

## Preface to the Modern English Study Version

The Eighty-Ninth (2023) General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) requested its Committee on Christian Education (CCE) to prepare a modern English study version (MESV) of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the OPC. The CCE completed this work and submitted this modern English study version to the Ninety-First (2025) General Assembly.

As its name indicates, this is meant merely to assist those studying the Confession and Catechisms and is not intended to replace them. The modern English study version therefore carries no constitutional authority in the OPC.

### 2025 Modern English Study Version of The Confession of Faith

#### CHAPTER 1 *Of the Holy Scripture*

1. Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men without excuse; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary to salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at many times, and in many ways, to reveal himself, and to declare his will to his church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly to writing: which makes the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will to his people being now ceased.

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

*Of the Old Testament:*

Genesis	Ecclesiastes
Exodus	The Song of Songs
Leviticus	Isaiah
Numbers	Jeremiah
Deuteronomy	Lamentations
Joshua	Ezekiel
Judges	Daniel
Ruth	Hosea
I Samuel	Joel
II Samuel	Amos
I Kings	Obadiah
II Kings	Jonah
I Chronicles	Micah

II Chronicles  
 Ezra  
 Nehemiah  
 Esther  
 Job  
 Psalms  
 Proverbs

Nahum  
 Habakkuk  
 Zephaniah  
 Haggai  
 Zechariah  
 Malachi

*Of the New Testament:*

The Gospels  
 according to  
 Matthew  
 Mark  
 Luke  
 John

The Acts of the  
 Apostles

Paul's Epistles to  
 the Romans  
 the Corinthians I  
 the Corinthians II  
 the Galatians  
 the Ephesians  
 the Philippians  
 the Colossians  
 the Thessalonians I

the Thessalonians II  
 Timothy I  
 Timothy II  
 Titus  
 Philemon  
 The Epistle to  
 the Hebrews  
 The Epistle of James  
 The first and second  
 Epistles of Peter  
 The first, second,  
 and third Epistles  
 of John  
 The Epistle of Jude  
 The Revelation  
 of John

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

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

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, does not depend upon the testimony of any man, or church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author of it: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God.

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the

majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full revelation it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection of it, are arguments by which it abundantly evidences itself to be the Word of God: nevertheless, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of it, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

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

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

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

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

10. The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose judgment we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

**CHAPTER 2**  
***Of God, and of the Holy Trinity***

1. There is only one living, and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute; working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory; most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of those who diligently seek him; and additionally, most just, and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

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

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

**CHAPTER 3**  
***Of God's Eternal Decree***

1. God, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordained whatever comes to pass: yet so that by this neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

2. Although God knows whatever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet he has not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

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

4. These angels and men, thus predestined, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

5. Those of mankind that are predestined to 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, to everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him to do so; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

6. As God has appointed the elect to glory, so he has, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means to it. Therefore, those who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called to faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power, through faith, to salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

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

8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, 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. So this doctrine shall afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

#### **CHAPTER 4** ***Of Creation***

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

2. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it: and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change. Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; while they kept it, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.

#### **CHAPTER 5** ***Of Providence***

1. God the great Creator of all things upholds, directs, orders, and governs all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

2. Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the First Cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he orders them to come about, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.
3. God, in his ordinary providence, makes use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure.
4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in his providence, that it extends itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as has joined with it a most wise and powerful limiting, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends; yet so that their sinfulness proceeds only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.
5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God often leaves his own children, for a season, to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to expose to them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for various other just and holy ends.
6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous Judge, blinds and hardens for former sins, from them he not only withholds his grace by which they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts; but sometimes also withdraws the gifts that they had, and exposes them to such objects as their corruption makes occasions of sin; and, additionally, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, by which it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means that God uses for the softening of others.
7. As the providence of God, in general, reaches to all creatures; so, in a most special manner, it takes care of his church, and orders all things to its good.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of Its Punishment*

1. Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.
2. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.
3. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.

4. From this original corruption, by which we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, proceed all actual transgressions.

5. This corruption of nature, during this life, remains in those that are regenerated; and although it is pardoned and mortified through Christ; yet both itself, and all its motions, are truly and properly sin.

6. Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary to it, by its nature brings guilt upon the sinner, by which he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal.

## CHAPTER 7

### *Of God's Covenant with Man*

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures owe obedience to him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he has been pleased to express by way of covenant.

2. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, in which life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.

3. Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; in which he freely offers to sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give to all those that are ordained to eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.

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

5. This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the old testament.

6. Under the gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited,<sup>1</sup> the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper: which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet, in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence and

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<sup>1</sup> In the new testament, Christ is set forth, who is the substance of the covenant of grace, which is more fully dispensed through the Word and sacraments.

spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the new testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.

## CHAPTER 8

### *Of Christ the Mediator*

1. It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Head and Savior of his church, the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world: to whom he from all eternity gave a people, to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

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

3. The Lord Jesus, in his human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified, and anointed with the Holy Spirit, above measure, having in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell; to the end that, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, he might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a mediator, and surety. He did not take this office to himself, but was called to it by his Father, who put all power and judgment into his hand, and gave him commandment to execute the same.

4. The Lord Jesus undertook this office most willingly; that he might discharge it, he was made under the law, and perfectly fulfilled it; endured most grievous torments immediately in his soul, and most painful sufferings in his body; was crucified, and died, was buried, and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption. On the third day he arose from the dead, with the same body in which he suffered, with which also he ascended into heaven, and there sits at the right hand of his Father, making intercession, and shall return, to judge men and angels, at the end of the world.

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

6. Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after his incarnation, yet its virtue, efficacy, and benefits were communicated to the elect, in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices, in which he was

revealed, and signified to be the seed of the woman that would bruise the serpent's head; and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world; being yesterday and today the same, and forever.

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

8. To all those for whom Christ has purchased redemption, he certainly and effectually applies and communicates the same; making intercession for them, and revealing to them, in and by the Word, the mysteries of salvation; effectually persuading them by his Spirit to believe and obey, and governing their hearts by his Word and Spirit; overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, in such manner, and ways, as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation.

## **CHAPTER 9** ***Of Free Will***

1. God has endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor, by any absolute necessity of nature, determined to good, or evil.

2. Man, in his state of innocence, had freedom, and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but yet, mutably, so that he might fall from it.

3. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so that, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself for it.

4. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he frees him from his natural bondage under sin; and, by his grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so that by reason of his remaining corruption, he does not perfectly, nor only, will that which is good, but also wills that which is evil.

5. The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to good alone, in the state of glory only.

## **CHAPTER 10** ***Of Effectual Calling***

1. All those whom God has predestined to life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving to them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by his almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so that they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive in it, until, being made alive and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is enabled in this way to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.
3. Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who works when, and where, and how he pleases: so also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.
4. Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, despite their utmost diligence to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the laws of that religion they profess. And, to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.

## **CHAPTER 11**

### ***Of Justification***

1. Those whom God effectually calls, he also freely justifies: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ to them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness, by faith; this faith they do not have of themselves, it is the gift of God.
2. Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love.
3. Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those that are thus justified, and made a proper, real, and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf. Yet, because he was given by the Father for them; and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their place; and both, freely, not for anything in them; their justification is only of free grace; that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.
4. God, from all eternity, decreed to justify all the elect, and Christ, in the fullness of time, died for their sins, and rose again for their justification: nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit, in due time, actually applies Christ to them.
5. God continues to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and, although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored to them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.

6. The justification of believers under the old testament was, in all these respects, one and the same as the justification of believers under the new testament.

## **CHAPTER 12** *Of Adoption*

1. All those that are justified, God graciously guarantees, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have his name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him, as by a father: yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.

## **CHAPTER 13** *Of Sanctification*

1. Those who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and its several lusts are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more enlivened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

2. This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; from which arises a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

3. In this war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may greatly prevail; 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.

## **CHAPTER 14** *Of Saving Faith*

1. The grace of faith, by which the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.

2. By this faith, a Christian believes to be true whatever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking in it; and acts differently upon that which each particular passage of it contains; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

3. This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed, and weakened, but gets the victory: growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance, through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.

## **CHAPTER 15** *Of Repentance unto Life*

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

2. By it, a sinner, out of the sight and sense not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature, and righteous law of God; and upon the apprehension of his mercy in Christ to those who are penitent, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all to God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments.

3. Although repentance is not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of its pardon, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ; yet it is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.

4. As there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation; so there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent.

5. Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man's duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins, particularly.

6. As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon of them; upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy; so, he that scandalizes his brother, or the church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended, who are then to be reconciled to him and to receive him in love.

## **CHAPTER 16** *Of Good Works*

1. Good works are only such as God has commanded in his holy Word, and not such as, without its warrant, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretense of good intention.

