

Article XXV

Of the Abolishing of the Ceremonial Law

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- "We believe that the ceremonies and figures of the law ceased at the coming of Christ, and that all the shadows are accomplished....."
1. In the days of the old dispensation the people of God were under the law, and hence there were ceremonies and figures and shadows of things to come: a. Reality was not yet: Christ had not yet come; the blood of atonement was not yet shed; the Lord had not been exalted; and the Spirit of the exalted Christ was not yet. b. Yet the Lord would have a people for His name also in the old dispensation, a people that could manifest in their life and walk the beauty of His covenant. c. Hence, the law was given them. The law here is the entire body of precepts and all that was connected with it, given to Israel for the regulation of their life and walk as a covenant people in the midst of the world. d. This law offered shadows, ceremonies, figures of things to come. They were such as: Israel's national existence, a shadow of the royal priesthood of God's true covenant people; the land of Canaan, a shadow of the heritage of the people of God, all the covenant blessings as well as their final heritage in heaven; Jerusalem and Mt. Zion; the tabernacle and the temple; the altar and the sacrifices; the prophets, priests, and kings; the washings and cleansings; the tithes and firstlings; the hallowing of buildings and vessels; fastings, etc.
 2. All these, the article tells us, are abolished: a. The substance of them remains with us in Christ Jesus. All these ceremonies and shadows and figures had a substance. They were not mere empty, vain, deceiving shadows. On the contrary, these shadows were cast into the old dispensation by the coming of Christ: He was the real substance of them all. Hence, the substance of them could never perish: Israel still is, but is no more the Jewish nation, but the true Israel of God; Jerusalem still is, but no more the earthly city,-- it is the spiritual city of God; Canaan still is, but not in the land of Palestine, but it is the inheritance of the people of God; God's temple and tabernacle still are, but it is the covenant fellowship of God with His people in Christ. Christ is our Prophet, Priest, and King, and we are a royal priesthood in Him. He is the fulfillment of all the sacrifices. Washings and cleansings still are in the spiritual acts of a sanctified heart. Tithes and first-fruits are the true sacrifices of our thanksgiving. Fasting is the real sorrow of a contrite heart, etc. b. But the shadows and figures have been abolished. The earthly forms of heavenly things, the natural forms of spiritual things are no longer, and shall never return: 1) This is no doubt directed against Roman Catholicism, in the first place. Think of her eucharist, a repeated sacrifice; of her images, of her pope and priesthood, of her hallowing of buildings and vessels, etc. 2) But it holds as well against all that have chiliastic dreams, and attach special significance still to the Jewish nation, the land of Canaan, a return of the Jews to their land, etc. For Israel, Canaan, temple, and altar have been abolished in as far as they were shadows and figures. The Lord never returns to them.
 3. Yet the O.T. is of great value: a. In as far as it shows that the Lord fulfilled His promises, it confirms us in our faith and helps us to understand the reality. b. In as far as in the substance of the shadows there were also eternal principles of truth and righteousness, it regulates our life and walk in the world.

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION
Article XXVI
Of Christ's Intercession

"We believe that we have no access unto God, but alone through the only Mediator....."

