

The Belgic Confession

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

Article 1: About the Nature of God

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

Article 2: About the Knowledge of God

Moreover, we know God by two means, first, by the creation, preservation, and government of this whole world. For it is before our eyes as a most beautiful Book in which all creatures, from the least to the greatest, are as certain letters and marks through which the invisible things of God can be examined and understood, certainly His eternal power and His divinity as the Apostle Paul says in Romans 1:20. This knowledge is sufficient for convicting any given people and rendering them inexcusable. But He also bears His very self to us, much more clearly and openly, in His holy and divine Word; indeed, as much as is expedient in this life for His glory and for the salvation of His own people. Psalm 19; Ephes. 4:6; 2 Cor. 2:6.

Article 3: About Holy Scripture

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

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

Moreover, we hold that Sacred Scripture is encompassed in these two volumes of the Old and New Testaments, the books of which are called canonical; about these there was never a controversy. And this is not only their number but also their order, having been received in the Church of God: The Five Books of Moses, the book of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, the two books of Samuel, two of Kings the two books of Chronicles, which is called Paralipomenon, the first of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, likewise the Psalms of David, the three books of Solomon, certainly Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, the Four Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and to these twelve other Minor Prophets. Again, there are canonical books of the New Testament: the Four Gospels, obviously blessed Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Acts of the Apostles, the Fourteen Letters of Blessed Paul, and the

Seven Letters of the Remaining Apostles, the Apocalypse of the Blessed Apostle John.

Article 5: About the Authority of Holy Scripture

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

Article 6: About the Difference Between Canonical and Apocryphal Books

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

Article 7: About the Perfection of Scripture

Moreover, we believe that this Holy Scripture most perfectly contains the whole will of God and that all things are taught in it abundantly, whatsoever is necessary to be believed by people in order to grasp salvation. And so, since the entire account of divine worship is there exactly and profusely established, no one, however much gifted with apostolic dignity, nor likewise any Angel cast down from heaven, as blessed Paul says, is lawfully allowed to teach otherwise than what we have already thoroughly learned long ago in the Holy Scriptures. For since it is forbidden, lest anyone either add to or subtract from the Word of God, it is sufficiently made known that this holy doctrine is perfect and absolute in all its numbers and parts. Therefore, no other Writings of humans, however much gifted with sanctity, nor custom, nor any majority, nor antiquities, neither rules of the times nor succession of persons, nor any councils, nor finally any human decrees or statutes ought to be pitted against or held on par with these divine Scriptures and this naked truth of God, because the truth of God surpasses all things. For all human beings are liars, themselves vainer than vanity. For this reason, we reject, with our whole soul, whatsoever does not agree with this most certain rule, as we have been taught by the Apostles when they say, "Test the spirits whether they are from God," and also, "If anyone comes to you, and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house," etc. 2 Tim. 3:14, 17; 1 Pet. 1:1; Prov. 30:5; Gal. 3:15; Apoc. 22:18; John 15:15; Act 20:27; 1 Tim 1:3; 2 John 1:10; Gal. 1:8; 1 Cor. 15:2; Act. 26:22; Rom. 15:4; 1 Pet. 4:11; John 4:25; Es. 1:12; 1 Cor. 2:4; Rom. 3:4; 1 Cor. 3:11; Deut 12:32; Matth. 15:3, 17:5; Mark. 7:7; 1 Thess. 2:2; 1 John 4:1.

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

Joined to this truth and the Word of God, we believe in one God alone (Who is one essence, with incommunicable properties in three persons, having had a real distinction of affairs from eternity), certainly in accordance with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. 1 John 2:10; Esa. 43:11; John 1:12, 1; 1 John 1:1; Apoc. 19:13; Prov. 8: 22; John 1:14. For the Father is the cause, origin, and beginning of all visible and invisible things. The Son is the Word, the Wisdom, and the Image of the Father. The Holy Spirit is the true power and strength that emanates from the Father and the Son. Nevertheless, this distinction does not make it that God is divided, as if into three parts, seeing that Scripture teaches us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each has a hypostasis, or a subsistence, distinguished by their properties. Thus these three persons are nevertheless one God alone. Therefore, it is certain then that the Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Father, nor is the Holy Spirit either the Father or the Son. At the same time, however, these persons, so distinct, are neither divided, nor confused, nor mingled together. For the Father did not take on human flesh, nor the Holy Spirit, but only the Son. The Father never was without His Son, nor without His Holy Spirit, since these same persons are of the same eternal essence. Far from these, there is neither a first nor a last, for all three are one, in truth and power, in goodness and mercy.

