14:26; John 15:26; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:6; Titus 3:5-6.

God the Father and Our Creation Question 26 Q. What do you believe when you say: I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and all that is in them,[1] and who still upholds and governs them by His eternal counsel and providence,[2] is, for the sake of Christ His Son, my God and my Father.[3] In Him I trust so completely as to have no doubt that He will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul,[4] and will also turn to my good whatever adversity He sends me in this life of sorrow.[5] He is able to do so as almighty God,[6] and willing also as a faithful Father.[7]

[1] Genesis 1:1-31; Genesis 2:1-25; Exodus 20:11; Job 38:1-41; Job 39:1-30; Psalms 33:6; Isaiah 44:24; Acts 4:24; Acts 14:15. [2] Psalms 104:27-30; Matthew 6:30; Matthew 10:29; Ephesians 1:11. [3] John 1:12-13; Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:5. [4] Psalms 55:22; Matthew 6:25-26; Luke 12:22-31. [5] Romans 8:28. [6] Genesis 18:14; Romans 8:31-39. [7]

Matthew 6:32-33; Matthew 7:9-11.

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

A. God's providence is His almighty and ever present power,[1] whereby, as with His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth and all creatures,[2] and so governs them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, food and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty,[3] indeed, all things, come not by chance[4] but by 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.

Question 28 Q. What does it benefit us to know that God has created all things and still upholds them by His providence?

A. We can be patient in adversity,[1] thankful in prosperity,[2] and with a view to the future we can have a firm confidence in our faithful God and Father that no creature shall separate us from His love;[3] for all creatures are so completely in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move.[4]

[1] Job 1:21-22; Psalms 39:10; James 1:3. [2] Deuteronomy 8:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:18. [3] Psalms 55:22; Romans 5:3-5; Romans 8:38-39. [4] Job 1:12; Job 2:6; Proverbs 21:1; Acts 17:24-28.

Question 29 Q. Why is the Son of God called Jesus, that is, Saviour?

A. Because He saves us from all our sins,[1] and because salvation is not to be sought or found in anyone else.[2] [1] Matthew 1:21; Hebrews 7:25. [2] Isaiah 43:11; John 15:4-5; Acts 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 2:5.

Question 30

Q. Do those believe in the only Saviour Jesus who seek their salvation and well-being from saints, in themselves, or anywhere else?

A. No. Though they boast of Him in words, they in fact deny the only Saviour Jesus.[1] For one of two things must be true: either Jesus is not a complete Saviour, or those who by true faith accept this Saviour must find in Him all that is necessary for their salvation.[2] [1] 1 Corinthians 1:12-13; Galatians 5:4. [2] Colossians 1:19-20; Colossians 2:10; 1 John 1:7.

Question 31 Q. Why is He called Christ, that is, Anointed?

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

[1] Psalms 45:7 (Hebrews 1:9); Isaiah 61:1 (Luke 4:18; Luke 3:21-22. [2] Deuteronomy 18:15 (Acts 3:22). [3] John 1:18; John 15:15. [4] Psalms 110:4 (Hebrews 7:17). [5] Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews

10:11-14. [6] Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24; 1 John 2:1. [7] Zechariah 9:9 (Matthew 21:5); Luke 1:33. [8] Matthew 28:18-20; John 10:28; Revelation 12:10-11.

Question 32 Q. Why are you called a Christian?

A. Because I am a member of Christ by faith[1] and thus share in His anointing,[2] so that I may as prophet confess His Name,[3] as priest present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him,[4] and as king fight with a free and good conscience against sin and the devil in this life,[5] and hereafter reign with Him eternally over all creatures.[6]

[1] 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. [2] Joel 2:28 (Acts 2:17); 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.

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

A. Because Christ alone is the eternal, natural Son of God.[1] We, however, are children of God by adoption, through grace, for Christ's sake.[2]

[1] John 1:1-3; John 1:14; John 1:18; John 3:16; Romans 8:32; Hebrews 1:1-14; 1 John 4:9. [2] John 1:12; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:5-6.

Question 34 Q. Why do you call Him our Lord?

A. Because He has ransomed us, body and soul,[1] from all our sins, not with silver or gold but with His precious blood,[2] and has freed us from all the power of the devil to make us His own possession.[3] [1] 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Timothy 2:5-6. [2] 1 Peter 1:18-19. [3] Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 2:14-15.

Question 35 Q. What do you confess when you say: He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary?

A. The eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God,[1] took upon Himself true human nature from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary,[2] through the working of the Holy Spirit.[3] Thus He is also the true seed of David,[4] and like His brothers in every respect,[5] yet without sin.[6]

[1] John 1:1; John 10:30-36; Romans 1:3; Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:15-17; 1 John 5:20. [2] Matthew 1:18-23; John 1:14; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:14. [3] Luke 1:35. [4] 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalms 132:11; Matthew 1:1; Luke 1:32; Romans 1:3. [5] Php 2:7; Hebrews 2:17. [6] Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26-27.

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

A. He is our Mediator,[1] and with His innocence and perfect holiness covers, in the sight of God, my sin, in which I was conceived and born.[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.

Question 37 Q. What do you confess when you say that He suffered?

A. During all the time He lived on earth, but especially at the end, Christ bore in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race.[1] Thus, by His suffering, as the only atoning sacrifice,[2] He has redeemed our body and soul from everlasting damnation,[3] and obtained for us the grace of God, righteousness, and eternal life.[4]

[1] Isaiah 53:1-12; 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18. [2] Romans 3:25; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 10:14; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10. [3] Romans 8:1-4; Galatians 3:13; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18-19. [4] John 3:16; Romans 3:24-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:15.

