

## Prepared against

Major: Westminster Confessional Standards, Genevan Confession, Council of Orange, 39 Articles

Minor: New Hampshire Baptist Confession, The Augsburg Confession, The Belgic Confession.

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The Consensus Triguinus

Canons of Dort

Chicago statement on Biblical Inerrancy

Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Danvers Statement

## The revealed God

### Of God

We all believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only<sup>1</sup> living and true God,<sup>2</sup> Creator of the world and man, and that he is infinite in being and perfection,<sup>3</sup>

Spiritual<sup>4</sup>

Incomprehensible<sup>5</sup>

Invisible<sup>6</sup>

Immutable<sup>7</sup>

Almighty<sup>8</sup>

Perfectly wise<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4,6

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. 1:9; Jer. 10:10

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 90:2, 1 Tim. 1:17, Job 11:7,8,9; Job 26:14

<sup>4</sup> John 4:24

<sup>5</sup> Ps 145:3

<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. 1:17

<sup>7</sup> James 1:17; Mal. 3:6

<sup>8</sup> Gen. 17:1, Rev. 4:8

Most holy<sup>10</sup>

Most free<sup>11</sup>

Committed to His own glory<sup>12</sup>

Loving and just<sup>13</sup>

and the overflowing fountain of all good<sup>14</sup>

who hates sin<sup>15</sup>

Because there is one only Lord and Master we acknowledge that there is one only God whom we are both to worship and serve, and in whom we are to put all our confidence and hope: having this assurance, that in him alone is contained all wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy.

He seeks to be served and is to be served in spirit and in truth.

Therefore we think it an abomination to put our confidence or hope in any created thing, to worship anything else than him, whether angels or any other creatures, and to recognize any other Saviour of our souls than him alone, whether saints or men living upon earth; and likewise to offer the service, which ought to be rendered to him, in external ceremonies or observances pandering to the flesh,<sup>16</sup> as if he took pleasure in such things, or to make an image to represent his divinity or any other image for adoration.

### **Unity of the Three-personed God**

We acknowledge that Scripture reveals there is one unity of this Godhead in three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And the term “person” is used as the Fathers have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself.

### **The Glorious Wisdom of God in His Providence**

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God manifest themselves so completely in His providence, that it extends even to the first fall, and all

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<sup>9</sup> Rom. 16:27

<sup>10</sup> Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8

<sup>11</sup> Ps. 15:3

<sup>12</sup> Prov. 16:4; Rom. 11:36

<sup>13</sup> Neh. 9:32,33., Jer. 12:1

<sup>14</sup> Exod. 34:6,7, Matt. 19:17

<sup>15</sup> Ps. 5:5,6

<sup>16</sup> Col 2.23

other sins of angels and men<sup>17</sup> - not by a bare permission<sup>18</sup>, but by a permission which has joined with it a most wise and powerful limiting<sup>19</sup>, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a varied administration, for His own holy ends<sup>20</sup>. However, the sinfulness comes from the creatures alone and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin<sup>21</sup>.

### **Of the Word or Son of God, who was made very Man, the Christ.**

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God<sup>22</sup>, and of one substance with the Father, took Man's nature<sup>23</sup> in the womb of Mary who was a virgin at that point,<sup>24</sup>: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, two distinct natures, inseparably joined together in one person, without change, production, or mixture<sup>25</sup>, Jesus son of Mary and Joseph and Son of David, fully God, and fully man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator<sup>26</sup> between God and man who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

Christ in the truth of our nature was made like us in all things, except for sin, from which he was clearly void, both in his flesh, and in his spirit. He came to be the Lamb without spot, who, by sacrifice of himself once made, should take away the sins of the world; and sin was not in him. But all the rest of humanity, although baptized and born again in Christ, yet sin in many things; and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

### **Of the Christ**

It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man<sup>27</sup>; the Prophet<sup>28</sup> and Priest<sup>29</sup>, King<sup>30</sup> and Servant<sup>31</sup>; the Head and Saviour of His Church<sup>32</sup>; the Heir of all things<sup>33</sup>; and

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<sup>17</sup> Rom. 11:32,33,34; 2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chron. 21:1; 1 Kings 22:22,23; 1 Chron. 10:4,13,14; 2 Sam. 16:10; Acts 2:23; Acts 4:27,28.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 14:16

<sup>19</sup> Ps. 76:10; 2 Kings 19:28

<sup>20</sup> Gen. 1:20; Isa. 10:6,7,12

<sup>21</sup> James 1:13,14,17; 1 John 2:16; Ps. 1:21

<sup>22</sup> Heb. 2:14,16,17; Heb. 4:15

<sup>23</sup> John 1:1,14; 1 John 5:20; Phil. 2:6; Gal. 4:4.

<sup>24</sup> Luke 1:27,31,35; Gal. 4:4

<sup>25</sup> Luke 1:35; Col. 2:9; Rom. 9:5; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Tim. 3:16

<sup>26</sup> Rom. 1:3,4; 1 Tim. 2:5

<sup>27</sup> Isa. 42:1; 1 Pet. 1:19,20; John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:5

<sup>28</sup> Acts 3:22

<sup>29</sup> Heb. 5:5,6

<sup>30</sup> Ps. 2:6; Luke 1:33

<sup>31</sup> Isa 53

<sup>32</sup> Eph. 5:23

<sup>33</sup> Heb. 1:2

Judge of the world<sup>34</sup>; to whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed<sup>35</sup>, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified<sup>36</sup>.

The Lord Jesus, in His human nature thus united to the divine, was set apart and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure<sup>37</sup>; having in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge<sup>38</sup>; in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell<sup>39</sup>, so that, being holy, blameless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth<sup>40</sup>, He might be thoroughly equipped to execute the office of a Mediator and Guarantor<sup>41</sup>, an office He took not unto Himself, but was called to it by His Father<sup>42</sup> who put all power and judgment into His hand, and commanded Him to execute it<sup>43</sup>.