Article 9: About the Holy Trinity

We certainly know all these things to such an extent according to the testimonies of Holy Scripture as much from their own effects, especially from those we feel within our very selves. And indeed, the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures that teach us to believe in this sacred Trinity run throughout in the Old Testament need not be enumerated so much as selected with reliable judgment. These are of such a sort: God first says in Genesis, "Let Us make humanity according to Our image and likeness." And then, "He created them male and female." Likewise, "Behold, Adam has been made, as it were, one of Us." Gen. 3:5. From this, namely because it is said, "Let Us make humanity according to Our image," it appears that there is a plurality of Persons in the Deity. But since "God created, etc." is said, a unity of Divinity is indicated. How many persons there are, although it is obscurely delivered in the Old Testament, is placed before us in the New with bright light. For when our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized in the Jordan, Matth. 3:16, the voice of the Father was heard proclaiming, "This is my dear Son;" the Son Himself was seen in the water; and, truly, the Holy Spirit appeared under the form of a dove. In the common baptism of all believers we are commanded to use this formula: "Baptize all peoples in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." So also, in the Gospel of Luke 1:35 the Angel Gabriel addresses Mary, the mother of our Lord: "The Holy Spirit come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and for this reason the One who will be born from you, He will be called the Son of God." Again, "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you." Again, "There are three who testify in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, which three are one" 1 John 5:7. In all of these, we are most amply taught that there are three Persons in one God. Moreover, although this doctrine surpasses the whole comprehension of human nature, we nevertheless firmly believe it now according to the Word of God, anticipating, until we may fully enjoy the knowledge of this in heaven. Furthermore, we must note the office and effect of these three Persons Who stretch out towards us. For the Father is called our Creator on account of His power. The Son is called

our true Savior and Redeemer because He has redeemed us by his blood. The Holy Spirit is our Sanctifier because He dwells in our hearts. Mal. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 John 4:14; Gal. 4:6; Tit. 3:5; Rom. 8:9; Rom. 14:16. Moreover, the Church has always held this doctrine of the Holy Trinity from the age of the Apostles all the way up to this time now and has defended it against Jews, Muslims, and other psuedo-Christians and heretics, such as Marcion, Mani, Praxeas, Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, and the like, who have been deservingly condemned by the blessed fathers. And so, in this matter, we willingly here receive the Three Symbols, the Apostles', Nicene, and the Athanasian, and whatever judgment, along with their Symbols, they established concerning this dogma.

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

We believe that Jesus Christ, with respect to His divine nature, is the only Son of God begotten from eternity not made or created John 1:18, 49, for He would be a creature but for the exact same essence of the Father and coeternal to Him, and Who is the true image of the substance of the Father and the splendor of His glory, equal to Him in all things Col. 1:15; John 10:30; Phil. 2:6; Hebr. 1:3; John 8:23, 9:36; Act. 8:37; Rom. 9:5. Moreover, He is the Son of God, not only from the time He took on our human nature but from all eternity, as this collective testimony teaches us: Moses says "God created the world," and blessed John says, "All things had been made through the Word, Who is called God." Thus the Apostle asserts to the Hebrews that God created all things through the Son, Jesus Christ Colos. 1:16. And so it follows that He Who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ already then existed when He created all things. For this reason the prophet Micah says, in the fifth chapter, verse two, "His origin is without beginning, from eternal times." Again, "He is without beginning of days, and without end of life." He is therefore true God, eternal, omnipotent, Whom we honor and worship.

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

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

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

We believe that the Father, through His Word, that is through the Son, created heaven, earth, and all remaining nature from nothing when it seemed opportune to Him, and, that there is a form for each of them in turn, and that He has assigned various duties so that they might serve the interests of their Creator. Even now He maintains, sustains, and rules them by His eternal providence and immeasurable power. And this is so that they may also serve humanity, as humanity may serve the interests of its true God. Furthermore, He created the angels good in nature so that they might be His messengers and serve the interests of His elect. Nevertheless, several of them have fallen down from the excellent nature in which God created them into eternal perdition, and others, certainly by the grace of God alone, have

stood firm in their original state. Indeed, the devils and the excrement-ridden demons are so corrupt and depraved that they conspire as enemies-of-the-State against both God and all good people. As thieves from a look out, they lie in ambush with all their strength for the Church and each of its members in order to ruin and destroy them all by their deceptions. For this reason, having been sentenced to eternal condemnation on account of their own evil, they daily await the dreadful punishment of their deeds. And therefore we reject the error of the Sadducees in this place, who deny that there are any Spirits or Angels. Likewise, the error of the Manicheans, who assert that the Devils hold an origin from themselves and are evil on account of their nature, but not corrupted by willful disobedience. John 15:26; Gen. 1:1; Isai. 40:26; Heb. 3:4; Apo. 4:11; 1 Tim 4:3,1; Col. 1:16; Heb 3:14, 1:3; Psal. 103:21, 4:3,8; John 8:44; 2 Pet. 2:4; Luc. 8:31; 1 Pet. 5:8; Matt. 25:40; Act. 23:8.