1. This article deals with the intercession of our Savior for us in heaven with the Father: a. The place of the article here in this connection must be explained from the fact that prayer is the highest expression of gratitude and sanctification. b. And the length of the article in comparison with other articles in the Confession is naturally explained from the conflict with the Roman Catholic Church and its doctrine of the intercession of the saints for us. c. The article then speaks of two things that are very closely related: 1) of Christ's intercession for His people. 2) of our prayer in the name of Christ only.
2. Christ's intercession for us: a. The intercession of our Savior is the high-priestly function of Christ according to which He appears before the Father in behalf of all His people, to receive for them all things necessary for their salvation. John 17: 11,20; Heb. 9:24; 7:25; Rom. 8:34; I John 2: 1. b. Its character: 1) It is, in the first place, an authoritative intercession on the ground of His mediatorial work. John 17:24. 2) It is, in the second place, a wise and compassionate intercession, for the Lord knows all our needs with a view to our salvation, and He can have compassion with our infirmities, knowing them by experience. 3) It is, in the third place, a unique intercession, there being only one Mediator to pray for us. I Tim. 2:5. 4) Further, it is a perpetual intercession, for the Lord always liveth to make intercession for us. 5) Fifthly, it is efficacious, for the Savior surely receives from the Father whatsoever He asks for His people. I John 2: 1,2. c. Regarding the manner of this intercession, we must remember: 1) That the Lord is both God and man, as also is emphasized in the article. He is Mediator, and stands between the Father and us. 2) That the Savior as the Head of His people continually receives all the blessings of salvation He merited from the Father. 3) Finally, that the Lord as the Head of His church bestows these blessings of salvation upon all whom the Father has given Him.
3. It follows that we pray only in Jesus' name: a. We pray as being in Him: 1) In the judicial sense. 2) In the organic sense. b. Secondly, we pray not on any other ground than His mediatorial work and atonement. c. From this it follows that we pray only for those things that are pleasing in the sight of God. d. Finally, if we do not pray as we ought, the Spirit itself helps our infirmities and prays for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. Rom. 8:26,27.
4. And prayer through the intercession of the saints is to be condemned: a. Because there are no saints in the Roman Catholic sense of the word. All that have gone before are saints perfected, and not only a special class canonized by the church. b. Because the creature can never have any merit with God, as these saints are supposed to have. c. Because it leads to idolatry, especially of the Virgin Mary, for the saints are made the object of worship. d. Because it is derogatory of the work of Christ, as if it were not sufficient to lead us to the Father. e. Because it is a superstition not at all supported by the Word of God. f. Finally, because it is detrimental to our spiritual life, draws us away from Christ, and makes us trust in men.

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION
Article XXVII

Of the Catholic Christian Church

"We believe and profess, one catholic or universal church,"

1. This article speaks of the church as an object of faith:
 - a. It is not the church as we see her in the world, for then she appears divided, separated, often unholy and apostate.
 - b. But the church as we believe she is and always will be in the world and in heaven: 1) one and undivided over the whole world. 2) universal, catholic. 3) an holy congregation.
2. We must remember the following:
 - a. That the church is essentially the body of Christ, and that He is the Head of the church, both organically and judicially: 1) She is not a mere society, congregated through an external bond by the will of men. She is an organism, gathered by the power of grace and united by the Spirit of Christ. 2) Hence, she is also one whole, from which none can be removed and to which none can be added. 3) She is an organic whole, in which each part and member occupies his own place.
 - b. That the members of this church as an object of faith are the elect of God: 1) They are chosen in Christ. 2) They are gathered by the Son of God through the Word in time. 3) They are washed, sanctified, and sealed as an holy congregation. 4) To these belong the seed of the covenant according to God's promise.
 - c. That of this one church there are various parts: 1) Part of it is in heaven, triumphant. 2) Part of it is on the earth, militant because of the powers of darkness that threaten her. 3) Part of it must still be born, for the church shall be to the end of the world.
 - d. That this church on earth manifests itself in confession and walk of the members and through her institute: 1) Hence, we speak of the church visible, as she becomes manifest, the congregation of believers and their children. 2) Of the church invisible, the church from the aspect of her spiritual life and union with Christ.
3. Of this church the article asserts:
 - a. That she is one and universal, catholic. Though she becomes manifest in the world as divided and separated for many reasons, such as distance, race, language, and even difference in church polity and creed, yet essentially the whole church is one body, united by one faith and one and the same Spirit.
 - b. That this church is holy: 1) She is holy in Christ. 2) She is holy by virtue of the principle of regeneration and sanctification.
 - c. That she always is, has been, and shall be: no separation of Israel and the church, as the chiliasts will have it.
 - d. That Jesus is the King of the church. Also this is denied by the chiliasts, who make the Lord King of the Jews only, while He is the Head of the church.
 - e. That this church has a hard battle, but always has the victory: 1) She may appear very small sometimes. 2) The Lord preserves His church in the old dispensation, today, and even unto the end of the world.

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION

Article XXVIII

That Every One is Bound to Join Himself to the True Church

"We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved....."