This office the Lord Jesus most willingly undertook<sup>44</sup>, and in order to discharge its obligations, He was born under the law<sup>45</sup>, and perfectly fulfilled it<sup>46</sup>; endured most grievous sufferings in His body and soul<sup>47</sup>; was crucified, and died<sup>48</sup>; was buried, and remained under the power of death, yet was not abandoned by God to the grave<sup>49</sup>. On the third day He arose from the dead<sup>50</sup>, with the same body in which He suffered<sup>51</sup>; with which also He ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of His Father, making intercession<sup>52</sup>; and He shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world<sup>53</sup>.

The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, has fully satisfied the justice of His Father<sup>54</sup>; and secured, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven,

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<sup>34</sup> Acts 17:31

<sup>35</sup> John 17:6; Ps. 22:30; Isa. 53:10

<sup>36</sup> 1 Tim. 2:6; Isa. 55:4,5; 1 Cor. 1:30

<sup>37,38</sup> Ps. 45:7; John 3:34

<sup>38</sup> Col. 2:3

<sup>39</sup> Col. 1:19

<sup>40</sup> Heb. 7:26; John 1:14

<sup>41</sup> Acts 10:38; Heb. 12:24; Heb. 7:22

<sup>42</sup> Heb. 5:4,5

<sup>43</sup> John 5:22,27; Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36

<sup>44</sup> Ps. 40:7,8; Heb. 10:5-10; John 10:18; Phil. 2:8

<sup>45</sup> Gal. 4:4

<sup>46</sup> Matt. 3:15; Matt. 5:17

<sup>47</sup> Matt. 26:37,38; Luke 22:44; Matt. 27:46

<sup>48</sup> Phil. 2:8

<sup>49</sup> Acts 2:23,24,27; Acts 13:37; Rom. 6:9

<sup>50</sup> 1 Cor. 15:3,4,5

<sup>51</sup> John 20:25,27

<sup>52</sup> Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24; Heb. 7:25

<sup>53</sup> Rom. 14:9,10; Acts 1:11; Acts 10:42; Matt. 13:40,41,42; Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4

<sup>54</sup> Rom. 5:19; Heb. 9:14,16; Heb. 10:14; Eph. 5:2; Rom. 3:25,26

for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him,<sup>55</sup> as well as bringing judgment upon all who refuse to repent and obediently trust in His work.<sup>56</sup>

To all those for whom Christ purchased redemption, He certainly and effectually applies and communicates it<sup>57</sup>; making intercession for them<sup>58</sup>; and revealing unto them, in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation<sup>59</sup>; effectually persuading them by His Spirit to believe and obey; and governing their hearts by His Word and Spirit<sup>60</sup>; overcoming all their enemies by His almighty power and wisdom<sup>61</sup>

## Of The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He inspired men to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the assurance of God to bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

## Of The word

God is known by His own revelation in His Word concerning His Son.

We know God through His Spirit in His revealing of Himself in His Word.

Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable<sup>62</sup>; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation<sup>63</sup>.

We confess that this Word of God was not sent, nor delivered by the will of man, but that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.<sup>64</sup> And that afterwards God,

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<sup>55</sup> Dan. 9:24,26; Col. 1:19,20; Eph. 1:11,14; John 17:2; Heb. 9:12,15

<sup>56</sup> Jn 3:36

<sup>57</sup> John 6:37,39; John 10:15,16

<sup>58</sup> 1 John 2:1,2; Rom. 8:34

<sup>59</sup> John 15:13,15; Eph. 1:7,8,9; John 17:6

<sup>60</sup> John 14:16; Heb. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:13; Rom. 8:9,14; Rom. 15:18,19; John 17:17

<sup>61</sup> Ps. 110:1; 1 Cor. 15:25,26; Mal. 4:2,3; Cor. 2:15

<sup>62</sup> Rom. 2:14–15, Rom. 1:19–20, Ps. 19:1–3, Rom. 1:32, Rom. 2:1

<sup>63</sup> 1 Cor. 1:21, 1 Cor. 2:13–14

from a special care, which he has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit his revealed word to writing; with the Incarnation, the full revealing of God in His Son and the former ways of God's revealing His will to His people, in piecemeal progressively and in diverse ways, have their fulfillment<sup>65</sup>.

We believe that the Holy Scriptures are contained in two books, namely, the Old and New Testament, which are canonical, against which nothing can be alleged. The Apocrypha and all other literature and medium of meaning, Christian or otherwise cannot in any way be considered authoritative in the same manner and import as canonical Scripture.

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man. Therefore we must not entertain the false pretence that the Old Testament looked only for material or transitory promises.

We receive all the books contained in the Old and New Testaments, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and conformation of our faith; believing without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Spirit witnesses in our hearts, that they are from God<sup>66</sup>, which they carry the evidence in themselves. For even blind sinners illuminated by the Spirit are able to perceive that the things foretold in them have biblical witness of fulfillment.

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary inference may be deduced from Scripture. To this, nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men<sup>67</sup>. 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<sup>68</sup>; and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian wisdom, according to the doctrine of the word. <sup>69</sup>

Since Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation and a life of worship, whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man by anyone, even if it were an apostle, or angel, or officer of the church, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought essential or necessary to salvation.

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<sup>64</sup> 2Pet 1.21

<sup>65</sup> Heb 1.1-5

<sup>66</sup> 1 John 2:20,27; John 16:13,14; 1 Cor. 2:10,11,12; Isa. 59:21

<sup>67</sup> 2 Tim. 3:15,16,17; Gal. 1:8,9; 2 Thess. 2:2

<sup>68</sup> John 6:45; 1 Cor. 2:9,10,11,12

<sup>69</sup> 1 Cor. 11:13,14; 1 Cor. 14:26,40

It is unlawful for anyone to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures. Neither do we consider of equal value any writing of men with those divine Scriptures, however godly and wise these men may have been, nor ought we to consider custom, or the majority opinion, or antiquity of a belief, or succession and pedigree of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore, we reject with all our hearts, whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule, which the apostles have taught us, saying, 'Try the spirits whether they are of God'. Likewise, 'if there come any unto you; and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house'.

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly<sup>70</sup>. The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture<sup>71</sup>.

All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all<sup>72</sup>; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them<sup>73</sup>.