Article 13: About the Providence of God

We believe that this Most High God, after He created all things, did not in the least hand them over to fate or the rule of fortune, but continually rules and governs them according to the precept of His sacrosanct will so that nothing may happen in this world apart from His decree and ordination. Neither is it possible to say that God is the author of or the guilty party in the evils that occur in this world. For both His power and goodness lie widely open as immeasurable and incomprehensible, and His work and proceedings are sacredly and justly determined and executed, although both the Devil and the wicked unjustly act. Truly, whatsoever He does, having exceeded human constraints, we do not wish to inquire about these things pryingly and beyond our constraints. In fact, on the contrary, we nevertheless humbly and reverently adore the hidden and just judgments of God. For it is enough for us, as disciples of Christ, to learn no more than that which He Himself teaches us in His Word, without transgressing the limits that we regard as lawful. Truly, this doctrine brings immeasurable comfort to us. For from it we know that nothing happens to us by fortune, but only all things by the will of our heavenly Father, Who truly keeps watch for us with fatherly care, having subjugated all things unto Himself so that not even a hair our head (which have all been numbered down to the individual one) can be plucked out, nor can the smallest chick fall to the ground, apart from the will of our Father. And so we thoroughly rest in this, acknowledging that God restrains the devils and all our enemies, just as curbed with whips, so that no one is strong enough to hurt us apart from His will and good permission. And therefore in this place we reject the detestable opinion of the Epicureans, who create an idle god, doing nothing and forfeiting all things. Act. 23:8; John 5:17; Heb. 1:3; Prover. 16:4; Iacob. 4:15; Jacob. 4:15; Job 1:21; 2 Kings 22:20; Act. 4:28; 1 Sam. 8:25; Psal. 115:3; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6; Deut. 19:5; Prover. 21:1; Ps. 105:25; Isa. 10:5; 2 Thess. 2:11; Ezech. 41:9; Rom 1:28; 1 Kings 11:23; Gen. 45:8, 50:20; 2 Sam. 16:10; Matt. 8:31; 1 John 3:8.

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

We believe that God certainly created humanity from the mud of the earth and created them in His image, good, certainly just and also holy, who could by their own choice arrange their will and conform it to the will of God. In truth, when they were in honor they were unaware and did not understand their excellence. But knowing and desiring, they subjected their very selves to sin and to the consequence of death and the curse. By bending the ear towards the

words and allurements of the devil, they transgressed the commandment of life, which they had received from the LORD, and through this penalty they carried themselves away and alienated themselves from God (their true life), having wholly damaged and corrupted their own nature by sin. By this, it was accomplished that they handed themselves over as liable to the death of both the body and the soul. And so accomplished as wicked and perverse in all their ways and pursuits, they cast off all those splendid gifts with which God had adorned them, to the point that nothing remains except small sparks and tiny vestiges, which are sufficient for rendering people inexcusable, because whatever light in us has turned into blind shadows, so that Scripture itself teaches, saying: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it." For here John clearly calls people "darkness." Therefore whatever is drudged up concerning the free will of humanity, we deservedly reject it, since humanity is the "slave of sin," and no good can come out of humanity, "unless it was given to it from heaven." For who dares to boast that he can perform anything that he desires, since Christ Himself says, "No one can come to me, unless my Father, Who sent me, draws him"? May he who hears "all flesh has been afflicted with hostility against God" glorify his own will? May he who knows "the human soul is not capable of the things that are of the Spirit of God," pride himself about his own knowledge? In short, may he who understands that we are not sufficient for any thought according to our very selves but that what we are sufficient for is entirely from God, even drag out any thought of his into the public gaze? Therefore, what the Apostle said ought to remain firm and fixed: "God is He Who works in us so that we both desire and work according to His gratuitous good will." For no mind, no desire, in which Christ Himself has not first worked acquiesces to the will of God, which He Himself teaches us, saying, "Without me you can do nothing." Matt. 20:29, 30; Gen 1:26; Eccle. 7:30; Eph. 4:24; Psal. 49; Isa. 59:2; Gen. 8:17; Rom. 5:12; Rom. 3:10; Act. 4:16; 1 Kings 1:20, 21; Act. 17:27; Eph. 5:8; John 1:5; Isa. 26:12; Psal. 94:11; John 3:27; John 6:44; Rom 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 3:5; Philip. 2:13; John 15:5.