1. The subject of this article: a. Everyone is bound to join himself to the true church: 1) What is meant is not that one makes himself a member of the true spiritual body of Christ. 2) But that one is in duty bound to unite himself with the manifestation of that body in the church in the world. b. This takes place: 1) Through the outward sign of baptism, whether of children or of adults. 2) Through confession of faith. 3) Through the union in public worship, celebration of the Lord's Supper, and in general, participation in the organic life of the church. c. This is directed against all that are inclined to and actually do separate themselves from the communion of the church: 1) There are always such persons, who despise the church, and separate themselves from it. But especially in times of reformation, when the corruption of what used to be considered the true church is exposed, many separate. Many people, not distinguishing, break with the church entirely. 2) This was true in the time of the Reformation, and it is true today. Separatistic individuals and sects are formed. Separatistic movements, as for instance, many revivalist and evangelistic movements, laboring in separation from the church.
2. The ground of this doctrine: a. The church is: 1) the assembly of those that are saved. 2) Outside of it there is no salvation. b. By this is meant: 1) Not any particular manifestation of the church, or the institute of the church, as the Roman Catholics would have it. 2) But the essence of the church as the body of the Lord: a) The church is one body. b) To that one body belongs the one Spirit of Christ, even as He is the one Head of the body. c) Outside of that body no one has any part with Christ. There is no salvation outside of the church. The saving operation of the Spirit is in the body only. d) Hence, believers are in duty bound to manifest this essential unity by uniting themselves in the visible body, the church on earth.
3. What this implies: a. That we all: 1) submit ourselves to the doctrine and discipline of the church. 2) providing it represents the yoke of Christ, and no other yoke. b. That all exert themselves for the mutual edification of the members: 1) whether as officebearers, or outside of the office. 2) each according to the talents God gave him. c. That we separate ourselves from all those that do not belong to the church: 1) whether from the false church, as in times of apostasy and reformation. 2) or from the world, in as far as believers cannot make common cause with them.
4. The importance of this truth: a. One who separates himself from the church acts against the ordinances of God. b. He must unite himself, even though the hatred of the world, suffering, and persecution be the result.

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION

Article XXIX

Of the Marks of the True Church, and Wherein She Differs
from the False Church,

"We believe, that we ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true Church, since all sects which are in the world assume to themselves the name of the Church, But we speak not here of hypocrites, who are mixed in the Church with the good, yet are not of the Church, though externally in it; but we say that the body and communion of the true Church must be distinguished from all sects, who call themselves the Church. The marks, by which the true Church is known, are these:....."

1. This article speaks of the distinction between the true and false church, and asserts that they may easily be distinguished from each other. It also brings into question the problem that is much discussed in our day, namely that concerning the multiformity of the church.
 - a. It is true, of course, that the true church may easily be distinguished from the false church. The false church is no church, and may easily be distinguished from the true church.
 - b. But we must remember that ~~xx~~there are always various degrees of truth and falsity in the manifestation of the church. A true church does not of a sudden become the false church, though she may begin to show the marks of the false church.
 - c. Hence, rather than claiming that we as Prot. Ref. Churches are the only true church in the world, while all others are false churches, we would claim that we are the purest manifestation of the body of Christ in the world, and that it is our duty to join ourselves to it.
2. The marks of the true church are:
 - a. The preaching of the pure doctrine of the gospel: 1) In general we may say that the Apostolic Confession may serve here as a standard. 2) But even then, it is easily seen that there are various degrees of purity. Many doctrines are not even mentioned in that Apostolic Confession
 - b. The pure administration of the sacraments; 1) Baptism in the name of the Triune God. 2) The Lord's Supper as a commemoration of the death of Christ in the signs of His broken body and shed blood for the remission of sin.
 - c. The exercise of Christian discipline, without which the first two cannot be maintained.
 - d. In general, the management of all things according to the Word of God, and the acknowledgement of Christ as the only Head of the church.
3. Marks of the true members of the church:
 - a. Faith, becoming manifest in confession, of course.
 - b. Walk, avoiding of sin, following after righteousness, etc.
 - c. Many infirmities, against which they fight and with which they take refuge in the blood of Christ.
4. Marks of the false church:
 - a. Exalts human ordinances above the Word of God and refuses to submit herself to the yoke of Christ.
 - b. Does not maintain the proper administration of the sacraments.
 - c. Persecutes the saints instead of punishing the wicked.

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION

Article XXX

Concerning the Government of, and Offices in the Church.

"We believe, that this true Church must be governed by that spiritual policy....."

