

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH

1788 version of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

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CHAPTER I

Of the Holy Scripture

I. Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence show the goodness, wisdom, and power of God so much as to leave people inexcusable, yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary for salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at various times and in diverse ways, to reveal himself and to declare his will to his Church. Afterwards, in order to better preserve and propagate the truth, and to more surely establish and protect the Church against the corruption of the flesh, the malice of Satan, and the malice of the world, it pleased the Lord to commit this wholly into writing, which makes the Holy Scripture most necessary, those former ways of God's revealing his will to his people now being ceased.

II. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the written Word of God, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament, which are these:

Of the Old Testament:

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

Of the New Testament:

The Gospels, according to

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Paul's Letters to

Timothy I.

Timothy II.

Titus

Philemon

The Acts of the Apostles

The Letter to the Hebrews

The Letter of James

Paul's Letters to the

The first Letter of Peter

Romans

The second Letter of Peter

Corinthians I.

The first Letter of John

Corinthians II.

The second Letter of John

Galatians

The third Letter of John

Ephesians

The Letter of Jude

Philippians

The Revelation of John

Colossians

Thessalonians I.

Thessalonians II.

All of these are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.

3. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are not part of the canon of the Scripture, and therefore have no authority in the Church of God, nor are they to be approved in any way, or made use of, more than any other human writings.

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, does not depend on the testimony of any human or of the Church, but wholly on God (who is truth itself), the author of it. Therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.

5. We may be moved and induced to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture by the testimony of the Church; other arguments by which it abundantly evidences itself to be the Word of God are:

- the heavenliness of the subject matter;
- the effects of its teaching;
- the majesty of its style;
- the agreement of all its parts;
- the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God);
- the full presentation it makes of the only way of the salvation of mankind,
- and its many other incomparable excellences, and the entire perfection of it.

Nevertheless, our full persuasion and assurance of the unerring truth and divine authority of Holy Scripture is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

6. The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory and for mankind's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly written down in Scripture or may be deduced from Scripture by good and necessary consequences. Nothing at any time is to be added to Scripture, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or the traditions of mankind. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word, and we acknowledge that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, that are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

7. Not all things in Scripture are equally plain in themselves, nor are they equally clear to all people. Yet those things that are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly discussed and made clear, in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the educated but also the uneducated may reach a sufficient understanding of them with the adequate use of ordinary means.

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), were immediately inspired by God. By his unique care and providence they have been kept pure in all ages and are therefore authentic, so that in all controversies of religion, the Church's final appeal is to them. However, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right to and a legitimate claim to the Scriptures, and who are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them, the Scriptures are therefore to be translated into the common language of every nation into which they come, so that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all the nations, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and so that, through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, they may have hope.

9. The unerring rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself. Therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not multiple, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.

10. The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and by which all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose judgment we are to rest, can be nothing other than the Holy Spirit speaking in Scripture.

CHAPTER II

Of God, and of the Holy Trinity

- I. There is only one living, and true God, who is
- infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions;
 - immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute;

- working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory;
- most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;
- the rewarder of those who diligently seek him;
- and in addition, most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

2. God has all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; he alone is in and to himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he has made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, to, and upon them. He is the only fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things, and he has complete sovereign dominion over them, to do through them, for them, or upon them whatever pleases him. In his sight all things are open and manifest; his knowledge is infinite, unerring, and independent of the creature, so that nothing is contingent or uncertain to him. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due, from angels, mankind and every other creature, whatever worship, service, or obedience God is pleased to require of them.

3. In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; and the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son.

CHAPTER III

Of God's Eternal Decree

1. God, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordained everything that ever happens, yet in such a way that God is not the author of sin nor is violence done to the will of the creatures, nor is the power or possibility of secondary causes taken away, but rather established.

2. Although God knows everything that may or can come to pass based on all possible conditions, yet he has not decreed anything just because he foresaw it as future, or as what would happen because of such conditions.

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some people and angels are predestined to everlasting life and others are foreordained to everlasting death.

4. These angels and people thus predestined and foreordained are particularly and unchangeably intended, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or decreased.

5. Before the foundation of the world was laid, God chose in Christ those of mankind who are predestined to life for everlasting glory, according to his eternal and immutable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will. He did this out of his mere free grace and love,

without any foreseeing of their faith, their good works, their perseverance in either of these, or any other thing in the creature that might act as conditions or causes moving him to it. All of this is to the praise of his glorious grace.

6. As God has appointed those whom he chose to glory, so also he has, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means of bring it about. Thus those who are chosen, being fallen in Adam,

- are redeemed by Christ,
- are effectually called to faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, and
- are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power, through faith, to salvation.

No others are redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but only those chosen by God.

7. God decided, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, by which he extends or withholds mercy as he pleases, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by the rest of mankind and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.

8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, so that people, giving attention to the will of God revealed in his Word and yielding their obedience to it, may be assured of their eternal selection based on the certainty of their effectual calling. This doctrine should provide matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and it should produce humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all who sincerely obey the Gospel.