Article 15: About Original Sin

We believe that sin, which is called Original, has been sown into and poured throughout the whole human race by the disobedience of Adam. Moreover, original sin is a corruption of the entire nature and a hereditary crime, with which even infants themselves are polluted in the womb of their mother. And just as a toxic root, it sprouts forth every type of sin in humanity, and, in the presence of God, it is so filthy and detestable, that it is sufficient for the condemnation of the entire human race. Truly, it is not thoroughly extinguished nor plucked out by the roots through Baptism, seeing that just as waves of a stream continually rise up and pour forth from a corrupt bubbling spring, so too from it. Although, to the children of God it is not handed over or imputed to condemnation, but for them it is remitted according to the pure grace and mercy of God, not so that they may fall asleep confident in this remission, but so that with the sense of this corruption it wakes up more frequent groans in the faithful, and so that by it they more passionately desire themselves to be free from this body of death. From this, we therefore damn the error of the Pelagians, who assert that this original sin is nothing other than imitation. Phil. 2:13; John 15:5; Psal. 51:7; Rom. 3:10; Gen. 6:3; John 3:6; Rom. 5:14; Eph. 1:5; Rom. 7:18, 24.

Article 16: About Divine Predestination

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

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

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

Article 18: About the Incarnation of the Son of God

Truly we confess that God then finally fulfilled the promise (that He made to the Fathers, by the mouth of his holy Prophets), when, at the time He Himself established, He sent into this world this only and eternal Son of His, "Who received the form of a servant," "made similar to humanity," truly assuming a real human nature with all its weaknesses, except sin, when He was conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, without the work of any man. Again, He not only assumed a human nature as far as the body but also unto the soul. For He had been endowed with a true human soul so that he would be a real human. Indeed, since the soul no less than the body itself is guilt of damnation, it was necessary that he assume both body and soul in order that he might save them both together. For this reason, against the heresy of the Anabaptists who deny that Christ assumed human flesh from his mother, we confess that Christ "partook of the same flesh and blood just as His own brethren," made "flesh from the loins of David," "the same flesh from the seed of David," "and fruit from the womb of the virgin Mary," "born from a woman," "seed of David," "a flower from the root of Jesse," "from the tribe of Judah," "and having descended from the Jews themselves according to the flesh," and, in short, "True seed of Abraham and of David" because "He had assumed the seed of Abraham, except for sin," as it is said, "He was made similar to His brothers in all things, to a degree that He is truly Emmanuel, that is, God with us."

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

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

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

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

We believe that God, Who is consummately and perfectly both merciful and just, has sent His Son so that He would assume that nature in order that He should make satisfaction in that very nature that sinned through disobedience, and in order that concerning sin, He should endure the just penalties by His bitter suffering and death. Therefore, God displayed and stretched forth His justice upon His own Son, laden with our sins. He liberally poured out and stretched forth His goodness and mercy upon us, worthily deserving condemnation, when He handed His Son over to death on account of our offenses, out of his immeasurable love for us, and in turn raised Him from death on account of our justification, so that we would obtain immortality and eternal life through Him.

Article 21: About the Satisfaction of Christ for Our Sins

We believe that Jesus Christ is that consummate High Priest, established in eternity with an oath according to the Melchizedekian order, and that He presented His very self in our name in the presence of the Father for the placation of His wrath with full satisfaction, placing His very self upon the altar of the cross and pouring out His blood for the purgation of our sins, just as the Prophets had predicted it would happen. For it is written, “the castigation of our peace was placed on the Son of God,” and “we are healed by his wounds.” Again, “He Himself was led to death as a lamb,” and He was “numbered among sinners” and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, even though he had previously declared Him innocent. Therefore, He paid, “for what He had not stolen,” and the just suffered for the unjust, both in His soul and body, so while sensing the awe-striking debt for our sins, He sweated blood and water and He even finally cried out, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” And He endured all these things for the remission of our sins. For this reason, we rightly say with blessed Paul “we know nothing whatsoever, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” in fact, “we consider all things as excrement on account of the excellence of the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, ” so that he who is in His wounds finds every kind of consolation. And so nothing is necessary lest we would hope for or think up for ourselves any other reckonings with which we can be reconciled to God besides this one and only complete oblation, by which all believers, who are sanctified, are consecrated and perfected unto eternity. And moreover this is the reason why He Himself was called by the Angel, “Jesus,” that is, “Savior,

because He is going to save His people from their sins.”

Article 22: About Justifying Faith and about Justification in Faith

We believe that the Holy Spirit imparts true faith indwelling within our hearts so that we arrive at a true knowledge of such a great mystery; a faith that embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits and claims Him as made our own. For it is necessary that either all the things that are required for our salvation are not in Christ, or, that if all things are in Him, then he who possesses Christ by faith also has perfect salvation at the same time. And therefore it is a wholly horrendous blasphemy against God to assert that Christ is less than sufficient, but also that other things likewise are needed. For it would follow from here, that Jesus Christ is only Savior in part. And therefore we deservedly say with blessed Paul, “We are justified by faith alone, or by faith apart from works of the Law.” Otherwise, properly speaking, we by no means understand faith itself, through itself, or from itself, to justify us; it is as if it were no more than an instrument by which we lay hold of Christ our righteousness. Therefore our righteousness is Christ Himself, Who imputes all His own merits to us. Truly faith is the instrument by which we are bound to Him in fellowship and the communion of all His good works, and also preserved in the same, to the point that all those, having been made ours, are more than enough for the absolution from our sins.