1. Articles 30-32 deal with the church as an institute:
 - a. We can distinguish the church as church visible and invisible, militant and triumphant, organism and institute.
 - b. In these articles the Confession deals with the church as an institute. Hence, in them the Confession speaks of the offices, the government, and the discipline of the church.
2. Article 30 mentions that the church must be governed according to the spiritual policy Christ revealed in His Word:
 - a. Policy here means a system of rules and principles for government.
 - b. The policy in the church must be spiritual, in distinction from the character of the sword-power of the world. The church has no sword, but keys. She does not avenge evil, but must always be motivated by the love of Christ and the salvation of His people.
3. Further, it mentions the church council:
 - a. In general, for the purpose: 1)that the unity of the church may be manifest and maintained. 2)that all things may be accomplished with good order and decency. 3)that the body of Christ may be edified.
 - b. In particular; 1)that the truth may be preserved and propagated. 2)that church discipline may be exercised. 3)that the poor and needy may be relieved and comforted.
4. Further, it tells us that the church council consists of:
 - a. Ministers or pastors: 1)for the preaching of the Word. 2)the administration of the sacraments. Word and sacraments belong together, and should never be separated.
 - b. Elders, to whom especially the government and discipline of the church is entrusted.
 - c. Deacons, particularly to care for the needy and distressed. (We may remark here that the Confession includes the deacons in the consistory or church council. The Church Order excludes them, except in places where the consistory is very small.)
5. Principally the Consistory is the sole ruling body in the church, and the Confession does not mention other assemblies. However, when several local congregations unite into a denominational church connection, other assemblies originate:
 - a. the classis, consisting of two delegates,--generally the minister and an elder,--from each local church.
 - b. the general synod, consisting of six delegates from each classis, three pastors and three elders, or, as it is in our small churches, four ministers and four elders from each classis. (In the Netherlands the Reformed Churches also have particular synods, intervening between classes and general synod.) These assemblies are not superior and supreme courts, but broader or larger assemblies. The basis of agreement is the confession.

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION

Article XXXI

Of the Ministers, Elders, and Deacons

"We believe, that the ministers of God's Word, and the elders and deacons, ought to be chosen to their respective offices by a lawful election by the church....."

This article speaks of four things: the election, the calling, the authority, and the worthiness of esteem of the officebearers in the church:

1. The election of the officebearers:

- a. They must be chosen by a lawful election by the church. This can be done in various ways: 1)The consistory can choose them and present them for approbation to the congregation. 2)The consistory can make a nomination, present it for approbation to the congregation, and in a legally called meeting have the congregation choose from the nomination. 3)The congregation can have free election, which is not advisable: a)because it ignores the kingship of Christ as represented by the officebearers. b)because the congregation is without any direct guidance in choosing their officebearers. Therefore, except in places where there is as yet no consistory, free election is to be condemned.
- b. This must be done with calling on the name of the Lord. After all, He must point out through the congregation whom He would have chosen.

2. The calling of officebearers:

- a. They must have an inward or personal calling; 1)a desire to serve the Lord in a certain office. 2)the necessary gifts to serve in that office. 3)the way must be opened by the Lord.
- b. They must be outwardly called by the church. One therefore must not intrude himself against the will of the Lord into the church.
- c. This is necessary: 1)because the Lord will give His Holy Spirit only to those whom He calls. 2)because the officebearer surely needs the assurance that the calling is of the Lord.

3. The power of the officebearers:

- a. Ministers have equally the same power the article states, where-soever they are.
- b. This is said: 1)over against the system of the Roman Catholic Church, with its higher and lower clergy. 2)with a view to their distinction from the elders, whose office is naturally strictly of a local nature; a)not, of course, as if the ministers have a certain higher office and could rule over the churches in common. b)but with regard to the ministry of the Word and the administration of the sacraments.

4. Their worthiness of esteem:

- a. Not for their person's sake: 1)The object of esteem is not their person as such, their learning or ability. 2)Though the office-bearer may well remember that his person can never be separated from his work.
- b. But for their work's sake: 1)The Lord will teach and rule over us by them. 2)And for that purpose He gives them His Holy Spirit. 3)In their office they represent Him.

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION

Article XXXII

Of the Order and Discipline of the Church

"In the meantime we believe, though it is useful and beneficial that those, who are rulers of the Church, institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves....."