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

A. Though innocent, Christ was condemned by an earthly judge,[1] and so He freed us from the severe judgment of God that was to fall on us.[2] [1] Luke 23:13-24; John 19:4; John 19:12-16. [2] Isaiah 53:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13.

Question 39 Q. Does it have a special meaning that Christ was crucified and did not die in a different way?

A. Yes. Thereby I am assured that He took upon Himself the curse which lay on me, for a crucified one was cursed by God.[1] [1] Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13.

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

A. Because of the justice and truth of God[1] satisfaction for our sins could be made in no other way than by the death of the Son of God.[2] [1] Genesis 2:17. [2] Romans 8:3; Php 2:8; Hebrews 2:9; Hebrews 2:14-15.

Question 41 Q. Why was he buried?

A. His burial testified that He had really died.[1] [1] Isaiah 53:9; John 19:38-42; Acts 13:29; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.

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

A. Our death is not a payment for our sins, but it puts an end to sin and is an entrance into eternal life.[1] [1] John 5:24; Php 1:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10.

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

A. Through Christ's death our old nature is crucified, put to death, and buried with Him,[1] so that the evil desires of the flesh may no longer reign in us,[2] but that we may offer ourselves to Him as a sacrifice of thankfulness.[3] [1] Romans 6:5-11; Colossians 2:11-12. [2] Romans 6:12-14. [3] Romans 12:1; Ephesians 5:1-2.

Question 44 Q. Why is there added: He descended into hell?

A. In my greatest sorrows and temptations I may be assured and comforted that my Lord Jesus Christ, by His unspeakable anguish, pain, terror, and agony, which He endured throughout all His sufferings[1] but especially on the cross, has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell.[2] [1] Psalms 18:5-6; Psalms 116:3; Matthew 26:36-46; Matthew 27:45-46; Hebrews 5:7-10. [2]

Isaiah 53:1-12.

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

A. First, by His resurrection He has overcome death, so that He could make us share in the righteousness which He had obtained for us by His death.[1] Second, by His power we too are raised up to a new life.[2] Third, Christ's resurrection is to us a sure pledge 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; Php 3:20-21.

Question 46 Q. What do you confess when you say, He ascended into heaven?

A. That Christ, before the eyes of His disciples, was taken up from the earth into heaven,[1] and that He is there for our benefit[2] until He comes again to judge the living and the dead.[3]

[1] Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11. [2] Romans 8:34; Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 7:23-25; Hebrews 9:24. [3] Matthew 24:30; Acts 1:11.

Question 47 Q. Is Christ, then, not with us until the end of the world, as He has promised us?[1]

A. Christ is true man and true God. With respect to His human nature He is no longer on earth,[2] but with respect to His divinity, majesty, grace, and Spirit He is never absent from us.[3]

[1] Matthew 28:20. [2] Matthew 26:11; John 16:28; John 17:11; Acts 3:19-21; Hebrews 8:4. [3] Matthew 28:18-20; John 14:16-19; John 16:13.

Question 48

Q. But are the two natures in Christ not separated from each other if His human nature is not present wherever His divinity is?

A. Not at all, for His divinity has no limits and is present everywhere.[1] So it must follow that His divinity is indeed beyond the human nature which He has taken on and nevertheless is within this human nature and remains personally united with it.[2] [1] Jeremiah 23:23-24; Acts 7:48-49. [2] John 1:14; John 3:13; Colossians 2:9.

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

A. First, He is our Advocate in heaven before His Father.[1] Second, we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that He, our Head, will also take us, His members, up to Himself.[2] Third, He sends us His Spirit as a counter-pledge,[3] by whose power we seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, and not the things that are on earth.[4]

[1] Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1. [2] John 14:2; John 17:24; Ephesians 2:4-6. [3] John 14:16; Acts 2:33; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:5. [4] Colossians 3:1-4.

Question 50 Q. Why is it added, And sits at the right hand of God?

A. Christ ascended into heaven to manifest Himself there as Head of His Church,[1] through whom the Father governs all things.[2] [1] Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:18. [2] Matthew 28:18; John

5:22-23.

Question 51 Q. How does the glory of Christ, our Head, benefit us?

A. First, by His Holy Spirit He pours out heavenly gifts upon us, His members.[1] Second, by His power He defends and preserves us against all enemies.[2] [1] Acts 2:33; Ephesians 4:7-12. [2] Psalms 2:9; Psalms 110:1-2; John 10:27-30; Revelation 19:11-16.

Question 52 Q. What comfort is it to you that Christ will come to judge the living and the dead?

A. In all my sorrow and persecution I lift up my head and eagerly await as judge from heaven the very same person who before has submitted Himself to the judgment of God for my sake, and has removed all the curse from me.[1] He will cast all His and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but He will take me and all His chosen ones to Himself into heavenly joy and glory.[2]

[1] Luke 21:28; Romans 8:22-25; Php 3:20-21; Titus 2:13-14. [2] Matthew 25:31-46; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

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

A. First, He is, together with the Father and the Son, true and eternal God.[1] Second, He is also given to me,[2] to make me by true faith share in Christ and all His benefits,[3] to comfort me,[4] and to remain with me forever.[5]

[1] Genesis 1:1-2; Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16. [2] 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13. [3] Galatians 3:14; 1 Peter 1:2. [4] John 15:26; Acts 9:31. [5] John 14:16-17; 1 Peter 4:14.