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

We believe that all our happiness is situated in the remission of our sins, which is in Jesus Christ, and that our whole justification before God is contained in it alone, as blessed Paul teaches us according to David, proclaiming Blessed, “those to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works.” But also the same Apostle says, “We are justified through the redemption made in Jesus Christ.” On account of this, as supported by solid ground, we present all glory to God, perceiving ourselves in extreme humility so that we may properly know of what sort our selves really are. And so, we presume nothing whatsoever on account of ourselves or any of our merits, but having been supported only by the obedience of Christ crucified, we thoroughly acquiesce to it, so that when we believe in Him it becomes ours. Again, this alone is abundantly sufficient both for covering over all our iniquities and also for rendering us safe and secure against all temptation at the same time. And indeed this drives all fear, all trembling, and finally all dread far away from the conscience, where we approach near to God and we do not imitate the example of the first of our parents, who, fleeing because of fear, attempted to hide and cover themselves with fig leaves. Certainly it is proper that if we were to stand in the presence of God, relying ever so little upon ourselves or any other creature, it is certain that we would be instantly engulfed in wrath. For this reason, it is preferable for each of us, in turn, to call out with David: “Lord, do not enter into judgment with your servant, because any living thing will not be justified in your gaze.”

Article 24: About Sanctification and about Good Works

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

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

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

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

Article 26: About the Intercession of Christ

Furthermore, we believe that we have no access to God except through this only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous, Who therefore was made man (uniting divine and human natures) in order that He would open up an entrance to the majesty of God for us miserable humans, which had otherwise been shut eternally to us. Nevertheless, the Majesty and power of this Mediator (Whom the Father had established between Himself and us) ought not terrify us in the least, lest for that reason we would think that we ought to seek after

another for ourselves, according to our own judgment. For there is, neither among heaven nor among the terrestrial creatures, one who more lovingly embraces us than Christ Himself, Who, “although He was in the form of God, emptied His very self,” and, on account of us, “was made like His brethren in all things.” But if we had to contrive another Mediator for ourselves through seeking, who would deem us of some worth, who would love us more zealously than He Himself Who willingly abandoned His own life on our behalf when we were up to that point enemies? Again, if another had to be sought out by us, who excels in consummate authority and power, who has ever obtained so much as He Who is seated “at the right hand of the Father,” and to Whom “all power on heaven and earth has been given”? And finally, who shall have been heard by God more clearly than That Only-Begotten, the Elect Son of God? Therefore, unbelief alone has led to this custom by which we afflict the Saints (those we think in heaven) with dishonor, when we accomplish that which is so far removed from those things they ever did while living, but rather they constantly repelled this, in accordance with their duty, just as their writings testify. And our vileness here is not to be dragged out as an excuse for such sacrilege. For we do not in the least offer prayers propped up with our dignity, but with the dignity and excellence only of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose righteousness is ours by faith, according to which place the Apostle justly, since he would shake off this inane fear (or rather unbelief) from us, says, “Christ was made like His brethren in all things,” so that he would be a merciful and faithful High Priest, in these things which were in accordance with the ritual for the expiation of the sins of the people in the presence of God. For according to this, He can aid those who are tested, because he had fully endured when He was tested. In addition, so that he would increase our spirits in which we may come near to this High Priest more confidentially, the same Apostle adds, “Therefore, having a great High Priest, Who has entered into heaven, Jesus Christ the Son of God, let us hold on to our profession. For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to be moved with a sense of our weaknesses, but One tested in all things, similar to us, except for sin. Therefore, let us proceed with faith up to the throne of grace so that we may pursue mercy and come upon grace unto favorable aid.” The same apostle says, “We have freedom for entering into the sacristy through the blood of Jesus. Let us therefore approach with a firm persuasion of faith, etc.” Likewise, “Christ has an eternal priesthood, from which He can also save those who approach through His blood unto God, always living, so that He may always intercede on their behalf.” What need is there for other things? Since Christ Himself says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to my Father except through Me,” why should we seek another advocate for ourselves? Most certainly, since it has pleased God Himself to give His Son to us as an advocate, let us not having abandoned Him, seek another, lest in always having to follow fate we may never come across any other. For when God gave That One to us, He knew, without a doubt, that we were miserable sinners. According to which, it happens that in remaining close to the commandment of Christ Himself, we only call upon the heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our only mediator Himself, as He Himself also taught us in the Lord’s Prayer. For we are certain that we are going to receive all the things for which we ask in His name, from the Father.