CHAPTER IV

Of Creation

1. It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, to create, or make of nothing, the world and all things in it, whether visible or invisible, in the beginning in the space of six days; all of this was very good.

2. After God had made all other creatures, he created mankind, male and female, with immortal souls that could reason, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image. They had the law of God written in their hearts and power to fulfil it, but with the possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change. Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. While they kept this, they were happy in their communion with God and had dominion over the creatures.

CHAPTER V

Of Providence

1. God the great Creator of all things upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest to the least, by his most wise and holy *providence*, according to his certain foreknowledge and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.
2. In relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and unerringly; yet, by the same providence, he orders them to come about according to the nature of secondary causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.
3. God, in his ordinary providence, makes use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against, them, at his pleasure.
4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God do so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extends even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and people. Such do not happen by a bare permission, but are joined with a most wise and powerful bounding, ordering and governing of them, in various dispensations, for his own holy purposes, yet so that the sinfulness of them comes only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, is not nor can be the author or approver of sin.
5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God often leaves his own children for a season to various temptations and the corruption of their own hearts
 - to chastise them for their former sins, or to show to them the hidden strength of the corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, so that they may be humbled,
 - to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself,
 - to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin,and for various other just and holy purposes.
6. As for those wicked and ungodly people whom God blinds and hardens, as a righteous judge, for their former sins, he not only withholds from them his grace by which they might have been enlightened in their understandings and worked upon in their hearts, but also sometimes withdraws the gifts they had, and exposes them to such objects as their corruption makes occasions of sin. In addition, he gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, by which it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even by those means which God uses for the softening of others.
7. As the providence of God in general reaches to all creatures, so, after a most special manner, it takes care of his Church, and disposes all things to the good of it.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Fall of Mankind, of Sin, and of the Punishment of it

1. Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit this sin of theirs, having planned to use it to his own glory.
2. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and abilities of soul and body.
3. Because they were the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation; and the same death in sin and the same corrupted nature was conveyed to their posterity.
4. All of our actual transgressions proceed from this original corruption, by which we are utterly unwilling, disabled, made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil.
5. This corruption of nature remains in those who are regenerated during this life. Although it is pardoned and mortified through Christ, yet this nature itself and all the actions coming from it are truly and properly sin.
6. Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God and contrary to it, by its nature brings guilt on the sinner, by which the sinner is bound over to the wrath of God and the curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all manner of spiritual, temporal, and eternal miseries.

CHAPTER VII.

Of God's Covenant with Mankind

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasoning creatures owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, except by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he has been pleased to express by way of *covenant*.
2. The first covenant made with mankind was a *covenant of works*, in which life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, on condition of perfect and personal obedience.
3. Because the man, by his fall, made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second covenant, commonly called the *covenant of grace*, in which he freely offers to sinners life and salvation through Jesus Christ, requiring them to have faith in him so that they may be saved, and promises to give to all those that are ordained to eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.

4. This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in Scripture by the name of a *testament*, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ, the testator, and to the everlasting inheritance bequeathed by it, with all the things belonging to it.

5. This covenant was differently administered in the time of the Law and in the time of the Gospel. Under the Law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the Passover lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the Jewish people, all signifying in advance the Christ to come. These were sufficient and effective for that time, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins and eternal salvation. This is called the *Old Testament*.

6. Under the Gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Although these are fewer in number, and are administered with more simplicity and less outward glory, yet in them the covenant is shown forth in more fullness, evidence, and spiritual effectiveness to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles. It is called the *New Testament*. Therefore there are not two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same covenant, under different dispensations.

CHAPTER VIII

Of Christ the Mediator

1. It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the *mediator* between God and mankind—the prophet, priest, and king, the head and savior of his Church, the heir of all things, and the judge of the world. From all eternity he gave to the Lord Jesus a people to be his seed and eventually to be redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified by him.

2. The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being truly and eternally God, of one substance and equal with the Father, when the fullness of time came, took upon himself mankind's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities of it, yet without sin, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary, and of her substance. Thus two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. This person is truly God and truly man, and yet is one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

3. The Lord Jesus, in his human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit beyond measure, having in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. It pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell in him, for the purpose that, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, he might be thoroughly equipped to carry out the office of a mediator, and a payment for them. He did not take this office to himself, but was called to it by his Father, who put all power and judgment into his hand, and gave him the command to carry it out.

4. The Lord Jesus undertook this office completely willingly. So that that he might carry it out, he was made to be under the Law, and he perfectly fulfilled it. He endured grievous torments directly in his soul, and very painful sufferings in his body; he was crucified, died, was buried, and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption. On the third day he rose from the dead, with the same body in which he suffered, with which also he ascended to heaven, and sits there now at the right hand of his Father, making intercession; he shall return to judge people and angels at the end of the world.

5. The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he offered up to God once, through the eternal Spirit, has fully satisfied the justice of his Father and has purchased not only reconciliation but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father has given to him.

6. Although the work of redemption was not actually worked by Christ until after his incarnation, yet the virtue, effectiveness, and benefits of it were communicated to God's people in all ages successively from the beginning of the world. This occurred in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices in which he was revealed and signified to be the seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world, the same yesterday and today and forever.

7. Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself. Yet by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to name of the other nature.

8. Christ certainly and effectively applies and communicates his redemption to all those for whom has purchased it, making intercession for them, and revealing the mysteries of salvation to them, in and by the Word. He effectually persuades them by his Spirit to believe and obey, and he governs their hearts by his Word and Spirit, overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, in such ways as are most consistent with his wonderful and unsearchable arranging of things.

CHAPTER IX

Of Free Will

1. God has given natural freedom to the will of each person so that it is neither forced nor determined to good or evil, by any absolute necessity of nature.

2. Mankind, in the state of innocence, had the freedom and power to will and to do what was good and pleasing to God, but was nevertheless changeable, so that they might fall from this state.

3. By the fall into a state of sin, mankind has wholly lost all ability to will or to do any spiritual good accompanying salvation. A person in his natural state is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself or to prepare himself for it, being altogether averse to the good, and dead in sin.

4. When God converts a sinner and translates him into the state of grace, he frees him from his natural bondage to sin. By this grace alone, God enables him to freely will and to do what is spiritually good, yet so that, because of the sinner's remaining corruption, he does not perfectly or only will to do what is good, but also wills to do what is evil.

5. The will of people will be made perfectly and unchangeably free to want solely what is good only when they reach the state of glory.

CHAPTER X

Of Effectual Calling

1. All those whom God has predestined to life, and only those, he is pleased to *effectually call* at his appointed and accepted time, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to come to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ. In this call, he enlightens their minds spiritually, in a way effective to salvation, so that they understand the things of God. He takes away their heart of stone and gives to them a heart of flesh; he renews their wills; and by his almighty power he makes them determined to do what is good. This effectually draws them to Jesus Christ, yet in such a way that they come completely freely, being made willing by his grace.

2. This effectual call comes entirely from God's free and special grace, not from anything at all foreseen in the person, who is completely passive in it until, being made alive and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is enabled by it to answer the call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

3. Infants whom God chooses, who die in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when, where, and how he pleases. The same is true for all other people God chooses who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.

4. Others not chosen by God may be called by the ministry of the Word and may have some common experiences of the Spirit, but they never truly come to Christ and therefore cannot be saved. Much less can people not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way, even if they are diligent to orient their lives according to the light of nature and the laws of the religion they profess. To assert and maintain that they may is very pernicious, and to be detested.

CHAPTER XI

Of Justification

1. Those whom God effectually calls, he also freely *justifies*, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and by accounting and accepting them as righteous. This is not because anything worked in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone. Nor is it by counting faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, as their righteousness. Rather, it is only by imputing the obedience and full payment of Christ to them, in

which they receive and rest on him and his righteousness by faith. They do not have this faith from themselves; it is the gift of God.

2. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the only condition of justification, but is it not the only thing done in the person justified; it is always accompanied by all other saving graces, and is not a dead faith, but works by love.

3. Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are thus justified, and made a proper, real, and full payment to his Father's justice on their behalf. Yet, because he was given by the Father for them, and because his obedience and payment were accepted in their place, and because both of these were done freely, not because of anything in those who are justified, their justification is entirely of free grace. Therefore both the exact justice and the rich grace of God are glorified in the justification of sinners.

4. From all eternity, God decreed to justify all of his chosen ones, and in the fullness of time, Christ died for their sins and rose again for their justification. Nevertheless, they are not justified until the Holy Spirit, in due time, actually applies Christ to them.

5. God continues to forgive the sins of those who are justified. Although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his face restored to them until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.

6. The justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.

CHAPTER XII

Of Adoption

God condescends, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make all those who are justified to be partakers of the grace of *adoption*, by which they are taken into the number of the children of God and enjoy the liberties and privileges of such. Namely, they

- have his name put upon them,
- receive the spirit of adoption,
- have access to the throne of grace with boldness,
- are enabled to cry "Abba, Father,"
- are pitied, protected, provided for,
- and are chastened by Him, as by a father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption,
- and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.

CHAPTER XIII

Of Sanctification

1. Those who are at one time effectively called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further *sanctified*, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them. The dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the various lusts of it are weakened and put to death more and more; those who are sanctified are given life and strengthened more and more in all of the saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.
2. This sanctification is throughout the whole person, yet imperfect in this life, because some remnants of corruption still remain in every part of the person, from which a continual and irreconcilable war arises, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.
3. In this war, although the remaining corruption may prevail for a time, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part of the person wins, so that the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

CHAPTER XIV

Of Saving Faith

1. The grace of faith, by which God's chosen are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts. It is ordinarily worked by the ministry of the Word, by which, along the administration of the sacraments and prayer, the grace of faith is also increased and strengthened.
2. By this faith, a Christian *believes* to be true whatever is revealed in the Word, on the basis of the authority of God himself speaking in it, and *acts* differently based on what each particular passage in it contains. A Christian yields obedience to the commands, trembles at the threats, and embraces the promises of God for this life and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting on Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.
3. This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; it may be assailed often and in many ways and weakened, but it gets the victory, growing up in many Christians to the attainment of a full assurance, through Christ, who is both the author and the finisher of our faith.