Question 54 Q. What do you believe concerning the holy catholic Christian church?

A. I believe that the Son of God,[1] out of the whole human race,[2] from the beginning of the world to its end,[3] gathers, defends, and preserves for Himself, [4] by His Spirit and Word,[5] in the unity of the true faith,[6] a church chosen to everlasting life.[7] And I believe that I am[8] and forever shall remain a living member of it.[9]

[1] John 10:11; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11-13; Colossians 1:18. [2] Genesis 26:4; Revelation 5:9. [3] Isaiah 59:21; 1 Corinthians 11:26. [4] Psalms 129:1-5; Matthew 16:18; John 10:28-30. [5] Romans 1:16; Romans 10:14-17; Ephesians 5:26. [6] Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 4:1-6. [7] Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:3-14. [8] 1 John 3:14, 1 John 3:19-21. [9] Psalms 23:6; John 10:27-28; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 1 Peter 1:3-5.

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

A. First, that believers, all and everyone, as members of Christ have communion with Him and share in all His treasures and gifts.[1] Second, that everyone is duty-bound to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the benefit and well-being of the other members.[2]

[1] Romans 8:32; 1 Corinthians 6:17; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 1 John 1:3. [2] Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:20-27; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7; Php 2:4-8.

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

A. I believe that God, because of Christ's satisfaction, will no more remember my sins,[1] nor my sinful nature, against which I have to struggle all my life,[2] but He will graciously grant me the righteousness of Christ, that I may never come into condemnation.[3]

[1] Psalms 103:3-4; Psalms 103:10; Psalms 103:12; Micah 7:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; 1 John 1:7; 1 John 2:2. [2] Romans 7:21-25. [3] John 3:17-18; John 5:24; Romans 8:1-2.

Question 57 Q. What comfort does the resurrection of the body offer you?

A. Not only shall my soul after this life immediately be taken up to Christ, my Head,[1] but also this my flesh, raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul and made like Christ's glorious body.[2]

[1] Luke 16:22; Luke 23:43; Php 1:21-23. [2] Job 19:25-26; 1 Corinthians 15:20; 1 Corinthians 15:42-46; 1 Corinthians 15:54; Php 3:21; 1 John 3:2.

Question 58 Q. What comfort do you receive from the article about the life everlasting?

A. Since I now already feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, [1] I shall after this life possess perfect blessedness, such as no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived-- a blessedness in which to praise God forever.[2] [1] John 17:3; Romans 14:17; 2 Corinthians 5:2-3. [2] John 17:24; 1 Corinthians 2:9.

Question 59 Q. But what does it help you now that you believe all this?

A. In Christ I am righteous before God and heir to life everlasting.[1] [1] Habakkuk 2:4; John 3:36; Romans 1:17; Romans 5:1-2.

Question 60 Q. How are you righteous before God?

A. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ.[1] Although my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all God's commandments, have never kept any of them,[2] and am still inclined to all evil,[3] yet God, without any merit of my own,[4] out of mere grace,[5] imputes to me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ.[6] He grants these to me as if I had never had nor committed any sin, and as if I myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ has rendered for me,[7] if only I accept this gift with a believing heart.[8]

[1] Romans 3:21-28; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Php 3:8-11. [2] Romans 3:9-10. [3] Romans 7:23. [4] Deuteronomy 9:6; Ezekiel 36:22; Titus 3:4-5. [5] Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8. [6] Romans 4:3-5; 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; Romans 3:22.

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

A. Not that I am acceptable to God on account of the worthiness of my faith, for only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ is my righteousness before God.[1] I can receive this righteousness and make it mine my own by faith only.[2] [1] 1 Corinthians 1:30-31; 1 Corinthians 2:2. [2] Romans 10:10; 1 John 5:10-12.

Question 62 Q. But why can our good works not be our righteousness before God, or at least a part of it?

A. Because the righteousness which can stand before God's judgment must be absolutely perfect and in complete agreement with the law of God,[1] whereas even our best works in this life are all imperfect and defiled with sin.[2] [1] Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10. [2] Isaiah 64:6.

Question 63 Q. But do our good works earn nothing, even though God promises to reward them in this life and the next?

A. This reward is not earned[1]; it is a gift of grace.[2] [1] Matthew 5:12; Hebrews 11:6. [2] Luke 17:10; 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

Question 64 Q. Does this teaching not make people careless and wicked?

A. No. It is impossible that those grafted into Christ by true faith should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.[1] [1] Matthew 7:18; Luke 6:43-45; John 15:5.

Question 65 Q. Since then faith alone makes us share in Christ and all His benefits, where does this faith come from?

A. From the Holy Spirit,[1] who works it in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel,[2] and strengthens it by the use of the sacraments.[3]

[1] John 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; Ephesians 2:8; Php 1:29. [2] Romans 10:17; 1 Peter 1:23-25. [3] Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16.

Question 66 Q. What are the sacraments?

A. The sacraments are holy, visible signs and seals. They were instituted by God so that by their use He might the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel.[1] And this is the promise: that God graciously grants us forgiveness of sins and everlasting life because of the one sacrifice of Christ accomplished 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.

Question 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. Yes, indeed. The Holy Spirit teaches us in the gospel and assures us by the sacraments 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.

Question 68 Q. How many sacraments has Christ instituted in the new covenant?

A. Two: holy baptism and the holy supper.[1] [1] Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Question 69 Q. How does holy baptism signify and seal to you that the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross benefits you?