Article 27: About the Catholic Church

We believe and confess a single Catholic or universal Church, which is the true congregation or assembly of all the faithful who await their entire salvation from Jesus Christ alone,

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

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

We believe that since this holy assembly and congregation is of those who ought to be saved and that there is no salvation outside of it, no one (regardless of whatever status or name he may be) ought to withdraw or separate his very self from it, so that being content with such a habit, he would live alone and apart. But on the contrary, each and every one ought to attach and hold themselves to this assembly, and anxiously preserve the unity of the Church, and they ought to subjugate their very selves to both its doctrine and its discipline, and finally, they ought to willingly place the neck under the yoke of Christ and serve the interests of the edification of the brethren, as communal members of a single body, just as God has lavishly given to each one his own gifts. Furthermore, so that this may be better observed, it is the duty of all believers, according to the word of God, to separate their very selves from those who are established outside the Church and to join their very selves to this assembly and congregation of the faithful, wherever God has established it, regardless of whether hostile decrees of princes and magistrates forbid it, even those who would do so indicting with a punishment of beheading and death of the body. And so, whosoever withdraws from this true Church, or refuses to join their selves to it, openly fights against the command of God.

Article 29: About the Marks of the True Church

We believe that we ought to seek and discern according to the word of God, with consummate diligence and prudence, what then this true Church may be, since all of the sects, however many flourish in the world today, seize upon and cloak themselves with the title of "Church." We are certainly not now speaking of the assembly of hypocrites, who are mixed among the good in the Church although they do not rightly extend into the Church in which they are bodily present, but of having to distinguish the congregation of the true Church from all sects, which falsely glorify themselves as members of the Church. Therefore the true Church will be distinguished from the false by these marks; if the pure preaching of the Gospel and the legitimate administration of the sacraments, according to the prescription of Christ, flourishes, likewise if the right ecclesiastical discipline is used for the restraint of sin. And finally, (so that we embrace the whole Word alone), it measures all things according to the standard of the Word of God and repudiates whatever things are hostile to it and acknowledges Christ as the only head. It is certain that by these marks it is possible to distinguish the true Church, from which it is not lawful for anyone to be separated. Moreover,

those who are true members of this Church can be judged by marks according to the communion of all Christians, of such a sort is Faith, by which, once apprehending Christ as their Savior, they flee from sin and seek after righteousness; likewise, they love their neighbors, and, not turning to the left or right, they crucify their flesh with its works, even though it is too little, as if a greater weakness is in them, but regarding that, they fight against it by the power of the Spirit throughout the whole course of life, and, constantly fleeing to the blood, death, suffering, and obedience of our Lord Christ, as to the most safe protection, since they know that in Him alone they have forgiveness of sins, through faith in Him. Truly the False Church, on the contrary, always assigns more authority to its very self, and its institutions and traditions, than to the word of God. It does not suffer to subject itself to the yoke of Christ, nor does it administer the sacraments according to the prescription of Christ, but it adds something to them in this way, and subtracts from them in that way, according to its judgment. Furthermore, it always relies more upon humans than on Christ, and, in a hostile manner, it persecutes those who piously desire to conform their lives according to the prescription of the word of God or who indict and repudiate its sins as greed and idolatry. Therefore, from this, in turn, it is easy to discern and recognize either Church from one another.

Article 30: About Control of the Church

We believe that this true Church ought to be ruled and governed according to the spiritual order that God has instructed us with His Word, so that there would be Pastors and Ministers in it who purely preach and administer the Sacraments. Likewise, there should be Elders and Deacons who compose the Senate of the Church, so that just as by these means true Religion can be preserved, true doctrine retained and propagated, and people given over to sin censored and corrected, and also, just as they can be restrained with the same bridle of discipline, so also are the poor and afflicted can be assisted with help and comfort according to their particular need. For then all things will be done duly and in good order, when faithful and pious men are elected to its government according to the prescription of blessed Paul, which is held in Tim. 3 and Tit. 1.