2. These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brothers, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus for these good works, that, having their fruit that leads to holiness, they may have the end, eternal life.

3. Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And that they may be so enabled, beside the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit, to work in them to will, and to do, of his good pleasure: yet they are not therefore to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any

duty unless by a special motion of the Spirit; but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.

4. Those who, in their obedience, attain to the greatest height that is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate, and to do more than God requires, that they fall short of much that in duty they are bound to do.

5. We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come; and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom, by them, we can neither profit, nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins, but when we have done all we can, we have done only our duty, and are unprofitable servants: and because, as they are good, they proceed from his Spirit; and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

6. Nevertheless, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unreprovable in God's sight; but that he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.

7. Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them they may be things that God commands; and of good use both to themselves and others: yet, because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word; nor to a right end, the glory of God, they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man fit to receive grace from God: and yet, their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God.

## CHAPTER 17

### *Of the Perseverance of the Saints*

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

2. This perseverance of the saints does not depend upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all of which arises also its certainty and infallibility.

3. Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalence of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue in them: by which they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

**CHAPTER 18**  
*Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation*

1. Although hypocrites and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God, and state of salvation (which hope of theirs shall perish): yet those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may, in this life, be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.

2. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope; but an infallible assurance of faith founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces to which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, which Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance, by which we are sealed to the day of redemption.

3. This infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he becomes a partaker of it: yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things that are freely given him by God, he may attain to it without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that in this way his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance; so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation shaken, diminished, and intermitted in various ways; as, by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin that wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit; by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and allowing even those who fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light: yet they are never utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brothers, that sincerity of heart, and conscience of duty, out of which, by the operation of the Spirit, this assurance may be revived in due time; and by which, in the meantime, they are supported from utter despair.

**CHAPTER 19**  
*Of the Law of God*

1. God gave to Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience, promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.

2. This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai, in ten commandments, and written in two tables: the first four commandments containing our duty towards God; and the other six, our duty to man.

3. Beside this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly, holding forth various instructions of moral duties. All of these ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the new testament.

4. To them also, as a body politic, he gave various judicial laws, which expired together with the State of that people; not obliging any other now, further than their general equity may require.

5. The moral law forever binds all, justified persons as well as others, to the obedience of it; and that, not only in regard to the matter contained in it, but also with respect to the authority of God the Creator, who gave it. Neither does Christ, in the gospel, in any way dissolve, but greatly strengthen this obligation.

6. Although true believers are not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be justified, or condemned by it; yet it is of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life informing them of the will of God, and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; exposing also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so that, examining themselves by it, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin: and the threatenings of it serve to show what even their sins deserve; and what afflictions, in this life, they may expect for them, although freed from the curse for them threatened in the law. The promises of it, in like manner, show them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect for the performance of it: although not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works. Therefore, a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourages to the one, and deters from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law; and, not under grace.

7. Neither are the aforementioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but sweetly comply with it; the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely, and cheerfully, which the will of God, revealed in the law, requires to be done.

## CHAPTER 20

### *Of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience*

1. The liberty that Christ has purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law; and, in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin; from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation; and also, in their free access to God, and their yielding obedience to him, not out of slavish fear, but a childlike love and willing mind. All of these were common also to believers under the law. But, under the new testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish church was subjected; and in greater boldness of

access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law ordinarily partook of.

2. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, that are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

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

4. And because the powers that God has ordained, and the liberty that Christ has purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another, those who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it is civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And, for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity (whether concerning faith, worship, or conduct), or to the power of godliness; or, such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order that Christ has established in the church, they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against, by the censures of the church.

## CHAPTER 21

### *Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day*

1. The light of nature shows that there is a God, who has lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and does good to all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, 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 is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

2. Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and to him alone; not to angels, saints, or any other creature: and, since the fall, not without a Mediator; nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone.

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

4. Prayer is to be made for lawful things; and for all sorts of men living, or that shall yet live: but not for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin that leads to death.

5. The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching and conscientious hearing of the Word, in obedience to God, with understanding, faith, and reverence, singing of psalms with grace in the heart; and also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ, are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God: beside religious oaths, vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in a holy and religious manner.

6. Neither prayer, nor any other part of religious worship, is now, under the gospel, either tied to, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed: but God is to be worshiped everywhere, in spirit and truth; as, in private families daily, and in secret, each one by himself; so, more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or willfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God calls men to them by his Word or providence.