A. In this way: Christ instituted this outward washing[1] and with it gave the promise that, as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body, so certainly His blood and Spirit wash away the impurity of my soul, that is, all my sins.[2] [1] Matthew 28:19. [2] Matthew 3:11; Mark 16:16; John 1:33; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21.

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

A. To be washed with Christ's blood means to receive forgiveness of sins from God, through grace, because of Christ's blood, poured out for us in His sacrifice on the cross.[1] To be washed with His Spirit means to be renewed by the Holy Spirit and sanctified to be members of Christ, so that more and more we become dead to sin and lead a holy and blameless life.[2]

[1] Ezekiel 36:25; Zechariah 13:1; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2; Revelation 1:5; Revelation 7:14. [2] John 3:5-8; Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Colossians 2:11-12.

Question 71

Q. Where has Christ promised that He will wash us 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: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.[1] He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned.[2] This promise is repeated where Scripture calls baptism the washing of regeneration and the washing away of sins.[3] [1] Matthew 28:19; [2] Mark 16:16; [3] Titus 3:5; Acts 22:16;

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

A. No, only the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.[1] [1] Matthew 3:11; 1 Peter 3:21; 1 John 1:7.

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

A. God speaks in this way for a good reason. He wants to teach us that the blood and Spirit of Christ remove our sins just as water takes away dirt from the body.[1] But, even more important, He wants to assure us by this divine pledge and sign that we are as truly cleansed from our sins spiritually as we are bodily washed with water.[2] [1] 1 Corinthians 6:11; Revelation 1:5; Revelation 7:14. [2] Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27.

Question 74 Q. Should infants, too, be baptized?

A. Yes. Infants as well as adults belong to God's covenant and congregation.[1] Through Christ's blood the redemption from sin and the Holy Spirit, who works faith, are promised to them no less than to adults.[2] Therefore, by baptism, as sign of the covenant, they must be grafted into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers.[3] This was done in the old covenant by circumcision,[4] in place of which baptism was instituted in the new covenant.[5]

[1] Genesis 17:7; Matthew 19:14. [2] Psalms 22:11; Isaiah 44:1-3; Acts 2:38-39; Acts 16:31. [3] Acts 10:47; 1 Corinthians 7:14. [4] Genesis 17:9-14. [5] Colossians 2:11-13.

Question 75

Q. How does the Lord's Supper signify and seal to 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 of this broken bread and drink of this cup in remembrance of Him. With this command He gave these promises:[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 was His body offered for me and His blood poured out for me on the cross. Second, as surely as I receive from the hand of the minister and taste with my mouth the bread and the cup of the Lord as sure signs of Christ's body and blood, so surely does He Himself nourish and refresh my soul to everlasting life with His crucified body and shed blood.

[1] Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

Question 76 Q. What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink His shed blood?

A. First, to accept with a believing heart all the suffering and the death of Christ, and so receive forgiveness of sins and life eternal.[1] Second, to be united more and more to His sacred body through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us.[2] Therefore, although Christ is in heaven[3] and we are on earth, yet we are flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones,[4] and we forever live and are governed by one Spirit, as the members of our body are by one soul.[5]

[1] John 6:35, John 6:40, John 6:50-54. [2] John 6:55-56; 1 Corinthians 12:13. [3] Acts 1:9-11; Acts 3:21; 1 Corinthians 11:26; Colossians 3:1. [4] 1 Corinthians 6:15, 1 Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 5:29-30; 1 John 4:13. [5] John 6:56-58; John 15:1-6; Ephesians 4:15-16; 1 John 3:24.

Question 77

Q. Where has Christ promised that He will nourish and refresh believers with His body and blood as surely as they eat of this broken bread and drink of this cup?

A. In the institution of the Lord's supper: The Lord Jesus on the night when 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 also the cup, after supper, saying, "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.[1] This promise is repeated by Paul where he says: The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.[2] [1] 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; [2] 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

Question 78 Q. Are then 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 the blood of Christ and is not the washing away of sins itself but is simply God's sign and pledge,[1] so also the bread in the Lord's supper does not become the body of Christ itself,[2] although it is called Christ's body[3] in keeping with the nature and usage of sacraments.[4]

[1] Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5. [2] Matthew 26:26-29. [3] 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 1 Corinthians 11:26-28. [4] Genesis 17:10-11; Exodus 12:11; Exodus 12:13; 1 Corinthians 10:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21.

Question 79

Q. Why then does Christ call the bread His body and the cup His blood, or the new covenant in His blood, and why does Paul speak of a participation in the body and blood of Christ?

A. Christ speaks in this way for a good reason: He wants to teach us by His supper that as bread and wine sustain us in this temporal life, so His crucified body and shed blood are true food and drink for our souls to eternal life.[1] But, even more important, He wants to assure us by this visible sign and pledge, first, that through the working of the Holy Spirit we share in His true body and blood as surely as we receive with our mouth these holy signs in remembrance of Him,[2] and, second, that all His suffering and obedience are as certainly ours as if we personally had suffered and paid for our sins.[3] [1] John 6:51, John 6:55. [2] 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 1 Corinthians 11:26. [3] Romans 6:5-11.

Question 80 Q. What difference is there between the Lord's supper and the papal mass?

A. The Lord's supper testifies to us, first, that we have complete forgiveness of all our sins through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which He Himself accomplished on the cross once for all;[1] and, second, that through the Holy Spirit we are grafted into Christ,[2] who with His true body is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father,[3] and this is where He wants to be worshipped.[4] But the mass teaches, first, that the living and the dead do not have forgiveness of sins through the suffering of Christ unless He is still offered for them daily by the priests; and, second, that Christ is bodily present in the form of bread and wine, and there is to be worshipped. Therefore the mass is basically nothing but a denial of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry.