Article 31: About the Calling of Ministers of the Church

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

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

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

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

Article 33: About the Sacraments

We believe that God, mindful of our sluggishness and weakness in reason, established sacraments for us, so that He would imprint His promises upon us and thus be most certain pledges for us, of divine goodness and of His gifts, having been instituted for the fostering and sustaining of our faith. He truly attached these to the word of the Gospel so that He would put forth before our external senses both the very thing itself that He proclaims to us in His word and also even that which He Himself internally works in our hearts, and finally, so that He would confirm in us, more and more, the salvation that He deemed worthy to communicate to us. For the sacraments are signs and visible symbols of internal and invisible things, through which, as through means, God Himself works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. And therefore these signs are not in the least empty, or vacuous, or established for our deception or frustration. For their truth is Jesus Christ Himself, without Whom they would certainly be nothing of importance. Moreover, the number of the remaining sacraments that Christ Himself, our true and only Teacher, has instituted is sufficient for us. Truly there are only two, obviously the sacrament of baptism and of the Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Article 34: About Baptism

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, (Who is the end of the Law), has now, by the pouring out of His own blood, put in place the end of having to use the pouring out of all other bloods for the propitiation of sin. And, having abolished Circumcision, which was occurring in Blood, He instituted Baptism in its place, by which we are received into the Church of God and separated from all other peoples and foreign religions, since we have been consecrated to Him alone, Whose signet and insignia we bear. And finally, Baptism is a testimony to us that That One Himself, Who is the favorably inclined Father towards us, will be God to us throughout eternity. Therefore, the Lord commanded all His own to be baptized, by pure water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, in order that, through the same Holy Spirit, He would indicate the blood of Christ to work and act internally in the soul, in the same way that water operates externally upon bodies. For just as water, having been poured out upon us, and residing upon the body to be baptized, and itself clearly seen,

washes filth away from the body, so too the Blood of Christ also cleans that one from sins, washes the soul and thoroughly cleanses it from iniquities, and regenerates us children of wrath as children of God. But this does not happen because of this material of the water, but by the very sprinkling of the most precious Blood of the Son of God, Who is for us as the Red Sea through which it is necessary to cross, so that we can escape from the tyranny of the Pharaoh, that is, of the Devil, and to enter into the spiritual land Canaan. And so, Ministers certainly offer sacraments and the visible thing to us, but the Lord Himself produces what is signified in the Sacrament, certainly the invisible gifts and graces, washing, purifying, and cleansing our souls from all their filth and sins; likewise, renewing and filling up our hearts with all consolation, and finally, granting assurance of His fatherly goodness to us, and clothing us with the new man and stripping off the old with all of its deeds. On account of these reasons, we believe that every person who seeks to obtain eternal life ought to be baptized with one (and once is enough) baptism, which it is never to be repeated afterwards, since we certainly cannot be born twice. Nevertheless, this baptism not only benefits us only in that moment at which water settles down upon us or at which we are moistened by it, but also throughout the whole span of our life. And so we call down a solemn curse upon this error of the Anabaptists, who not only have not been content in receiving Baptism once and for all, but who also damn the Baptism of the children from the faithful. We believe that, for the same reason, they ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant in which little children were once circumcised in Israel, certainly because the same promises have been made to our infants. And in fact Christ has poured out His blood so that He would wash adults no less than infants. And therefore, it is fitting for them to receive the sign or the Sacrament of the thing that Christ has done for their sake, just as in the Law, the Lord commanded the Sacrament of the death and suffering of Christ to be communicated to recently born children by offering a lamb in their place, which was the future Sacrament of Christ. In addition, the things that Circumcision fulfilled for the Jewish people are the same things that Baptism fulfills for the children of the faithful. And this is the reason why Paul calls Baptism the Circumcision of Christ.

Article 35: About the Supper of the Lord

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

this life of ours is afterwards sustained), so also truly for the maintaining of spiritual life in us, we receive the true body and blood of Christ our only Savior in our souls, by faith, which is the counterpart to the hand and mouth of our soul. Truly, it is most certain that Christ did not so anxiously entrust His Sacrament to us without reason, as He actually accomplishes in us whatever He Himself represents to us in His sacred signs, although the manner itself exceeds our natural capacity, nor can it be perceived in any of this, because clearly all the operations of the Holy Spirit are hidden and incomprehensible. Moreover, we certainly do not error in saying that that which is eaten is the very most natural body of Christ, and that that which is drunk is His true blood, but the instrument or medium through which we eat and drink these is not the mouth of the body but our spirit itself, and that through faith. And so Christ always resides at the right hand of the Father in heaven, but this does not therefore in the least keep Him from communicating Himself to us through faith. Again, this Supper is a meal of the Spirit, in the midst of Whom Christ brings His self forth to us for partaking with all of His works, and makes it so that, in this, just as which we enjoy His very self, so too do we enjoy the merits of His suffering and death. For He nourishes, reinforces, and consoles our miserable afflicted souls that are destitute of all consolation by the eating of His very own flesh; likewise He sustains and recreates them by the drinking of His blood. In addition, although the Sacraments are joined to the signified things themselves, both of those things, nevertheless, are not received by all. Indeed, the evil person certainly receives the Sacrament to his own damnation, but he does not receive the thing or truth of the Sacrament. For example, Judas and Simon Magus indeed both received the Sacrament, but truly not in the least Christ Himself Who was signified in it, for He is communicated to believers alone. Finally, we communicate with this sacred Sacrament in the meeting of the people of God, with consummate humility and reverence, piously celebrating the memory of the death of Christ our Savior with acts of gratitude, and there publicly declaring the confession of faith and of the Christian Religion. And so, no one who has not first examined his very self ought to bring himself to this table, lest eating from this bread or drinking from this cup, he eats and drinks judgment and damnation upon his very self. Again, by the use of this Sacrament, the most passionate love towards both God Himself and towards neighbor is inflamed in us. And so, indeed we rightly reject as true profanity all the mockery and damnable fabrications of people, (which they have added to and mixed among the Sacraments), and we affirm that we ought to be content only with that entire pious order and rite that Christ and the Apostles have handed over to us, and we ought to speak of the same mysteries in the way in which they have also spoken of them.