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For further study, see Chicago statement

## Of Man

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<sup>70</sup> 2 Pet. 1:20–21, Acts 15:15–16

<sup>71</sup> Matt. 22:29,31, Eph. 2:20, Acts 28:25

<sup>72</sup> 2 Pet. 3:16

<sup>73</sup> Ps. 119:105,130

## The creation of Man

After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female, after His own image

Man, in his state of innocence, had freedom and ability to will and to do what was good and well-pleasing to God, and yet not unalterably, such that he could fall from it.

## Sin

By Adam's sin, humanity fell from its original righteousness and communion with God<sup>74</sup>, and so became dead in sin<sup>75</sup>, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body<sup>76</sup>.

Adam being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed to all humanity<sup>77</sup>, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their descendants<sup>78</sup>.

Original sin stands not in the mere imitation of Adam's example, (as claimed by Pelagians) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh always desires what is contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, this deserves God's Righteous anger and condemnation. And this infection of nature does remain, even in those that are regenerated; whereby the desire of the flesh, ('epithumia sarkos' *Greek*) is not obedient to the Law of God.<sup>79</sup> And although through Christ there is no condemnation for those that are regenerated and in the life of the Christian it will be progressively put to death; yet it and its expressions are still sin.

## Of Free-Will, Goodness, Faith and Knowledge in the Unregenerate Man

From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good<sup>80</sup>, and wholly inclined to all evil<sup>81</sup>, do proceed all actual transgressions<sup>82</sup>. This depravity is so total that we are not able to be regenerated and saved by the exercise of our own will in co-operation with God (against the Semi-Pelagian). An

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<sup>74</sup> Gen. 3:6,7,8; Eccl. 7:29; Rom. 3:23

<sup>75</sup> Gen. 2:17; Eph. 2:1

<sup>76</sup> Tit. 1:15; Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-18

<sup>77</sup> Gen. 1:27,28; Gen. 2:16,17; Acts 17:26; Rom. 5:12,15,16,17,18,19; 1 Cor. 15:21,22,45,49

<sup>78</sup> Ps. 51:5; Gen. 5:3; Job 14:4; Job 15:14

<sup>79</sup> Rom 13.14, Rom 7.14, 8.7, Gal 5.16-17but Gal 5.24, Eph 2.3, 1 Jo 2.16

<sup>80</sup> Rom. 5:6; Rom. 8:7; Rom. 7:18; Col. 1:21

<sup>81</sup> Gen. 6:5; Gen. 8:21 ; Rom. 3:10,11,12

<sup>82</sup> James 1:14,15; Eph. 2:2,3; Matt. 15:19



unregenerate man is opposed to good and is dead in sin; he is unable by his own strength to convert himself or to prepare himself to be converted.

The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith; and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without God's gracious initiative by Christ going before us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has completely lost all ability to choose any spiritual good that comes with salvation.

Therefore, we acknowledge man by nature to be blind, darkened in understanding, and full of corruption and perversity of heart, so that of himself he has no power to be able to comprehend the true knowledge of God as is proper, nor to apply himself to good works. But on the contrary, if he is left by God to what he is by nature, he is only able to live in ignorance and to be abandoned to all iniquity. Hence he has need to be illumined by God, so that he may come to the right knowledge of his salvation, and thus to be redirected in his affections and reformed to the obedience of the righteousness of God.

Since man is naturally deprived and destitute in himself of all the light of God, and of all righteousness, we acknowledge that by himself he can only expect the wrath and curse of God, and hence he must look outside himself for the means of his salvation.

(See further Council of Orange Canon 5, Phil 1.6, Eph 2.8)

When God converts a sinner into the state of grace, he frees him from his natural bondage to sin, and by his grace alone he enables him freely to will and to do what is spiritually good. Yet, because of his remaining corruption, he does not do good perfectly nor will what is good at all times without fail, but also wills what is evil. Only in the state of glory will the will of man finally and unchangeably be free to do good alone.

## The Saving God

### Salvation, Election and Calling

God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass<sup>83</sup>: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin<sup>84</sup>, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established<sup>85</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> Eph. 1:11; Rom. 11:33; Heb. 6:17; Rom. 9:15,18

<sup>84</sup> James 1:13,17; 1 John 1:5

<sup>85</sup> Acts 2:23; Matt. 17:12; Acts 4:27,28; John 19:11; Prov. 16:33

Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass under all conceivable conditions<sup>86</sup>, yet He has not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass under such conditions<sup>87</sup>.

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

God is pleased to call effectually in his appointed and accepted time, by his Word and Spirit, all those—and only those—whom He has predestined for salvation prior to Creation. He calls them from their natural state of sin and death to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly, so that they understand the things of God. He takes away their hearts of stone and gives them hearts of flesh, renews their wills, and by his almighty power turns them to what is good and effectually draws them to Jesus Christ. Yet he does this in such a way that they come most freely, being made willing by his grace. This effectual call is from God's free and special grace alone, based exclusively on the good pleasure of God, and not from anything at all that God foresees in man, who is entirely passive in it, until—being made alive and renewed by the Holy Spirit—he is enabled to answer the call and embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

The rest of mankind, God was pleased to pass by, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extends or withholds mercy, as He pleases, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice<sup>88</sup>.

Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory<sup>89</sup>, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him to do this<sup>90</sup>; and all to the praise of His glorious grace<sup>91</sup>.<sup>92</sup>

As God has appointed the elect unto glory, so has He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means to that end<sup>93</sup>. Therefore, those who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ<sup>94</sup>; are effectually called unto faith in Christ by

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<sup>86</sup> Acts 15:17-18; 1 Sam. 23:11,12;

<sup>87</sup> Rom. 9:11,13,16,18

<sup>88</sup> Matt. 11:25,26; Rom. 9:17,18,21,22; 2 Tim. 2:19,20; Jude 4; 1 Pet. 2:8

<sup>89</sup> Eph. 1:4,9,11; Rom. 8:30; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:9

<sup>90</sup> Rom. 9:11,13,16; Eph. 1:4,9

<sup>91</sup> Eph. 1:6,12

<sup>92</sup> WCF 3.5

<sup>93</sup> 1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:4,5; Eph. 2:10; 2 Thess. 2:13

<sup>94</sup> 1 Thess. 5:9,10; Tit. 2:14

His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified<sup>95</sup>, and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation<sup>96</sup>. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only<sup>97</sup>.