CHAPTER XV

Of Repentance Leading to Life

1. Repentance leading to life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine of which is to be preached by every minister of the Gospel, as well as the doctrine of faith in Christ.

2. By it a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and on the realization of God's mercy in Christ to those who are penitent, grieves for and hates his sins so much that he turns away from them all to God, planning and working hard to walk with God in all the ways of his commandments.
3. Although repentance is not to be rested in as any payment for sin or as any cause of the pardon of sin, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ, yet it is of such necessity to all sinners, that no one may expect pardon without it.
4. As there is no sin so small that it does not deserve damnation, so there is no sin so great that it can bring damnation on those who truly repent.
5. People ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is each one's duty to work hard to repent of his particular sins, particularly.
6. Everyone is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon of them, upon which, and upon the forsaking of them, he will find mercy. In the same way, he who scandalizes his brother or the Church of Christ ought to be willing to declare his repentance to those who are offended, by a private or public confession and with sorrow for his sin. Afterwards they are to be reconciled to him, and to receive him in love.

CHAPTER XVI

Of Good Works

1. Good works are only such as God has commanded in his holy Word, and not such as are devised by people without the warrant of God's Word, out of blind zeal or any pretense of good intentions.
2. These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and living faith. By them believers
 - make known their thankfulness,
 - strengthen their assurance,
 - edify their brethren,
 - adorn the profession of the Gospel,
 - stop the mouths of the adversaries,
 - and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus for good works, so that, having their fruit to holiness, they may have the goal, eternal life.
3. Their ability to do good works is not at all from themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. Also, so that they may be enabled to do good works, in addition to the graces they have already received, they need an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do his good pleasure. Yet are they not to grow negligent based on this, as if they were not bound to perform any duty unless they receive a special motion of the Spirit; instead they ought to be diligent to stir up the grace of God that is in them.

4. Those who attain to the greatest height possible in their obedience in this life are still far from being able to earn merit for others or to do more than God requires, because they still fall short of much of the duty they are bound to do.

5. We cannot merit the pardon of sin or eternal life at the hand of God by our best works,

- because of the great disproportion between them and the glory to come,
- because of the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom we can neither profit by them nor pay for the debt of our former sins, but when we have done all we can, we have only done our duty, and are unprofitable servants,
- because if they are good, they proceed from his Spirit,
- and because they are done by us, and therefore are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

6. Nevertheless, because believers are accepted in themselves through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him, not as though they were wholly blameless in this life and irreproachable in God's sight, but because he, looking on them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward all that which is sincere, although accompanied by many weaknesses and imperfections.

7. Works done by unregenerate people, although of their nature they may be things that God commands and may be of good use both to themselves and others, yet, because they do not proceed from a heart purified by faith, nor are they done in a right *manner*, that is, according to the Word, nor to a right *purpose*, to the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, and cannot make a person acceptable to receive grace from God. Yet if those people neglect good works, it is more sinful and displeasing to God.

CHAPTER XVII

Of the Perseverance of the Saints

1. Those whom God has accepted in his Beloved, has effectually called, and has sanctified by his Spirit can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; they will certainly persevere in that state of grace to the end and will be eternally saved.

2. This perseverance of the saints does not depend on their own free will, but on

- the immutability of the decree of God's choice, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father,
- the effectiveness of the merit and the intercession of Jesus Christ,
- the abiding of the Spirit, and the seed of God abiding within them,
- and the nature of the covenant of grace.

The certainty and unfailing nature of their perseverance arises from all of these.

3. Nevertheless, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalence of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, the saints may fall into grievous sins and continue in them for a time. By these sins

- they incur God's displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit,

- they come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts,
- they have their hearts hardened,
- they have their consciences wounded,
- they hurt and scandalize others,
- and they bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation

1. Although hypocrites and other unregenerate people may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and fleshly presumptions of being in God's favor and in a state of salvation (a hope of theirs that will perish), yet people who truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love him in sincerity, trying to walk in all good conscience before him, may be assured with certainty in this life that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, a hope that will never make them ashamed.

2. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable belief grounded on a fallible hope, but a confident assurance of faith founded on

- the divine truth of the promises of salvation,
- the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made,
- and the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God.

This Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, by which we are sealed to the day of redemption.

3. This confident assurance does not belong to the essence of faith, so that a true believer may wait a long time and come into conflict with many difficulties before he partakes of it. Yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things that are freely given to him by God, a person may attain it, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means. Therefore it is the duty of each person to give great diligence to make sure of his calling and selection by God, so that by it his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, which are the proper fruits of this assurance. Thus this assurance is far from inclining people to looseness.

4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation shaken in various ways, diminished, and cease for a time,

- by negligence in preserving it,
- by falling into some special sin which wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit;
- by some sudden or vehement temptation,
- or by God's withdrawing the light of his face, allowing even those who fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light.