[1] Matthew 26:28; John 19:30; Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:12, Hebrews 9:25-26; Hebrews 10:10-18. [2] 1 Corinthians 6:17; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17. [3] John 20:17; Acts 7:55-56; Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 8:1. [4] John 4:21-24; Php 3:20; Colossians 3:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

Question 81 Q. Who are to come to the table of the Lord?

A. Those who are truly displeased with themselves because of their sins and yet trust that these are forgiven them and that their remaining weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and amend their life. But hypocrites and those who do not repent eat and drink judgment upon themselves.[1] [1] 1 Corinthians 10:19-22; 1 Corinthians 11:26-32.

Question 82

Q. Are those also to be admitted to the Lord's supper who by their confession and life show that they are unbelieving and ungodly?

A. No, for then the covenant of God would be profaned and His wrath kindled against the whole congregation.[1] Therefore, according to the command of Christ and His apostles, the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such persons by the keys of the kingdom of heaven, until they

amend their lives.

[1] Psalms 50:16; Isaiah 1:11-17; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

Question 83 Q. What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

A. The preaching of the holy gospel and church discipline. By these two the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and closed to unbelievers.[1] [1] Matthew 16:19; John 20:21-23.

Question 84 Q. How is the kingdom of heaven opened and closed by the preaching of the gospel?

A. According to the command of Christ, the kingdom of heaven is opened when it is proclaimed and publicly testified to each and every believer that God has really forgiven all their sins for the sake of Christ's merits, as often as they by true faith accept the promise of the gospel. The kingdom of heaven is closed when it is proclaimed and testified to all unbelievers and hypocrites that the wrath of God and eternal condemnation rest on them as long as they do not repent. According to this testimony of the gospel, God will judge both in this life and in the life to come.[1] [1] Matthew 16:19; John 3:31-36; John 20:21-23.

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

A. According to the command of Christ, people who call themselves Christians but show themselves to be unchristian in doctrine or life are first repeatedly admonished in a brotherly manner. If they do not give up their errors or wickedness, they are reported to the church, that is, to the elders. If they do not heed also their admonitions, they are forbidden the use of the sacraments, and they are excluded by the elders from the Christian congregation, and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ.[1] They are again received as members of Christ and of the church when they promise and show real amendment.[2]

[1] Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:3-5; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15. [2] Luke 15:20-24; 2 Corinthians 2:6-11.

Question 86

Q. Since we have been delivered from our misery by grace alone through Christ, without any merit of our own, why must we yet do good works?

A. Because Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit to be His image, so that with our whole life we may show ourselves thankful to God for His benefits,[1] and He may be praised by us.[2] Further, that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by its fruits,[3] and that by our godly walk of life we may win our neighbours for Christ.[4]

[1] Romans 6:13; Romans 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; 1 Peter 3:1-2.

Question 87 Q. Can those be saved who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and impenitent walk of life?

A. By no means. Scripture says that no unchaste person, idolater, adulterer, thief, greedy person, drunkard, slanderer, robber, or the like shall inherit the kingdom of God.[1] [1] 1 Corinthians

6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5-6; 1 John 3:14.

Question 88 Q. What is the true repentance or conversion of man?

A. It is the dying of the old nature and the coming to life of the new.[1] [1] Romans 6:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:5-10.

Question 89 Q. What is the dying of the old nature?

A. It is to grieve with heartfelt sorrow that we have offended God by our sin, and more and more to hate it and flee from it.[1] [1] Psalms 51:3-4, Psalms 51:17; Joel 2:12-13; Romans 8:12-13; 2 Corinthians 7:10.

Question 90 Q. What is the coming to life of the new nature?

A. It is a heartfelt joy in God through Christ,[1] and a love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works.[2] [1] Psalms 51:8-12; Isaiah 57:15; Romans 5:1; Romans 14:17. [2] Romans 6:10-11; Galatians 2:20.

Question 91 Q. But what are good works?

A. Only those which are done out of true faith,[1] in accordance with the law of God,[2] and to His glory,[3] and not those based on our own opinion or on precepts of men.[4]

[1] John 15:5; Romans 14:23; 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.

Question 92 Q. What is the law of the LORD?

A. God spoke all these words, saying: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.

2. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

3. You shall not take the Name of the LORD your God 3. in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His Name in vain.

4. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.

5. Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

6. You shall not kill.

7. You shall not commit adultery.

8. You shall not steal.

9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

10. you shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbour's.[1] [1] Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

Question 93 Q. How are these commandments divided?

A. Into two parts. The first teaches us how to live in relation to God; the second, what duties we owe our neighbour.[1] [1] Matthew 22:37-40.

Question 94 Q. What does the LORD require in the first commandment?

A. That for the sake of my very salvation I avoid and flee all idolatry,[1] witchcraft, superstition,[2] and prayer to saints or to other creatures.[3] Further, that I rightly come to know the only true God.[4] trust in Him alone,[5] submit to Him with all humility[6] and patience,[7] expect all good from Him only,[8] and love,[9] fear,[10] and honour Him[11] with all my heart. In short, that I forsake all creatures rather than do the least thing against His will.[12]

[1] 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Corinthians 10:5-14; 1 John 5:21. [2] Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:9-12. [3] Matthew 4:10; Revelation 19:10; Revelation 22:8-9. [4] John 17:3. [5] Jeremiah 17:5; Jeremiah 7:1. [6] 1 Peter 5:5-6. [7] Romans 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 10:10; Php 2:14; Colossians 1:11; Hebrews 10:36. [8] Psalms 104:27-28; Isaiah 45:7; James 1:17. [9] Deuteronomy 6:5; (Matthew 22:37). [10] Deuteronomy 6:2; Psalms 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10; Matthew 10:28; 1 Peter 1:17. [11] Deuteronomy 6:13; (Matthew 4:10); Deuteronomy 10:20. [12] Matthew 5:29-30; Matthew 10:37-39; Acts 5:29.