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

The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care<sup>98</sup>, that men, attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience to it, may, from the certainty of their effectual calling, be assured of their eternal election<sup>99</sup>. So shall this doctrine afford reason for praise, reverence, and admiration of God<sup>100</sup>, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation, to all that sincerely obey the Gospel<sup>101</sup>.

As the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, those who feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ who kindles their love towards God and mortifies in them the works of the flesh, draws up their mind to heavenly things as well as greatly establishes and confirms their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, so, for carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's Predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil thrusts them either into desperation or into wretched living.

Elect infants who die in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when, where, and how he pleases. So also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.

Although other persons who are not elected may be called by the ministry of the Word and may experience some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never really come to Christ and therefore cannot be saved. Much less can men not professing Christ be saved in any other way, no matter how carefully they may order their lives by the light of nature and by the laws of whatever religion they profess. To assert and maintain that they may be saved in some other way is very destructive and is to be detested.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:5; 2 Thess. 2:13

<sup>96</sup> 1 Pet. 1:5

<sup>97</sup> John 17:9; Rom. 8:28; John 6:64,65; John 10:26; John 8:47; 1 John 2:19

<sup>98</sup> Rom. 9:20; Rom. 11:33; Deut. 29:29

<sup>99</sup> 2 Pet. 1:10

<sup>100</sup> Eph. 1:6; Rom. 11:33

<sup>101</sup> Rom. 11:5,6,20; 2 Pet. 1:10; Rom. 8:33; Luke 10:20

<sup>102</sup> 1 Jn 2.16,19-20,27

## Justification

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or merit.

Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. He made a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, because he was freely given by the Father for them, and because his obedience and satisfaction were freely accepted in their stead, and not for anything in them, their justification is only of free grace that God might be glorified for his exact justice and rich grace in the justification of sinners.

Those whom God effectually calls he also freely accounts as righteous before Him, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and by accounting and accepting them as righteous. It is not for anything wrought in them, or done by them or for anything deserving in them, but for Christ's sake alone that they are justified. It is not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other act of Christian obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ to them who receive and rest on him and his righteousness by faith. this faith is not something men have of themselves; it is the gift of God. As such, that we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort.<sup>103</sup> Faith thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness—is the only instrument of justification; yet it is not 'alone' in the person justified, but is always accompanied by all other saving graces and is no dead faith, but faith which produces and works through love.

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

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

## Of Faith

The grace of faith, by which the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and not by nature, and is ordinarily produced through the faithful ministry of the Word.

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<sup>103</sup> WCF

By this gift of faith, a Christian believes to be true whatever is revealed in the Word, because of the authority of God himself speaking in it.

This faith varies in degrees, and can be weak or strong, attacked often and in many ways and weakened, but it gains the victory, maturing in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and the perfecter of our faith<sup>104</sup>.

### **Of Sin and Repentance**

By repentance, a sinner—seeing and sensing not only the danger but also the filthiness and hatefulness of his sins, because they are contrary to God's holy nature and his righteous law—turns from all his sins to God in the realization that God promises mercy in Christ to those who repent, and so grieves for and hates his sins that he determines and endeavours to walk with God in all the ways that he commands.

Although repentance is not to be relied on as any payment of the penalty for sin, or any cause of the pardon of sin (which is God's act of free grace in Christ); yet repentance is so necessary for all sinners, that no one may expect pardon without it.

No sin is so small that it does not deserve damnation. Nor is any sin so great that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent, except for blasphemy against the work of the Spirit in Christ.

No one should be satisfied with a general repentance; rather, it is everyone's duty to endeavor to repent of each particular sin, particularly.

Every Christian is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for pardon and whoever does so forsaking these sins shall find mercy, such that anyone who has morally offended a brother, or the church of Christ, ought to be willing by private or public confession and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended, who are then to be reconciled to him and receive him in love, signified by a common meal of the Lord's Supper.

The most wise, righteous, and gracious God does oftentimes leave, for a season, His own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their past sins, or to expose the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled<sup>105</sup>; and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for various other just and holy ends<sup>106</sup>.

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<sup>104</sup> Phil 1.6

<sup>105</sup> 2 Chron. 32:25,26,31; 2 Sam. 24:1

<sup>106</sup> 2 Cor. 12:7,8,9; Ps. 73; Ps. 77:1,10,12; Mark 14:66-72; John 21:15,16,17

As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous judge, blinds and hardens for former sins<sup>107</sup>, from them He not only withholds His grace, by which their minds would have been enlightened and their hearts affected<sup>108</sup>; but sometimes also withdraws the gifts which they had<sup>109</sup>, and exposes them to the sin of their corrupt nature<sup>110</sup>; and in addition, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan<sup>111</sup>, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God uses for the softening of others<sup>112</sup>.

Not every deadly sin willingly committed after Baptism is sin against the Holy Spirit and unpardonable. As such public repentance and forgiveness is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after Baptism. After we have received the Holy Spirit, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may arise again, and amend our lives. And therefore those who claim they can live in sinlessness and achieve holy perfection or deny the place of forgiveness are to be themselves denied.

### Of works

Even though good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith inasmuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.

Because believers are accepted through Christ, their good works are also accepted in him. They are accepted not because believers are in this life blameless and above rebuke in God's sight, but because he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, even though it is accompanied by many weaknesses and imperfections.

The ability to do good works is not at all from themselves, but entirely from the Spirit of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit working in them both to will and to do God's good pleasure. This truth, however, should not cause believers to become negligent, as though they were not bound to perform any duty unless specially moved by the Spirit; rather, they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.

Good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and living faith. By them believers show their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, build up their fellow believers, adorn the profession of the gospel, shut the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God. They are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good

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<sup>107</sup> Rom. 1:24,26,28; Rom. 11:7,8

<sup>108</sup> Deut. 29:4

<sup>109</sup> Matt. 13:12; Matt. 25:29

<sup>110</sup> Deut. 2:30; 2 Kings 8:12,13

<sup>111</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Exod. 7:3; Exod. 8:15,32; 2 Cor. 2:15,16; Isa. 8:14; 1 Pet. 2:7,8; Isa. 6:9,10; Acts 28:26,27

works, so that, bearing fruit unto holiness, they may attain the outcome, which is eternal life.