Yet are they never utterly destitute of the seed of God, the life of faith, the love of Christ and the brethren, sincerity of heart, and consciousness of duty, all of which the operation of the Spirit may use to revive this assurance in due time. In the meantime, they are supported by the Spirit from utter despair.

CHAPTER XIX

Of the Law of God

1. God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promising life upon the fulfillment of it, and threatening death upon the breach of it, and God gave him with power and the ability to keep it.
2. After the fall, this law continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; as such, it was delivered by God on Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, written in two tables. The first four commandments contain our duty towards God, and the other six, our duty to man.
3. Beside this law, commonly called the *moral law*, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under tutelage, *ceremonial laws*, containing several typological ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits, and partly presenting various instructions of moral duties. All of these ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the New Testament.
4. He also gave to them, as a corporate body, various *judicial laws*, which expired together with the nation-state of that people. These are not required of any other people now, other than the general justice of such laws may require.
5. The moral law binds everyone forever, justified believers as well as others, to obedience of it. That is not only in regard to the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Nor does Christ, in the Gospel, in any way dissolve this obligation, but instead much strengthens it.
6. Although true believers are not under the law as a covenant of works, to be justified or condemned by it, yet it is of great use to them, as well as to others, for the following reasons:
 - as a rule of life informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly;
 - it also shows the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives, so that as they examine themselves by it they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred of sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his obedience;
 - it is likewise of use to the regenerate to restrain their corruptions, because it forbids sin;
 - the threats of it serve to show what their sins deserve and what afflictions they may expect in this life from their sins, even though they are freed from the curse threatened in the law;
 - the promises of it, similarly, show them God's approval of obedience and what blessings they may expect from obedience, yet not as though these blessings are due to them by the law as a covenant of works.

Therefore a person doing good and refraining from evil, because the law encourages the one and deters from the other, is not evidence of that person being under the law and not under grace.

7. The uses of the law mentioned above are not contrary to the grace of the Gospel, but instead sweetly agree with it. The Spirit of Christ subdues and enables the will of a believer to freely and cheerfully do what the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.

CHAPTER XX

Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience

1. The liberty which Christ has purchased for believers under the Gospel consists in the following:

- their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, and the curse of the moral law;
- their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin;
- their deliverance from the evils of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation;
- their free access to God;
- and their yielding obedience to him, not out of slavish fear, but from a childlike love and a willing mind.

All of these were common also to believers under the Law. But, under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in the following:

- their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law to which the Jewish Church was subjected;
- greater boldness of access to the throne of grace;
- and fuller communion with the free Spirit of God than believers under the Law ordinarily experienced.

2. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from any doctrines and commandments of men that are in any way contrary to his Word, or apart from it, in matters of faith or worship. Therefore, to believe such doctrines or to obey such commands on the basis of conscience is to betray one's true liberty of conscience. To require an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience to such doctrines and commands is to destroy liberty of conscience, and also reason.

3. Those who practice any sin or cherish any lust on the pretense of Christian liberty are, by this, destroying the purpose of Christian liberty, which is that we might serve the Lord without fear all the days of our life, in holiness and righteousness before him, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies.

4. Because the powers which God has ordained and the liberty that Christ has purchased are not intended by God to destroy each other, but rather to mutually uphold and preserve one another, those who oppose any lawful power or the lawful actions of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, on the pretense of Christian liberty, resist the ordinance of God. When such opinions or practices are

- contrary to the light of nature or to the known principles of Christianity (whether concerning faith, worship, or conduct),

- contrary to the power of godliness;
- or destructive to the external peace and order which Christ has established in the Church, either in their own nature, or in the way in which they are published or propagated;

then those who publish such opinions or maintain such practices may lawfully be called to account and proceeded against by the censures of the Church and by the power of the civil magistrate.

CHAPTER XXI

Of Religious Worship, and the Sabbath Day

1. The light of nature shows that there is a God who has lordship and sovereignty over all, is good and does good to all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called on, trusted in, and served with all one's heart, with all one's soul, and with all one's might. But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself and is limited to his own revealed will. Therefore he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and inventions of mankind or the suggestions of Satan, in any visible representation, or in any other way not prescribed in the holy Scriptures.

2. Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to him alone, not to angels, saints, or to any other creature. Also, since the fall of mankind, worship cannot occur without a mediator, nor in the mediation of anyone other than Christ alone.

3. Prayer with thanksgiving, being a special part of religious worship, is required of all people by God. That it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of his Spirit, and according to his will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance, and if vocal, in a known tongue.

4. Prayer is to be made for lawful things and for all sorts of living people, or for those who will live in the future, but not for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin leading to death.

5. The ordinary religious worship of God includes:

- the reading of the Scriptures with godly fear,
- the sound preaching and conscientious hearing of the Word, in obedience to God, with understanding, faith, and reverence,
- singing of psalms with grace in the heart;
- and the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ.

In addition, religious oaths, vows, solemn fasts, and thanksgivings on special occasions, in their several times and seasons, are appropriate when used in a holy and religious manner.