Question 95 Q. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is having or inventing something in which to put our trust instead of, or in addition to, the only true God who has revealed Himself in His Word.[1] [1] 1 Chronicles 16:26; Galatians 4:8-9; Ephesians 5:5; Php 3:19.

Question 96 Q. What does God require in the second commandment?

A. We are not to make an image of God in any way,[1] nor to worship Him in any other manner 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; Deuteronomy 12:30; 1 Samuel 15:22-23; Matthew 15:9; John 4:23-24.

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

A. God cannot and may not be visibly portrayed in any way. Creatures may be portrayed, but God forbids us to make or have any images of them in order to worship them or to serve God through them.[1] [1] Exodus 34:13; Exodus 34:14, Exodus 34:17; Numbers 33:52; 2 Kings 18:4-5; Isaiah

40:25.

Question 98 Q. But may images not be tolerated in the churches as "books for the laity"?

A. No, for we should not be wiser than God. He wants His people to be taught not by means of dumb images[1] but by the living preaching of His Word.[2] [1] Jeremiah 10:8; Habakkuk 2:18-20. [2] Romans 10:14-15; Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19.

Question 99 Q. What is required in the third commandment?

A. We are not to blaspheme or to abuse the Name of God by cursing,[1] perjury,[2] or unnecessary oaths,[3] nor to share in such horrible sins by being silent bystanders.[4] In short, we must use the holy Name of God only with fear and reverence,[5] so that we may rightly confess Him,[6] call upon Him,[7] and praise Him in all our words and works.[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] Psalms 99:1-5; Isaiah 45:23; Jeremiah 4:2. [6] Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10. [7] Psalms 50:14-15; 1 Timothy 2:8. [8] Romans 2:24; Colossians 3:17; 1 Timothy 6:1.

Question 100

Q. Is the blaspheming of God's Name by swearing and cursing such a grievous sin that God is angry also with those who do not prevent and forbid it as much as they can?

A. Certainly,[1] for no sin is greater or provokes God's wrath more than the blaspheming of His Name. That is why He commanded it to be punished with death.[2] [1] Leviticus 5:1. [2] Leviticus 24:16.

Question 101 Q. But may we swear an oath by the Name of God in a godly manner?

A. Yes, when the government demands it of its subjects, or when necessity requires it, in order to maintain and promote fidelity and truth, to God's glory and for our neighbour's good. Such oath-taking is based on God's Word[1] and was therefore rightly used by saints in the Old and the New Testament.[2]

[1] Deuteronomy 6:13; Deuteronomy 10:20; Jeremiah 4:1-2; Hebrews 6:16. [2] Genesis 21:24; Genesis 31:53; Joshua 9:15; 1 Samuel 24:22; 1 Kings 1:29-30; Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23.

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

A. No. A lawful oath is a calling upon God, who alone knows the heart, to bear witness to the truth, 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; Matthew 23:16-22; James 5:12.

Question 103 Q. What does God require in the fourth commandment?

A. First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained[1] and that, especially on the day of rest, I diligently attend the church of God[2] to hear God's Word,[3] to use the sacraments,[4] to call publicly upon the LORD,[5] and to give Christian offerings for the poor.[6] Second, that all the days of my life I rest from my evil works, let the LORD work in me through His Holy Spirit, and so begin in this life the eternal sabbath.[7]

[1] Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Deuteronomy 6:20-25; 1 Corinthians 9:13-14; 2 Timothy 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:13-17; Titus 1:5. [2] Deuteronomy 12:5-12; Psalms 40:9-10; Psalms 68:26; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25. [3] Romans 10:14-17; 1 Corinthians 14:26-33; 1 Timothy 4:13. [4] 1 Corinthians 11:23-24. [5] Colossians 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:1. [6] Psalms 50:14; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:1-24; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15. [7] Isaiah 66:23; Hebrews 4:9-11.

Question 104 Q. What does God require in the fifth commandment?

A. That I show all honour, love, and faithfulness to my father and mother and to all those in authority over me, submit myself with due obedience to their good instruction and discipline,[1] and also have patience with their weaknesses and shortcomings,[2] since it is God's will to govern us by their hand.[3]

[1] Exodus 21:17; Proverbs 1:8; Proverbs 4:1; Romans 13:1-2; Ephesians 5:21-22; Ephesians 6:1-9; Colossians 3:18-25 & Colossians 4:1. [2] Proverbs 20:20; Proverbs 23:22; 1 Peter 1:1. [3] Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-8; Ephesians 6:1-9; Colossians 3:18-21.

Question 105 Q. What does God require in the sixth commandment?

A. I am not to dishonour, hate, injure, or kill my neighbour by thoughts, words, or gestures, and much less by deeds, whether personally or through another;[1] rather, I am to put away all desire of revenge.[2] Moreover, I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself.[3] Therefore, also, the government bears the sword to prevent murder.[4]

[1] Genesis 9:6; Leviticus 19:17-18; Matthew 5:21-22; Matthew 26:52. [2] Proverbs 25:21-22; Matthew 18:35; Romans 12:19; Ephesians 4:26. [3] Matthew 4:7; Matthew 26:52; Romans 13:11-14. [4] Genesis 9:6; Exodus 21:14; Romans 13:4.