### ***Of Works before Justification.***

Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; neither do they make men suitable to receive grace.<sup>113</sup>

Instead, even though the works done by unregenerate men may in themselves be things which God commands and things which are good in themselves and to others, yet, because they do not come from a heart purified by faith, they are not done in a right manner according to the Word, and are not done for the right purpose, which is to glorify God, and are therefore sinful, and cannot please God or make one suitable to receive his grace.

Yet, neglecting them is even more sinful and displeasing to God.

We cannot, by our best works, merit forgiveness for sin or eternal life at the hand of God because of the great disproportion between our best works and the glory to come, and because of the infinite distance between us and God. We cannot benefit God by our best works nor render satisfaction for the debt of our past sins, for when we have done all we can, we have done merely our duty and are unprofitable servants. This is because, insofar as they are good, these deeds proceed from the Spirit; and, insofar as they are done by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

(rf. 39 Art in Appendix)

## **Of Union with Christ and its benefits**

### **Benefits of Christ's work**

We acknowledge the things which are consequently given to us by God in Jesus Christ: first, that being in our own nature enemies of God and subjects of his wrath and judgment, we are reconciled with him and received again in grace through the intercession of Jesus Christ, so that by his righteousness and guiltlessness we have remission of our sins, and by the shedding of his blood we are cleansed and purified from all our stains.

Second, we acknowledge that by his Spirit we are regenerated into a new spiritual nature. That is to say that the evil desires of our flesh are mortified by grace, so that they rule us no

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<sup>113</sup> or as the Scholastic theologians say, deserve grace of congruity. Anglican 39 Art.

longer. On the contrary, our will is rendered conformable to God's will, to follow in his way and to seek what is pleasing to him. Therefore we are by him delivered from the servitude of sin, under whose power we were of ourselves held captive, and by this deliverance we are made capable and able to do good works and not otherwise.

### **adoption**

All those who are justified God graciously guarantees in and for his only Son, Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption. By this adoption they are taken into the number of God's children and enjoy the liberties and privileges of that relationship; they are given his name; they receive the Spirit of adoption; they have access to the throne of grace with boldness, enabled to cry, "Abba, Father.", from whom they will have pity, protection, provision, as well as discipline and rebuke, which comes from a loving father for the good of sons who are sealed to the day of redemption, heirs of the promised everlasting salvation.

### **sanctification**

All those who are once effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified—truly 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, its various lusts are more and more weakened and put to death, and those called and regenerated are more and more enlivened and strengthened in all saving graces, leading to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Sanctification is not a second or subsequent work of God in the believer, but is the necessary subjective aspect of every believer's union with Christ. Justification and sanctification are united as the work of the one Triune God, who has acted in Christ to make for himself a holy people.<sup>114</sup>

This sanctification, is effected in every part of man's nature, yet it is imperfect in this life. Some remnants of corruption still persist in every part, and so there arises a continual and irreconcilable war—the flesh warring against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

Although in this war the remaining corruption may strongly prevail for a time, yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part overcomes, and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Yet, however much we ought day by day to increase and grow in God's righteousness, there will never be plenitude or perfection while we live here. Thus we always have need of the mercy of God to obtain the remission of our faults and offences. And so we ought always to look for our righteousness in Jesus Christ and not at all in ourselves, and in him be confident and assured, putting no faith in our works.

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<sup>114</sup> 1 Cor 1:30, 1 Cor 6:11 – see also Appendix.



## Perseverance and Assurance

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

The perseverance of the saints does not depend upon their own free will, but on the unchangeableness of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; on the efficacy of Jesus Christ's merit, His Death as a redemption of God's people and His intercession; on the continuing presence of the Spirit and the sonship of a new birth through the word of God; and on the nature of God's grace. These are grounds of the certainty and infallibility of their perseverance.

Nevertheless, they may—through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the pervasiveness of the corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means by which they are to be preserved—fall into grievous sins and for a time continue in them. In so doing they incur God's displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit; some measure of God's graces and comforts is taken from them; they have their hearts hardened and their consciences wounded; they harm others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

Infallible assurance does necessarily belong to the essence of faith and a true believer may wait long and contend with many difficulties before he knows of it. Yet, because he is enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given to him by God, he may—without any extraordinary revelation—attain this assurance by a proper use of God's word. It is therefore the duty of everyone to be very diligent in making His calling and election sure.<sup>115</sup> By such diligence his heart may grow in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties which obedience to God requires—the proper fruits of this assurance which does not incline men to carelessness.

## The future

After death, the bodies of men decay and return to dust, but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal existence, return immediately to God,<sup>116</sup> who gave them. The souls of the righteous are then made perfect in holiness and received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory as they wait for the full redemption of their bodies. The souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in

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<sup>115</sup> 2 Pet 1.10

<sup>116</sup> Phil 1.23, Lk 23.43, 2 Cor 5.1-8

torments and utter darkness as they are kept for the judgment of the great day.<sup>117</sup> Scripture recognizes no other place except these two for the souls which have been separated from their bodies.

At the last day those who are alive shall not die but shall be changed. All the dead shall be raised up with their selfsame bodies, and no other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again with their souls forever.

By the power of Christ the bodies of the unjust shall be raised to dishonour. The bodies of the just shall be raised to honour by his Spirit and brought into conformity with Christ's own glorious body.

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

God's purpose in appointing this day is to manifest the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and the glory of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. On that day the righteous shall go into everlasting life and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord; but the wicked, who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.

As Christ would have us to be absolutely convinced that there will be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin and to give greater consolation to the godly in their adversity, so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, may always be watchful—because they do not know at what hour the Lord will come—and may always be prepared to say, “Come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly. Amen.”

## **The church**

Christ is the Head and is the Spouse of the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of him, filled with His word and growing in His fullness. Christ is Head over everything for the Church (Eph 1.22).