6. Under the Gospel, neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship is tied to or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed. Instead, God is to be worshipped everywhere, in spirit and truth. It is to occur in private families daily, in secret, each one by himself, and more solemnly in public assemblies. These are not to be

carelessly or willfully neglected or forsaken, when God calls us to it by his Word or his providence.

7. As it is the law of nature that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God, so God has particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath to be kept holy to him, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment in his Word, binding all people in all ages. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, this was the last day of the week, and after the resurrection of Christ it was changed into the first day of the week, which is called in Scripture the Lord's Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath.

8. This Sabbath is kept holy to the Lord when the people, after a due preparation of their hearts and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, not only observe a holy rest all day long from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are involved the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, as well as duties of necessity and mercy.

CHAPTER XXII

Of Lawful Oaths and Vows

1. A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, in which, on an appropriate occasion, the person swearing solemnly calls God to witness what he asserts or promises, and calls on God to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he swears.

2. People ought to swear only by the name of God, and in that, it is to be used with holy fear and reverence. Therefore to swear vainly or rashly by that glorious and dreadful Name, and to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful and to be abhorred. However, because an oath is warranted by the Word of God in matters of weight and significance, in the New Testament as well as the Old, in such matters a lawful oath ought to be taken, when required by a lawful authority.

3. Whoever takes an oath ought to duly consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and in it to vouch for nothing except what he is fully persuaded is the truth. No one may bind himself by oath to do anything except what is good and just, or what he believes to be so, and what he is able and resolved to perform. Yet it is a sin to refuse to give an oath on anything that is good and just if it is required by a lawful authority.

4. An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation or mental reservation. It cannot obligate a person to sin, but in anything not sinful, if an oath is taken, it binds the person to perform it, even if to his own hurt. Also, it may not be violated on the basis that it was made to heretics or those who reject the faith.

5. A vow is similar in nature to a promissory oath, and ought to be made with the same religious care and performed with the same faithfulness.

6. A vow is not to be made to any creature, but to God alone. To be accepted, it is to be made voluntarily, out of faith in God and awareness of our duty, either as an act of thankfulness for mercy we have received or for obtaining something we want, in which case we may more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties or to other things, so far and so long as they may be appropriate for those goals.

7. No one may vow to do anything forbidden in the Word of God or which would hinder any duty commanded in it, or to do anything which is not in his own power, and for the performance of which he has no promise of ability from God. In these respects, monastic vows like those of the Roman Catholic church of perpetual single life, professed poverty, and continual obedience to superiors are so far from being degrees of higher perfection, that they are superstitious and sinful snares in which no Christian ought to entangle himself.

CHAPTER XXIII

Of the Civil Magistrate

1. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil magistrates to be under him and over the people, for his own glory and for the public good. Therefore he has armed them with the power of the sword, for the defense and encouragement of those who are good and for the punishment of those who do evil.

2. It is lawful for Christians to accept and to carry out the office of a magistrate when called to it. In so doing, they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace according to the good laws of each commonwealth. For that purpose, they may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war on just and necessary occasions.

3. Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, or in the least way interfere in matters of faith. Yet, like good fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord, without giving preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions without violence or danger. Also, since Jesus Christ has appointed a regular government and discipline in his Church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, prevent, or hinder the due exercise of church discipline among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the lives and the good name of all their people, in such an effective manner that no person is allowed, on the pretense of either religion or of opposition to a religion, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person, and to make sure that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies are held without molestation or disturbance.

4. It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honor them as individuals, to pay them tribute or other due taxes, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for the sake of conscience. Unbelief, or difference in religion, does not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from the obedience due to them. Ecclesiastical

persons are not exempted, much less does the Pope have any power or jurisdiction over them in their dominions, or over any of their people, least of all to deprive them of their dominions or lives if he judges them to be heretics, or on any other pretense.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of Marriage, and Divorce

1. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman. Nor is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife at the same time, nor for any woman to have more than one husband at the same time.
2. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of the husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with legitimate offspring, for the increase of the Church with a holy seed, and for preventing uncleanness.
3. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry who are able to give their consent with judgment. Yet is it the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. Therefore those who profess the true reformed religion should not marry unbelievers, Roman Catholics, or other idolaters, nor should those who are godly be unequally yoked by marrying those who are notoriously wicked in their life or who hold to damnable heresies.
4. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of closeness of blood or relationship forbidden by the Word. Nor can such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful by any law of mankind or consent of the parties, so that those people might live together as man and wife. A man may not marry any of his wife's relatives nearer in blood than he may of his own, nor the woman of her husband's relatives nearer in blood than of her own.
5. Adultery or fornication committed after an engagement, detected before marriage, gives just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to pursue a divorce, and after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.
6. Although the corruption of mankind is such that they are apt to greatly pursue arguments to separate those whom God has joined together in marriage, yet nothing but adultery or desertion, so willful that it can in no way be remedied by the Church or the civil magistrate, is sufficient cause for dissolving the bond of marriage. In a divorce, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed, and the persons concerned in it are not to be left to their own wills and discretion in their own case.