1. This article deals with the order and discipline of the church:
 - a. When it speaks of ordinances which rulers may establish among themselves, it does not refer to the Confession: 1) The Confession is not made by rulers among themselves. 2) But it is the organic expression of the faith of the church, and must arise out of the church as the body of Christ.
 - b. But with matters pertaining to the Church Order and discipline it deals: 1) The local congregation has its own institute, its officebearers and ministry. Hence, various questions arise with regard to the duty of the officebearers, their relation to one another, to the congregation; questions of worship, administration of sacraments, meetings, order of discipline, etc. 2) Still more questions arise when the local congregations enter into a certain church union on the basis of an existing unity of faith: questions pertaining to the larger assemblies, classis and synod, their time of meeting, their power, etc.
2. The rulers establishing such ordinances may not depart from the institution of Christ:
 - a. Rulers in the church are ministers of Christ, Who is our only Head and Bishop. They are not legislators, but simply must discover and express the laws of Christ as instituted for His church.
 - b. This implies: 1) Not that they may only establish those rules that are literally found in the Word of God. 2) But also whatever under the guidance of the Holy Spirit may be deduced from the principles of the Word.
3. Hence, believers in the church limit and determine in their confession also the church order:
 - a. They reject all human inventions and laws of men not founded on the Word of God.
 - b. And they admit only: 1) such ordinances as can tend to the preservation of the unity and concord of the church. 2) such as the church must have to keep all men in obedience to God. This last refers to the discipline in the church.
4. Excommunication, with the various circumstances belonging to it. To this the Church Order devotes articles 71-81, from which we quote article 77: "After the suspension from the Lord's Table, and subsequent admonitions, and before proceeding to excommunication, the obstinacy of the sinner shall be publicly made known to the congregation, the offense explained, together with the care bestowed upon him, in reproof, suspension from the Lord's Supper, and repeated admonition, and the congregation shall be exhorted to speak to him and to pray for him. There shall be three such admonitions. In the first the name of the sinner shall not be mentioned that he be somewhat spared. In the second, with the consent of the Classis, his name shall be mentioned. In the third the congregation shall be informed that (unless he repent) he will be excluded from the fellowship of the church, so that his excommunication, in case he remains obstinate, may take place with the tacit approbation of the church. The interval between the admonitions shall be left to the discretion of the Consistory."

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION

Article XXXIII

Of the Sacraments

"We believe, that our gracious God, on account of our weakness and infirmities hath ordained the sacraments for us,....."

1. The name sacraments: a. It is not a Scriptural name, but one adopted from the Latin world. b. In the Roman world it signified an oath of allegiance to the flag or standard of the army by the soldier, or the sum of money deposited in connection with a legal process in a sacred place, which the depositor pledged to the gods in case he would lose his case. c. In the church the term was used at first in a rather general sense in application to the mysteries of the gospel, but gradually limited to our sacraments.
2. Meaning: a. They are first of all signs, that is, visible representations of invisible, spiritual realities. These spiritual realities are God's covenant, righteousness by faith, forgiveness of sin, fellowship with Christ in His death and resurrection, etc. The article expresses it by saying the true object presented by them is Jesus Christ. b. Further, they are seals, that is, a sign which marks at the same time the genuineness of a thing. Scripture often speaks of seals and of being sealed. The sign of circumcision was a seal of the righteousness which is by faith, Rom. 4:11. The things they seal are the same spiritual blessings they obsignate as signs. c. They must be instituted by God. There are many signs that are not institutions, viz., the stars, the sand of the seashore, etc. d. And therefore they are institutions that must be observed by the church. The rainbow was also an appointed sign, but not a sacrament.
3. Relation of the sign and the things obsignated: a. Sacraments are not vehicles of grace in themselves. In themselves they impart no grace: 1) Such is the Roman Catholic view, --transubstantiation. 2) As also the Lutheran Church, --consubstantiation. b. Neither, as the article expresses it, are they vain or insignificant. This is really the Zwinglian view. The Lord's Supper is a mere feast of commemoration. c. But they are means of grace, used by the Holy Spirit: 1) just like the Word, which is the chief means of grace, and in connection with which the sacraments should always be administered. 2) Only what the Word proclaims the sacraments obsignate. Without the Word they are not intelligible. They bring to our attention through the sense of sight the blessings of God's grace. 3) As seals they also bear testimony of the certainty of God's promises to us. 4) Through these means the Holy Spirit works in our hearts, concentrates all the attention of our faith on the sacrifice of Christ. 5) The Holy Spirit thus strengthens our faith, and by faith we appropriate the invisible blessings of God's covenant.
4. The number of the sacraments: a. The Roman Catholics have seven. Beside baptism and the Lord's Supper, they have confirmation, penance, marriage, priestly consecration, extreme unction. b. But these do not partake of the nature of sacraments. Hence, we are satisfied with the number Christ instituted.

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION

Art. 34

Of Holy Baptism

"We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law, hath made an end, by the shedding of his blood, of all other sheddings of blood which men could or would make as a propitiation or satisfaction for sin:" etc.