The visible catholic or universal Church of Christ, consists of the whole number of the elect, the citizens of His kingdom, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ,

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<sup>117</sup> Lk 16.22-31

the whole body of men throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel and obedience unto God by Christ according to it, not destroying their own profession by any errors overturning the foundation of the truth, which is the church;<sup>118</sup> out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

This universal church of Christ is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ and the house and family of God. The local church is the visible household of God, a visible pillar and foundation of truth, and should act and order itself accordingly.

Christ has given the ministry of His Word and the ministers unto the local church which is the universal visible Church for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life until the end of the world. According to His promise He makes them effectual, by His own presence and Spirit.

These officers are not entrusted however, with the administration of Baptism or the Lord's Meal in a manner exclusive to them in the likeness of a priest of the Old Covenant. Instead, it follows that those who have responsibility for the proper order of the church under Christ's rule in His Word, officers entrusted to that task, and saints engaged in mutual ministry of building up the church and consistent in their life and doctrine to the church, may serve the Lord's supper and baptize in a manner keeping with the atoning work of Christ.

The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error, and local churches are more or less pure, according to their handling of Christ's teaching, seen especially in the doctrine of the Gospel taught and embraced, the administration and ordering of the church in its life together, the congregational gatherings and their content and manner and intent.

Some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan: nevertheless Christ always has had, and ever shall have, a visible kingdom in this world of such as believe in him, and make profession of his name, to the end. There is no other Head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the head of any local church or denomination be the arbiter of truth over and above Scripture's authority. He that does so exalts himself in the Church against Christ, and against all godliness, and the Lord shall judge him with His coming.

While there is one only Church of Jesus Christ, we always acknowledge that necessity requires companies of the faithful to be distributed in different places. Of these assemblies each one is called the Church. But inasmuch as all companies do not assemble in the name of our Lord, but rather to blaspheme and pollute him by their sacrilegious deeds, we believe that the proper mark by which we rightly discern the Church of Jesus Christ is that his holy gospel be purely and faithfully preached, proclaimed, heard, and kept, that his sacrament be

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<sup>118</sup> 1 Tim 3.15

properly administered, even if there be some imperfections and faults, as there always will be among men. On the other hand, where the Gospel is not declared, heard, and received, there we do not acknowledge the form of the Church. Hence the churches governed by the ordinances of the pope for example are rather synagogues of the devil than Christian churches.

The church will at the coming of Christ, with the adversaries of the kingdom of Christ broken, enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable and glorious condition than they have enjoyed in the Present.

## **Baptism**

Water baptism is an external sign by which our Lord testifies that he desires to receive us for his children, as members of his Son Jesus. Hence in it there is represented to us the cleansing from sin which we have in the blood of Jesus Christ, the mortification of our flesh which we have by his death that we may live in him by his Spirit.

## **Word ministers of the church**

We recognize no other elders or overseers in the Church than faithful pastors of the Word of God, feeding the sheep of Jesus Christ on the one hand with instruction, admonition, consolation, exhortation, deprecation; and on the other resisting all false doctrines and deceptions of the devil, without mixing with the pure doctrines of the Scriptures their dreams or their foolish imaginings. To these we accord no other power or authority but to conduct, rule, and govern the people of God committed to them by the same Word, in which they have the power to proclaim, teach, command, defend, promise, and warn, and without which they neither can nor ought to attempt anything. As we receive the true ministers of the Word of God as messengers and ambassadors of God, it is necessary to listen to them as to him himself, and we hold their ministry to be a commission from God.

## **Discipline**

The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his church, has appointed a government in it, to be administered by church officers.

Because there are always some who hold God and his Word in contempt, who take account of neither command, exhortation nor reproof, thus requiring greater chastisement, we hold the discipline of excommunication to be a thing holy and salutary among the faithful, since truly it was instituted by our Lord with good reason.

Church discipline is necessary for reclaiming and gaining fellow Christians who are guilty of offenses, for deterring others from committing similar offenses, for purging the yeast which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honor of Christ and the holy profession of the gospel, and for averting the wrath of God which might justly fall on the church if it should allow his covenant and its seals to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

Therefore we believe that it is expedient according to the ordinance of God that all manifest idolaters, blasphemers, murderers, thieves, lewd persons, false witnesses, sedition-mongers, quarrellers, those guilty of defamation or assault, drunkards, morally unrestrained living, those who act unworthy of the body of Christ, when they have been duly admonished and if they do not make amendment, be separated from the communion of the faithful members of the church until their repentance is known.

For the better attaining of these purposes, the elders of the church are to proceed by admonition, then by suspension from the Lord's Supper for a time, and finally by excommunication from the church, according to the nature of the offense and the degree of the person's guilt.

### **The worship of the people of God**

The light of nature shows that there is a God who has lordship and sovereignty over all, that He is good and does good to all, and that He ought therefore to be feared, loved, praised, prayed to, trusted in, and served with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God has been instituted by Himself, and so limited by His own revealed will, that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations or invention of men, or the suggestions of Satan, or under any visible representation, or any other way prohibited in Holy Scripture. Acceptable worship is the result of the gospel, a life of worship lived in spirit and truth through the mediation of the Lord Jesus and is therefore the mode and manner of all Christian living.<sup>119</sup>

Worship is to be given to God alone— the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is not to be given to angels, saints, or any other creature. Worship is not to be given except through a mediator, nor is it to be given through any mediator other than Christ.

The church must be gathered regularly for prayer, the reading of the Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching and conscientious hearing and speaking of the Word in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence.

Worship is not now, under the gospel, either limited to, or made more acceptable by any place or time in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed. But God is to be worshiped everywhere and unceasingly, in spirit and truth; in families, privately, individually, and significantly in the public assemblies. The gathering of the church as called by His Word or providence must not be carelessly or willfully neglected, or forsaken by its members.

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<sup>119</sup> Rom 1-2

The Sabbath then, is a significant practice, expression of and reminder for a life of worship, kept holy unto the Lord, a holy rest that looks forward to the Rest of Heaven.

### *The Lord's Supper*

We subscribe to the doctrine on the Sacraments as expressed in the Consensus Triguinus.