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

8. This Sabbath is then kept holy to the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, not only observe a holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

## CHAPTER 22

### *Of Lawful Oaths and Vows*

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

2. The name of God alone is that by which men ought to swear, and in doing so it is to be used with all holy fear and reverence. Therefore, to swear vainly, or rashly, by that glorious and dreadful Name; or, to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful, and to be abhorred. Yet, as in matters of weight and moment, an oath is warranted by the Word of God, under the new testament as well as under the old; so a lawful oath, being imposed by lawful authority, in such matters, ought to be taken.

3. Whoever takes an oath ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and to avow in it nothing but what he is fully persuaded is the truth: neither may any man bind himself by oath to anything but what is good and just, and what he believes to be so, and what he is able and resolved to perform.
4. An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation, or mental reservation. It cannot oblige to sin; but in anything not sinful, being taken, it binds to performance, although to a man's own hurt. Nor is it to be violated, although made to heretics, or infidels.
5. A vow is of the same nature as a promissory oath, and ought to be made with the same religious care, and to be performed with the same faithfulness.
6. It is not to be made to any creature, but to God alone: and, that it may be accepted, it is to be made voluntarily, out of faith, and conscience of duty, in way of thankfulness for mercy received, or for the obtaining of what we want, by which we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties; or, to other things, so far and so long as they may fitly conduce to them.
7. No man may vow to do anything forbidden in the Word of God, or what would hinder any duty commanded in it, or that is not in his own power, and for the performance of which he has no promise of ability from God. In these respects, popish monastic vows of perpetual single life, professed poverty, and regular obedience, are so far from being degrees of higher perfection, that they are superstitious and sinful snares, in which no Christian may entangle himself.

### CHAPTER 23

#### *Of the Civil Magistrate*

1. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil magistrates, to be, under him, over the people, for his own glory, and the public good: and, to this end, has armed them with the power of the sword, for the defense and encouragement of those who are good, and for the punishment of evildoers.
2. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called to it: in managing it, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth; so, for that end, they may lawfully wage war now, under the new testament, upon just and necessary occasion.
3. Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments; or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven; or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ has appointed a regular government and discipline in his church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, obstruct, or hinder, its due exercise, among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and

belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner that no person be permitted, either upon pretense of religion or of infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever: and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance.

4. It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honor their persons, to pay them taxes or other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience' sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, does not make void the magistrates' just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to them: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted, much less has the pope any power and jurisdiction over them in their dominions, or over any of their people; and, least of all, to deprive them of their dominions, or lives, if he shall judge them to be heretics, or upon any other pretense whatsoever.

#### **CHAPTER 24** ***Of Marriage and Divorce***

1. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time.

2. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with legitimate offspring, and of the church with a holy seed; and for preventing of uncleanness.

3. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. And therefore those who profess the true reformed religion should not marry with infidels, papists, or other idolaters: neither should those who are godly be unequally yoked, by marrying with those who are notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresies.

4. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden by the Word. Nor can such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful by any law of man or consent of parties, so that those persons may live together as man and wife.

5. Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, gives just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract. In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce: and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead.

6. Although the corruption of man is such as is apt to study arguments unduly to put asunder those whom God has joined together in marriage: yet, nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion as can in no way be remedied by the church, or civil magistrate, is a sufficient cause for dissolving the bond of marriage: in which, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills, and discretion, in their own case.

**CHAPTER 25**  
*Of the Church*

1. The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head of it; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.
2. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.
3. To this catholic visible church Christ has given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, makes them effectual for this.
4. This catholic church has been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, that are members of it, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them.
5. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall always be a church on earth, to worship God according to his will.
6. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the pope of Rome, in any sense, be its head.

**CHAPTER 26**  
*Of the Communion of Saints*

1. All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such public and private duties as conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.
2. 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; and also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Such communion, as God offers opportunity, is to be extended to all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.
3. This communion that the saints have with Christ, does not make them in any way partakers of the substance of his Godhead; or to be equal with Christ in any respect: to affirm either of which is impious and blasphemous. Nor does their communion with one another, as saints, take away, or infringe the title or ownership that each man has of his goods and possessions.