Question 106 Q. But does this commandment speak only of killing?

A. By forbidding murder God teaches us that He hates the root of murder, such as envy, hatred, anger, and desire of revenge,[1] and that He regards all these as murder.[2] [1] Proverbs 14:30; Romans 1:29; Romans 12:19; Galatians 5:19-21; James 1:20; 1 John 2:9-11. [2] 1 John 3:15.

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

A. No. When God condemns envy, hatred, and anger, He commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves,[1] to show patience, peace, gentleness, mercy, and friendliness toward 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; Matthew 22:39; Romans 12:10. [2] Matthew 5:5; Luke 6:36; Romans 12:10; Romans 12:18; 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.

Question 108 Q. What does the seventh commandment teach us?

A. That all unchastity is cursed by God.[1] We must therefore detest it from the heart[2] and live chaste and disciplined lives, both within and outside of holy marriage.[3] [1] Leviticus 18:30; Ephesians 5:3-5. [2] Jude 1:22-23. [3] 1 Corinthians 7:1-9; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Hebrews 13:4.

Question 109 Q. Does God in this commandment forbid nothing more than adultery and similar shameful sins?

A. Since we, body and soul, are temples of the Holy Spirit, it is God's will that we keep ourselves pure and holy. Therefore He forbids all unchaste acts, gestures, words, thoughts, desires,[1] and whatever may entice us to unchastity.[2] [1] Matthew 5:27-29; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20; Ephesians 5:3-4. [2] 1 Corinthians 15:33; Ephesians 5:18.

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

A. God forbids not only outright theft and robbery[1] but also such wicked schemes and devices as false weights and measures, deceptive merchandising, counterfeit money, and usury;[2] we must not defraud our neighbour in any way, whether by force or by show of right.[3] In addition God forbids all greed[4] and all abuse or squandering of His gifts.[5]

[1] Exodus 22:1; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. [2] Deuteronomy 25:13-16; Psalms 15:5; Proverbs 11:1; Proverbs 12:22; Ezekiel 45:9-12; Luke 6:35. [3] Micah 6:9-11; Luke 3:14; James 5:1-6. [4] Luke 12:15; Ephesians 5:5. [5] Proverbs 21:20; Proverbs 23:20-21; Luke 16:10-13.

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

A. I must promote my neighbour's good wherever I can and may, deal with him as I would like others to deal with me, and work faithfully so that I may be able to give to those in need.[1] [1] Isaiah 58:5-10; Matthew 7:12; Galatians 6:9-10; Ephesians 4:28.

Question 112 Q. What is required in the ninth commandment?

A. I must not give false testimony against anyone, twist no one's words, not gossip or slander, nor condemn or join in condemning anyone rashly and unheard.[1] Rather, I must avoid all lying and deceit as the devil's own works, under penalty of God's heavy wrath.[2] In court and everywhere else, I must love the truth,[3] speak and confess it honestly, and do what I can to defend and promote my neighbour's honour and reputation.[4]

[1] Psalms 15:1-5; Proverbs 19:5; Proverbs 19:9; Proverbs 21:28; Matthew 7:1; Luke 6:37; Romans 1:28-32. [2] Leviticus 19:11-12; Proverbs 12:22; Proverbs 13:5; John 8:44; Revelation 21:8. [3] 1 Corinthians 13:6; Ephesians 4:25. [4] 1 Peter 3:8-9; 1 Peter 4:8.

Question 113 Q. What does the tenth commandment require of us?

A. That not even the slightest thought or desire contrary to any of God's commandments should ever arise in our heart. Rather, we should always hate all sin with all our heart, and delight in all righteousness.[1] [1] Psalms 19:7-14; Psalms 139:23-24; Romans 7:7-8.

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

A. No. In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience.[1] Nevertheless, with earnest purpose they do begin to live not only according to some but to all the commandments of God.[2] [1] Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 7:14-15; 1 Corinthians 13:9; 1 John 1:8. [2] Psalms 1:1-2; Romans 7:22-25; Php 3:12-16.

Question 115 Q. If in this life no one can keep the ten commandments perfectly, why does God have them preached so strictly?

A. First, that throughout our life we may more and more become aware of our sinful nature, and therefore seek more eagerly the forgiveness of sins and righteousness in Christ.[1] Second, that we may be zealous for good deeds and constantly pray to God for the grace of the Holy Spirit, that He may more and more renew us after God's image, until after this life we reach the goal of perfection.[2]

[1] Psalms 32:5; Romans 3:19-26; Romans 7:7; Romans 7:24-25; 1 John 1:9. [2] 1 Corinthians 9:24; Php 3:12-14; 1 John 3:1-3.

Question 116 Q. Why is prayer necessary for Christians?

A. Because prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness which God requires of us.[1] Moreover, God will give His grace and the Holy Spirit only to those who constantly and with heartfelt longing ask Him for these gifts and thank Him for them.[2] [1] Psalms 50:14-15; Psalms 116:12-19; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. [2] Matthew 7:7-8; Luke 11:9-13.

Question 117 Q. What belongs to a prayer which pleases God and is heard by Him?