The Supper of our Lord represents and expresses the true spiritual communion which we have in his body and blood. And we acknowledge that according to his ordinance it ought to be distributed in the company of the faithful. It is not as the Roman church has taught, a sacrifice to be offered repeatedly for sins and is as such an idolatry condemned by God.

### *Of the Traditions of the Church.*

The regulations that are necessary for the internal discipline of the Church, and belong solely to the maintenance of peace, honesty and good order in the assembly of Christians, we do not hold to be human traditions at all, in as much as they are composed under the general command of Paul, where he desires that all be done among them decently and in order. But all laws and regulations made binding on conscience which oblige the faithful to things not commanded by God, or establish another service of God than that which he demands, thus tending to destroy Christian liberty (e.g. fasting, ritual observances for spiritual improvement, distinctions of foods, prohibition of marriage, works-centric prayer, confessions etc.), we condemn as perverse doctrines of Satan, in view of our Lord's declaration that he is honoured in vain by doctrines that are the commandment of men.<sup>120</sup>

It is not necessary that principles and practices of the assemblies be in all places one, or utterly alike; for at all times they have been diverse, and may be changed according to the diversity and context and culture of the local assembly, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely, openly breaks the principles and practices of the Church, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and have been ordained and approved by common authority by the elders of the classis, ought to be rebuked openly, (that others may fear to do the like,) as he that offends against the common order of the Church, and wounds the consciences of the weaker brethren.

Every national church has authority to ordain, change, and abolish, liturgy, ceremonies, practices, principles and regulations of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done in keeping with the nature of the church ruled by Christ in His Word, the gospel, and the edification of Christians when they meet.

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<sup>120</sup> Mk 7

*Of Speaking in the Congregation in such a Tongue as the people understand.*

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God to have public speaking and ministering in the Church in a tongue not understandable of the people unless there is interpretation.

*Love and Fellowship*

All saints—who are united to Jesus Christ their head by his Spirit and by faith—have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. And, being united to one another in love, they participate in each other's gifts and graces and are obligated to perform those public and private duties which lead to their mutual good, both inwardly and outwardly.

Saints by profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in material things according to their various abilities and necessities. As God affords opportunity, this communion is to be extended to all those in every place who call on the name of the Lord Jesus.

**of the Law and the Gospel**

To the people of Israel, as a civil entity, he gave various judicial laws which expired at the time their State expired. Therefore, these judicial laws place no obligation upon anyone now, except as they embody general principles of justice based on the God's holy character.

Insofar as the Law reveals God's character and reveals His will for His people under the Lordship of His Son, it is still binding as the Word of God. Where the Law reveals God's will for humanity in general, the obligation extends also to non-believers. The obligation to obey the law in this sense is not only because of its content, but also because of the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. In the gospel, Christ in no way dissolves this obligation, but greatly strengthens it.

Although true believers are not under the law, to be judged by their works by which they are justified or condemned, nevertheless the law is of great use to them as well as to others. By informing them both of the will of God and of their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly. It also reveals to them the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives. Therefore, when they examine themselves in the light of the law, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred of their sin, together with a clearer view of

their need of Christ and the perfection of his obedience. The law is also useful to the regenerate because, by forbidding sin, it restrains their corruptions.

Therefore, the fact that a man does good rather than evil because the law encourages good and discourages evil is no evidence that the man is under the law rather than under grace.

However, the regenerate man in Christ, is taught primarily by the Holy Spirit the mind of Christ such that the good that he does which carries in it the spirit of the law, and the denial of sin and mortification of the old self in his life, come from the application of Christ's redemptive work in His new creation. Thus in the wisdom of Christ does the believer 'test and approve what is pleasing and acceptable' worship to God.

### **Wisdom and Freedom**

The liberty which Christ purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, from the condemning wrath of God, and from the curse of the moral law. In their being delivered from this present evil age, it consists of freedom from bondage to Satan and the dominion of sin, from the sting of death, from the victory of the grave, and from everlasting damnation. It consists also in their free access to God and in yielding obedience to him, not out of slavish fear, but out of a childlike dependent love and willing mind. Many of these things were common to believers also under the Old Testament. Under the New Testament, however, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged: they are free from the yoke of the ceremonial law to which the Jewish church was subjected; they have greater boldness of access to the throne of grace; and they experience in greater measure the gifts of God's free Spirit than believers under the law ordinarily partook of. They are further free to know joy in suffering as Christ did because of the hope in Christ.

God alone is Lord of the conscience and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men in matters of faith or worship. These men-made rulings are in general contrary to his Word, or if regarding the matters of faith and worship, are an addition to the Word. Therefore, anyone who believes such doctrines or obeys such commands out of conscience betrays true liberty of conscience.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, destroys both liberty of conscience and reason.

Those who, on the pretext of Christian liberty, practice any sin or cherish any evil desire destroy the purpose of Christian liberty. This purpose is that, having been delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we may serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

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<sup>121</sup> Rom 14.23



## On authority

God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil authorities to be, under him, over the people for his own glory and the public good. For this purpose he has armed them with the power of the sword for the defense and encouragement of those who are good, and for the punishment of those who do evil.<sup>122</sup>

Because the authorities which God has ordained and the liberty which Christ has purchased are not intended by God to destroy each other, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another, those who, in the name of Christian liberty, oppose any lawful authority or any lawful exercise of it, whether civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. Those who declare opinions or maintain practices contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity (whether concerning faith, worship, or manner of life), or godliness; or who are guilty of such erroneous opinions or practices or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive of the external peace and the order which Christ has established in the church, may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against, by the censures of the church.

It is the duty of people to pray for those in authority, to honor them, to pay them taxes or other revenue, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority for the sake of conscience. Neither unbelief nor difference in religion makes void the just and legal authority of officeholders nor frees the people—church authorities included—from their due obedience to them.

## Marriage

Marriage is to be between one man and one woman. It is not lawful for any man to have more than one wife, or for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time.