## CHAPTER 27

### *Of the Sacraments*

1. Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ, and his benefits; and to confirm our interest in him: and also, to put a visible difference between those that belong to the church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word.
2. There is, in every sacrament, a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified: from which it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.
3. The grace that is exhibited<sup>2</sup> in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither does the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that administers it: but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains a promise of benefit to worthy receivers, together with a precept authorizing the use of the sacrament.
4. There are only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel: baptism, and the Supper of the Lord, neither of which may be dispensed by any, but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained.
5. The sacraments of the old testament, in regard to the spiritual things signified and exhibited<sup>3</sup> by them, were, for substance, the same as those of the new.

## CHAPTER 28

### *Of Baptism*

1. Baptism is a sacrament of the new testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church; but also, to be to him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up to God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. This sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in his church until the end of the world.
2. The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, with which the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, by a lawfully called minister of the gospel.
3. Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring, or sprinkling water upon the person.
4. Not only those that actually profess faith in and obedience to Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized.

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<sup>2</sup> The word *exhibit* suggests that the grace signified and sealed by the elements of the sacrament is truly communicated and applied to worshippers who partake of them by faith.

<sup>3</sup> See the footnote to 27.3.

5. Although it is a great sin to disdain or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed to it, that no person can be regenerated, or saved, without it; or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.

6. The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time when it is administered; nevertheless, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited,<sup>4</sup> and conferred, by the Holy Spirit, to those (whether of age or infants) to whom that grace belongs, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time.

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

## CHAPTER 29

### *Of the Lord's Supper*

1. Our Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, to be observed in his church, until the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death; sealing all its benefits to true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, their further engagement in and to all duties that they owe to him; and, to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body.

2. In this sacrament, Christ is not offered up to his Father; nor any real sacrifice made at all, for remission of sins of the living or the dead; but only a commemoration of that one offering up of himself, by himself, upon the cross, once for all: and a spiritual offering of all possible praise to God, for the same: so that the popish sacrifice of the Mass (as they call it) is most abominably injurious to Christ's one, only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of his elect.

3. The Lord Jesus has, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people; to pray, and bless the elements of bread and wine, and in this way to set them apart from a common to a holy use; and to take and break the bread, to take the cup, and (they partaking also themselves) to give both to the communicants; but to none who are not then present in the congregation.

4. Private Masses, or receiving this sacrament by a priest, or any other, alone; as likewise, the denial of the cup to the people, worshiping the elements, lifting them up, or carrying them about, for adoration, and reserving them for any pretended religious use; are all contrary to the nature of this sacrament, and to the institution of Christ.

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

6. That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine, into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or

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<sup>4</sup> See the footnote to 27.3.

by any other way, is repugnant, not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense, and reason; overthrows the nature of the sacrament, and has been, and is, the cause of manifold superstitions and even gross idolatries.

7. Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament, then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.

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

### **CHAPTER 30** *Of Church Censures*

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

2. To these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed; by virtue of which, they have power, respectively, to retain, and remit sins; to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the Word, and censures; and to open it to penitent sinners, by the ministry of the gospel; and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require.

3. Church censures are necessary, for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brothers, for deterring of others from the like offenses, for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump, for vindicating the honor of Christ, and the holy profession of the gospel, and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should allow his covenant, and its seals, to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

4. For the better attaining of these ends, the officers of the church are to proceed by admonition; suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for a season; and by excommunication from the church; according to the nature of the offense, and demerit of the person.

### **CHAPTER 31** *Of Synods and Councils*

1. For the better government, and further edification of the church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils: and it belongs to the overseers and other rulers of the particular churches, by virtue of their office, and the power that Christ has given

them for edification and not for destruction, to appoint such assemblies; and to convene together in them, as often as they shall judge it expedient for the good of the church.

2. It belongs to synods and councils, ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same: these decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power by which they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed for these purposes in his Word.

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

4. Synods and councils are to handle, or conclude nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs that concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in extraordinary cases; or, by way of advice, for satisfaction of conscience, if the civil magistrate requires them to do so.

## CHAPTER 32

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

1. The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption: but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them: the souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. Beside these two places, for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledges none.

2. At the last day, those who are found alive shall not die, but be changed: and all the dead shall be raised up, with the selfsame bodies, and none other (although with different qualities), which shall be united again to their souls forever.

3. The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonor: the bodies of the just, by his Spirit, to honor; and be made conformable to his own glorious body.

## CHAPTER 33

### *Of the Last Judgment*

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

2. The end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of his justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then 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 do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

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