A. First, we must from the heart call upon the one true God only, who has revealed Himself in His Word, for all that He has commanded us to pray.[1] Second, we must thoroughly know our need and misery, so that we may humble ourselves before God.[2] Third, we must rest on this firm foundation that, although we do not deserve it, God will certainly hear our prayer for the sake of Christ our Lord, as He has promised us in His Word.[3]

[1] Psalms 145:18-20; John 4:22-24; Romans 8:26-27; James 1:5; 1 John 5:14-15; Revelation 19:10. [2] 2 Chronicles 7:14; 2 Chronicles 20:12; Psalms 2:11; Psalms 34:18; Psalms 62:8; Isaiah 66:2; Revelation 4:1-11. [3] Daniel 9:17-19; Matthew 7:8; John 14:13-14; John 16:23; Romans 10:13; James 1:6.

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

A. All the things we need for body and soul,[1] as included in the prayer which Christ our Lord Himself taught us.

[1] Matthew 6:33; James 1:17.

Question 119 Q. What is the Lord's prayer?

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 debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.[1] [1] Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4.

Question 120 Q. Why has Christ commanded us to address God as Our Father?

A. To awaken in us at the very beginning of our prayer that childlike reverence and trust toward God which should be basic to our prayer: God has become our Father through Christ and will

much less deny us what we ask of Him in faith than our fathers would refuse us earthly things.[1]
[1] Matthew 7:9-11; Luke 11:11-13.

Question 121 Q. Why is there added, Who art in heaven?

A. These words teach us not to think of God's heavenly majesty in an earthly manner,[1] and to expect from His almighty power all things we need for body and soul.[2] [1] Jeremiah 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-25. [2] Matthew 6:25-34; Romans 8:31-32.

Question 122 Q. What is the first petition?

A. Hallowed be Thy Name. That is: Grant us first of all that we may rightly know Thee,[1] and sanctify, glorify, and praise Thee in all Thy works, in which shine forth Thy almighty power, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, mercy, and truth.[2] Grant us also that we may so direct our whole life-- our thoughts, words, and actions-- that Thy Name is not blasphemed because of us but always honoured and praised.[3]

[1] Jeremiah 9:23-24; Jeremiah 31:33-34; Matthew 16:17; John 17:3. [2] Exodus 34:5-8; Psalms 145:1-21; Jeremiah 32:16-20; Luke 1:46-55, Luke 1:68-75; Romans 11:33-36. [3] Psalms 115:1; Matthew 5:16.

Question 123 Q. What is the second petition?

A. Thy kingdom come. That is: So rule us by Thy Word and Spirit that more and more we submit to Thee.[1] Preserve and increase Thy church.[2] Destroy the works of the devil, every power that raises itself against Thee, and every conspiracy against Thy holy Word.[3] Do all this until the fulness of Thy kingdom comes, wherein Thou shalt be all in all.[4]

[1] Psalms 119:5; Psalms 119:105; Psalms 143:10; Matthew 6:33. [2] Psalms 51:18; Psalms 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; Revelation 22:20.

Question 124 Q. What is the third petition?

A. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. That is: Grant that we and all men may deny our own will, and without any murmuring obey Thy will, for it alone is good.[1] Grant also that everyone may carry out the duties of his office and calling[2] as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.[3]

[1] Matthew 7:21; Matthew 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] Psalms 103:20-21.

Question 125 Q. What is the fourth petition?

A. Give us this day our daily bread. That is: Provide us with all our bodily needs[1] so that we may acknowledge that Thou art the only fountain of all good,[2] and that our care and labour, and also Thy gifts, cannot do us any good without Thy blessing.[3] Grant therefore that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures, and place it only in Thee.[4]

[1] Psalms 104:27-30; Psalms 145:15-16; Matthew 6:25-34. [2] Acts 14:17; Acts 17:25; James 1:17. [3] Deuteronomy 8:3; Psalms 37:16; Psalms 127:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:58. [4] Psalms 55:22;

Psalms 62:1-12; Psalms 146:1-10; Jeremiah 17:5-8; Hebrews 13:5-6.

Question 126 Q. What is the fifth petition?

A. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. That is: For the sake of Christ's blood, do not impute to us, wretched sinners; any of our transgressions, nor the evil which still clings to us,[1] as we also find this evidence of Thy grace in us that we are fully determined wholeheartedly to forgive our neighbor.[2] [1] Psalms 51:1-7; Psalms 143:2; Romans 8:1; 1 John 2:1-2. [2] Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 18:21-35.

Question 127 Q. What is the sixth petition?

A. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. That is: In ourselves we are so weak that we cannot stand even for a moment.[1] Moreover, our sworn enemies-- the devil,[2] the world,[3] and our own flesh[4]-- do not cease to attack us. Wilt Thou, therefore, uphold and strengthen us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, so that in this spiritual war[5] we may not go down to defeat, but always firmly resist our enemies, until we finally obtain the complete victory.[6]

[1] Psalms 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; Matthew 26:41; Mark 13:33; Romans 5:3-5. [6] 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Question 128 Q. How do you conclude your prayer?

A. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. That is: All this we ask of Thee because, as our King, having power over all things, Thou art both willing and able to give us all that is good,[1] and because not we but Thy holy Name should so receive all glory for ever.[2] [1] Romans 10:11-13; 2 Peter 2:9. [2] Psalms 115:1; Jeremiah 33:8-9; John 14:13.

Question 129 Q. What does the word Amen mean?

A. Amen means: It is true and certain. For God has much more certainly heard my prayer than I feel in my heart that I desire this of Him.[1] [1] Isaiah 65:24; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:13.

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