CHAPTER XXV

Of the Church

1. The catholic or universal Church, which is *invisible*, consists of the whole number of God's chosen people, who have been, are, or will be gathered into one under Christ the Head of the Church. It is the spouse, the body, and the fullness of him who fills all in all.
2. The *visible* Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (though not confined to one nation, as before under the Law), consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, and their children. It is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.
3. Christ has given to this catholic, visible Church the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life, up to the end of the world. He makes them effective for these purposes by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise.
4. This catholic Church has been sometimes more and sometimes less visible. Also, particular Churches which are members of it are more or less pure based on whether the doctrine of the Gospel is taught and embraced, the ordinances administered, and public worship is performed more or less purely in them.
5. The purest Churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error, and some have so degenerated as to become not Churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there will be always a Church on earth, to worship God according to his will.
6. There is no other head of the Church than the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be the head of it.

CHAPTER XXVI

Of the Communion of Saints

1. All saints are united to Jesus Christ their Head by his Spirit through faith, and have fellowship with him in his grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. Being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obligated to the performance of such public and private duties as support their mutual good, both in the inward and outward person.
2. Saints by profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God and to perform other spiritual services that tend to their mutual edification, including helping each other in outward things, according to their various abilities and necessities. This communion, as God offers the opportunity, is to be extended to all those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus in every place.
3. This union which the saints have with Christ does not make them in any way partakers of the substance of his Godhead or equal with Christ in any respect. To affirm either of these is impious

and blasphemous. Nor does their communion with one another as saints take away or infringe on the title or ownership which each person has of his own goods and possessions.

CHAPTER XXVII

Of the Sacraments

1. *Sacraments* are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, directly instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits and to confirm our connection to him. They also put a visible difference between the rest of the world and those who belong to the Church, and solemnly commit them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word.
2. In every sacrament there is a spiritual relationship, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified. Because of this, the names and effects of the one are often attributed to the other.
3. The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments, rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them. Nor does the effectiveness of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intentions of him who administers the sacrament. Rather, it depends on the work of the Spirit and the word of institution, which contains a promise of benefit to those who receive it in a worthy fashion, together with a precept authorizing the use of it.
4. There are only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel, namely, *baptism* and the *Lord's supper*. Neither of these may be dispensed by anyone except a lawfully ordained minister of the Word.
5. The sacraments of the Old Testament were the same in essence as those of the New Testament in regard to the spiritual things signified and exhibited by them.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of Baptism

1. Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the person baptized into the visible Church, but also to be a sign and seal of the covenant of grace to that person, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of the remission of sins, and of his being given up to God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. This sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his Church until the end of the world.
2. The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, with which the person is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, by a minister of the Gospel, lawfully called to this.
3. Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water on the person.

4. Not only those who actually profess faith in and obedience to Christ, but also the infants of one believing parent, or both, are to be baptized.

5. Although it is a great sin to neglect this ordinance or to treat it with contempt, yet grace and salvation are not inseparably connected to it; a person can be regenerated, or saved, without it, and not all people who are baptized are necessarily regenerated.

6. The effectiveness of baptism is not tied to that moment of time when it is administered. Nevertheless, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Spirit to those whom that grace belongs to, whether of age or infants, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time.

7. The sacrament of baptism is to be administered to any person only once.

CHAPTER XXIX

Of the Lord's Supper

1. Our Lord Jesus, in the night in which he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, called the Lord's supper, to be observed in his Church up to the end of the world, for the purpose of

- the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death;
- the sealing of all benefits of his death to true believers;
- their spiritual nourishment and growth in him;
- their further commitment in and to all duties which they owe to him;
- and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him and with each other, as members of his mystical body.

2. In this sacrament, Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor is any real sacrifice made at all for the remission of sins of the living or dead. It is a commemoration of that one-time offering of himself, by himself, on the Cross, once for all, and a spiritual offering of all possible praise to God for it. Thus the Roman Catholic "sacrifice of the mass" (as they call it) is abominably insulting to Christ's one and only sacrifice, the only propitiation for all the sins of his elect.

3. In the ordinance, the Lord Jesus has appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people, to pray and bless the elements of bread and wine and thereby to set them apart from a common use to a holy one, and to take and break the bread and to take the cup and give both to the communicants (partaking also themselves), but not to those who are not present in the congregation at the time.

4. All of the following are contrary to the nature of this sacrament and the institution of Christ:

- private masses, or receiving this sacrament alone from a priest or anyone else;
- denying of the cup to the people;
- worshipping the elements, or lifting them up or carrying them around for adoration;
- and reserving them for any pretended religious use.

5. The outward elements in this sacrament, duly set apart to the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to him crucified that truly, yet sacramentally only, they are sometimes called by the name of the things they represent, namely the body and blood of Christ. However, in substance and nature, they still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before.

6. The doctrine that teaches a change of the substance of the bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called "transubstantiation") as a result of the consecration of a priest, or by any other means, is repugnant not only to Scripture but even to common sense and reason. It overthrows the nature of the sacrament, and has been and is the cause of multiple superstitions, even more, of gross idolatries.

7. Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements of this sacrament, also inwardly by faith receive and feed on Christ crucified and all the benefits of his death, really and in fact, yet not bodily and physically but spiritually. The body and blood of Christ is not bodily or physically "in", "with", or "under" the bread and wine, yet is really but spiritually present to the faith of believers in this ordinance, just as the elements themselves are present to their outward senses.

8. Although ignorant and wicked people may receive the outward elements in this sacrament, yet they do not receive the thing signified by it. By their unworthily coming to it, they are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation. Therefore all ignorant and ungodly persons, because they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, are unworthy of the Lord's table and cannot, without great sin against Christ, partake of these holy mysteries or be admitted to them, as long as they remain that way.

CHAPTER XXX

Of Church Censures

1. The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his Church, has appointed a government of it, in the hand of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.

2. The keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed to these officers; by virtue of which they have the power

- to declare sins retained or remitted;
- to shut the kingdom against the unrepentant, both by the Word and by censures;
- and to open the kingdom to repentant sinners, by the ministry of the Gospel and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.

3. Church censures are necessary for

- reclaiming and gaining back offending members,
- for deterring others from similar offences,
- for purging out that yeast which might infect the whole lump,
- for vindicating the honor of Christ and the holy profession of the Gospel,
- and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall on the Church if they allow

his covenant and the seals of it to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

4. For the better attaining of these purposes, the officers of the Church are to proceed by admonition, suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's supper for a season, and by excommunication from the Church, according to the nature of the crime and character of the person.

CHAPTER XXXI

Of Synods and Councils

1. For the better government and further edification of the Church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils, and it belongs to the overseers and other rulers of the particular churches, by virtue of their office and the power which Christ has given them for the edification of the church and not for destruction, to appoint such assemblies and to convene together in them as often as they deem it expedient for the good of the church.

3. It belongs to synods and councils, pastorally

- to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience;
- to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God and government of his Church;
- to receive complaints in cases of bad practice, and to judge on them authoritatively.

These decrees and determinations, if consistent with the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power by which they are made, given as an ordinance of God established in his Word.

4. All synods or councils since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but instead are to be used as a help in both.

5. Synods and councils are to handle or conclude nothing except that which is ecclesiastical, and they are not to meddle in civil affairs that concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in extraordinary cases, or by way of advice, for the satisfaction of conscience, if they are asked to do so by the civil magistrate.

CHAPTER XXXII

Of the State of Men after Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead

1. The bodies of people return to dust after death and see corruption, but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal existence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. The souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved for the judgment of the great day. The Scriptures acknowledge no other places besides these two for souls separated from their bodies.

2. At the last day, those people who are alive will not die, but will be changed. All the dead will be raised up with their same bodies and no other body (although their bodies will have different qualities), and their bodies will be united again to their souls forever.

3. The bodies of the unjust shall be raised to dishonor by the power of Christ. The bodies of the just will be conformed to his own glorious body by his Spirit, for honor.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Of the Last Judgment

1. God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given to by the Father. In that day, not only the apostate angels will be judged, but also all persons that have lived on the earth will appear before the tribunal of Christ to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds and to receive judgement according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

2. The purpose of God's appointing this day is the manifestation of 1) the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect, and 2) his justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. After this the righteous will go into everlasting life and receive that fullness of joy and refreshment that come from the presence of the Lord. But the wicked, who know not God and do not obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, will be cast into eternal torments and will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

3. Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there will be a day of judgment, both to deter all people from sin and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity. He makes that day unknown to mankind, so that they may shake off all worldly security and be always watchful, because they do not know when the Lord will come, and may be always prepared to say, "Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen."

Translator's notes.

This translation is aimed to be at the level of a 10th grade native English speaker. Thus, even though in some cases a word exists in modern English, if there is a more familiar word or phrase this has been used. The translation uses American variants and spelling.

The liberal use of commas and semicolons in the original has changed to modern usage. In long lists, a semicolon has been retained acting as a comma, which is acceptable modern usage, and bullet points have been added for clarity.

Specific translation issues:

“Man” is used often in the Confession to refer to all humanity, but this word in modern English refers to a male specifically. In keeping with the notion of male headship or representation of humanity, which underlies the Confession, this word has been translated as “mankind” in most places; sometimes it is translated as “people” when it is clear from the context that its use is completely generic. Also, the generic “he”/“his” is retained here in many places to avoid the awkwardness of excessive use of “one”/“one’s” or “he/she”.

The old term “have an interest in” does not mean to be fascinated by, but rather, to have a legal claim or right to a share of the ownership of something. (This is the root of the term “interest” in banking, namely a share, or a participation in.) It could also be translated into the modern “have a relationship with”, but the transitory nature of modern relationships could undermine our thinking about this; therefore it is translated as either a “connection” or a “legitimate claim.”

The original speaks of “their persons”, which is an archaic construction. This has been translated as “them” or “them as individuals.”

The phrase “infallible” has been translated as “confident” or “unerring.” The term “infallible” in modern English carries the connotation of an ability to never err.