Article 36: About the Magistracy

We believe that the Most High God has established Kings, Princes, and Magistrates, because of the corruption and depravity of the human race, and that He desires that this World be governed by these laws and firm polity for the punishment of human evils and that all things be conducted among people in a right order. For this reason He has armed the magistrates themselves with the sword, so that they would inflict evil people with punishment, and truly protect good people. Again, it is the duty of these, not only to anxiously preserve civil polity, but also to give true effort that the holy ministry would be preserved, and that all idolatry and adultery of the worship of God would be removed from the public square, that the Kingdom of Antichrist would be destroyed, that the Kingdom of Christ would be truly extended. Finally, it is

of their duty to bring it about that the sacred word of the Gospel would be preached from everywhere so that everyone, in turn, can freely worship purely and venerate God according to the prescription of His word. Moreover, all people, of whatsoever status, or state, or respect they may be, ought to be subject to the lawful Magistrates, to pay tax and tribute to them, and to follow and obey them in all things that are not opposed to the word of God, and also to pour out prayers on their behalf so that God would deem it worthy to lead them in all of their actions, and so that we could truly lead, with all piety and honesty, a tranquil and quiet life under their very selves. For this reason we detest all Anabaptists and anarchists, who reject their Superiors and Magistrates and subvert right and law, who make all goods common, and finally, who efface and disfigure the honest order and hierarchy that God has established among people.

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

Finally, we believe, according to the word of God, that when the time predestined by God and unknown to all creatures arrives, and the number of the Elect will be completed, our Lord Jesus Christ is going to return from heaven, bodily and visibly, just as He once ascended there, decorated with consummate Majesty, and He will reveal Himself as a judge of the living and of the dead, having set this old world ablaze with fire and flame in order that He would purify it. Then truly all creatures, so as with men also with women and infants, as many as have thereupon lived, back from the beginning up unto the end of the world, will appear in the presence of this consummate Judge, certainly called forth by the sound of both the Archangel and by the trumpet of God. For all of the previously dead will then rise up from the ground and, by the Spirit, the soul of every one of them, in turn, will be united and joined together with their own body in which they had lived. Again, those who will be living up unto that ultimate day will be transformed in but a moment and a blink of the eye, clearly from corruption into an incorruptible nature. Then the books, certainly the consciences, will be opened up and the dead will be judged according to the things that they did in this world, whether good or bad. In fact, people are then even going to render an account of every idle word that they have spoken, which the world now regards as sport and joke. In short, then all the hypocrisies, and secrets of people, and the things of their hearts, will be openly uncovered in presence of all people, so that, with singular merit, the thought of this is rightly horrible and terrifying to the wicked and reprobate, and truly both most greatly hoped for and also an enormous consolation for the elect. For then their redemption will be made thoroughly obvious, and they will obtain the most pleasant fruits of their labor and pain that have endured in this life; then their innocence will be openly acknowledged by everyone, and they themselves, in turn, will see the terrifying vengeance that the Lord will take upon those whom have tyrannically afflicted them with various torments and molestations in this world. Again, evil people will be convicted by the own testimony of their consciences, and indeed rendered immortal, but in that state so that they will always be tortured eternally in the never-ending fire that has been prepared for the Devil. But on the contrary, the faithful and Elect will truly be given crowns of honor and glory, and the Son of God will confess their name in the presence of God the Father and of the Angels, and every tear will be wiped from their eyes. And so, their cause, which is damned as heresy and wickedness by Magistrates and judges, will then be acknowledged to be the cause of the Son of God. And the Lord will freely reward them with such glory as no person ever can imagine with the mind. Therefore, we wait upon that great

day of the Lord with consummate eagerness so that, as happy people, we will most fully acquire and will thoroughly enjoy throughout eternity all of those things promised by God in Jesus Christ the Lord. Apoc. 22:20. Come again Lord Jesus.