It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry who are able to give their intelligent consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. Therefore, those who profess the true reformed religion should not marry unbelievers, Roman Catholics, or other idolaters; nor should Christians be unequally yoked by marrying those who are notoriously wicked in their way of living or hold to damnable heresies.<sup>123</sup>

Marriage ought not to take place between persons who are within the degrees of close relationship by blood or by marriage forbidden by the Word. Such incestuous marriages can never be made lawful—so that such persons may live together as man and wife—by any law of man or by the consent of the parties involved.

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<sup>122</sup> Rom 13

<sup>123</sup> 1 Cor 7

Adultery or fornication committed after engagement in which a public commitment to marriage has been made, if detected before marriage, gives valid reason to the innocent party to break the engagement.

In the case of adultery after marriage it is lawful for the innocent party to seek a divorce and after the divorce to remarry just as if the offending party were dead.

Although the corruption of mankind is such that people are apt to seek arguments to justify unwarranted separation of those whom God has joined together in marriage, nothing but adultery or such willful desertion as cannot be remedied by the church or the civil authorities is sufficient cause to dissolve the bond of marriage. In such cases a public and orderly procedure is to be observed, and the persons concerned are not to be left to their own wills and discretion in their own case.

We subscribe fully to the Danvers Statement.

### prayer

As we have declared that we have confidence and hope for salvation and all good only in God through Jesus Christ, so we confess that we ought to invoke him in all necessities in the name of Jesus Christ, who is our Mediator and Advocate with him and has access to him. Likewise we ought to acknowledge that all good things come from him alone, and to give thanks to him for them. On the other hand, we reject the intercession of the saints as a superstition invented by men contrary to Scripture, for the reason that it proceeds from mistrust of the sufficiency of the intercession of Jesus Christ.

Moreover since prayer is nothing but hypocrisy and fantasy unless it proceed from the interior affections of the heart, we believe that all prayers ought to be made with clear understanding. The prayer our Lord taught His disciples shows fittingly just how we ought to pray.

Prayer is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of his Spirit, and according to his will. Prayer is to be offered with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance. If vocal, it must be offered in a language that is understood.

Prayer may be made for things that are lawful and for all kinds of men now alive or who will live at a later time. But it is wrong to pray for the dead since our judgment before God is decided at the point of death.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Heb 9.27

## Appendix.

### Sanctification

Adapted from:

<http://www.lionelwindsor.net/2004/01/01/justification-and-sanctification-biblical-definitions-and-modern-misunderstandings/>.

*What is the relation between the creation of a right relationship with God (justification) and living in this relationship (sanctification)?*

Justification and sanctification are united as the work of the Triune God. It is wrong to say that justification is the work of Christ, while sanctification is the work of the Spirit. Both justification and sanctification are the work of the Father, the Son and the Spirit together. Calvin's *Institutes*, which are self-consciously and credally Trinitarian, locate both sanctification and justification in the work of the Spirit, 'the bond by which Christ effectually unites us to himself.' (*Institutes* 3.1.1) The Spirit, says the Nicene Creed, is 'the holy one, the Lord, the lifegiver, the one who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]'. In Colossians, the Spirit is not mentioned except in 1:8, yet 'in Christ' language ([Colossians 1:2, 4, 27, 28](#); [2:2, 5, 6, 8-16, 17, 20](#); [3:1-4, 11, 15-16, 24](#)) is bound up with calls to living a godly life (especially chapter 3). Both justification and sanctification are initiated by the Father, effected by the Son and perfected by the Spirit.

Furthermore, justification and sanctification are united *in Christ*. Paul is sweeping in his inclusion of the whole of our reality "in Christ". This includes justification, sanctification ([1 Cor 1:30](#), [1 Cor 6:11](#)) and our Christian walk ([Eph 2:10](#); [Col 2:6](#); [Rom 6:3ff](#)). Our faith union with Christ means that in justification, 'We do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ are engrafted into his body—in short, because he deigns to make us one with him.' (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.10) Our faith union in Christ is so fundamental for sanctification that Paul's criterion for the value of our works is not their intrinsic value but their source: whatever is not from faith is sin ([Rom 14:17](#)).

Justification and sanctification are united in Christ's whole divine-human person and work. They are, in fact, "in Christ Jesus" ([1 Cor 1:30](#), i.e. Christ *crucified* 1:23). The Spirit is mediated to us through the Christ's humanity. Because we are united by faith to the incarnate divine person there is an ontic basis of justification, inseparable from sanctification. But because we are united by faith to Christ's human work of obedient substitutionary death and resurrection there is a forensic element to justification, and sanctification is typified by mortification and vivification.

However, justification and sanctification are also distinct. Firstly, they are distinguished *eschatologically*. Justification, an objective reality totally "in Christ", is completed in Christ's crucifixion, although it is hidden before Christ's eschatological appearance ([Col 3:3](#)). Sanctification, insofar as it is a subjective reality in the believer's life, will be completed at the eschaton 'in glory' ([Col 3:4](#)), although it is anticipated before then ([Col 3:5ff](#)). Luther expressed this in the eschatological dialectic of 'simultaneously a sinner and justified'.

Justification and sanctification are also distinct *soteriologically*. There is an ordered relationship between the two. Just as we received Christ, so we must walk in him ([Col 3:6](#)). This *ordo salutis* is not chronological, since they are inseparable in Christ. It is, rather, a logical and teleological order. Justification (God's act towards us) is the basis of sanctification (God's act in us). Conversely, sanctification is the goal of justification.

How does this distinction affect soteriology? The basis of salvation from condemnation into eternal life is justification, not sanctification ([Rom 5:9](#), [Rom 8:33-34](#), [Titus 3:7](#)), because it is the forensic act before the judge. This is not to deny that sanctification may be 'evidentiary' when it comes to final judgment, nor that there may be an assessment of our works (done in Christ and by faith). Yet after all we have done, we are still unworthy servants ([Luke 17:10](#)). God's creation of a right relationship with himself is not dependent upon our living in that relationship.

### *Of Works of Supererogation.*

Voluntary Works besides, over and above, God's Commandments, which they call Works of Supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety: for by them men are declaring, that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake, than duty requires. Whereas Christ states plainly: 'When you have done all that are commanded to you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants''. Those who attain the greatest heights of obedience possible in this life are so far from being able to go beyond duty and to do more than God requires, that they fall short of much that is their duty to do.