1. The article first states that Christ instituted baptism in the place of circumcision. This is evident:
 - a. From the fact that Christ's sacrifice abolished all shedding of blood, which was also connected with circumcision.
 - b. From the history of baptism and circumcision, the former replacing the latter.
 - c. From the fact that Paul teaches that believers in baptism are circumcized. Col. 2:11-12.
2. It further speaks of the significance of baptism:
 - a. It signifies in general: (1) incorporation into the church of God, the body of Christ; (2) separation from the world and all other peoples and strange religions.
 - b. The blessings of salvation following from this union with the body of Christ: forgiveness, regeneration, sanctification, etc.
 - c. Hence, Christ is our Red Sea, through whose blood we passed and are separated from the powers of darkness and put on our way to spiritual Canaan.
 - d. And the sign of baptism is an ensign and banner of our covenant God.
 - e. At the same time it is a testimony that He will forever be our gracious God and Father.
3. Thus, then, is the relation between the sign and the thing signified:
 - a. We are by nature born in sin and death, and are children of wrath. Hence, we cannot enter into God's covenant fellowship unless we are washed and renewed.
 - b. This washing and renewing takes place through the blood and Spirit of Christ. We must pass through the blood of the Savior in order to enter into the kingdom and covenant of God.
 - c. Of this baptism is both sign and seal. Hence, passing through the water of baptism we are cleansed and separated from the world and united with Christ, and thus we enter into God's covenant.
4. Hence, there is but one baptism:
 - a. Naturally, baptism being the sign and seal of our entering into the covenant of God, it cannot be repeated.
 - b. It has significance not only for the time of baptism, but for our whole life.
 - c. Anabaptism stands condemned. Anabaptism means literally to baptize again. The Anabaptists were a sect of the sixteenth century who denied the covenant of God and infant baptism.
5. Finally, the article speaks of infant baptism:
 - a. Children must be baptized.
 - b. They are partakers of the same promises as were the children among Israel. ("I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, etc.")
 - c. This, no doubt, is the basis for infant baptism. The covenant with Abraham continues in the line of generations, in the new dispensation as well as in the old. The covenant being one and running in the line of continued generations, children of believers must be baptized.
 - d. To this the article adds that Christ shed His blood no less for the children than for the adults, and that also in the law it was commanded that a lamb (typical of Christ) should be offered for them shortly after their birth.

Art.34, continued.

5. (cont.)

e. That this does not mean that all the children that are born of believing parents, head for head and soul for soul, are spiritual seed and are children of the promise is evident from Rom.9:6-8.

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION

Art. 35

Of the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ

"We believe and confess, that our Savior Jesus Christ did ordain and institute the sacrament of the Holy Supper," etc.

This article contains:

1. A general statement concerning the institution of the Lord's Supper:
 - a. The Lord Jesus Christ ordained and instituted it.
 - b. To nourish and support those that are already regenerated and have been received into His family.
2. Designation of the place for this sacrament in the life of believers:
 - a. Believers have a twofold life: (1) Their natural and temporal life they receive in their first birth. (2) Their spiritual and eternal life which they receive in the communion of the body of Christ, and which is effected by the Word of the gospel.
 - b. Accordingly, they are in need of a twofold nourishment: (1) Earthly bread and drink for their natural life. (2) Spiritual food for their new and heavenly life in Christ.
 - c. This spiritual bread is Christ, which descended from heaven.
 - d. And believers eat and drink Him when they apply and receive Him by faith in the Spirit.
3. An explanation of the significance of the Lord's Supper:
 - a. The signs and seals: (1) Earthly and visible bread is ordained as a sacrament of Christ's body. (2) Wine as a sacrament of His blood.
 - b. The thing designed and signified by the signs: (1) As certainly as our natural bodies are nourished by bread and wine, (2) so we receive by faith the true body and blood of Christ in our souls for the support of our spiritual life.
 - c. The spiritual operation of the sacrament is from Christ and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations of the Holy Ghost are hidden and invisible.
4. A statement of the connection between the sign and the thing signified:
 - a. The signs are not changed into the body and blood of Christ: (1) Christ is in the heavens at the right hand of God. (2) And we do not partake of Him by the mouth; physically or by any physical action we do not eat and drink His body and blood.
 - b. Yet we really eat and drink Christ's body and blood: (1) The supper is a spiritual feast: Christ communicates Himself to us there, (2) That we may partake of Him and all His benefits, (3) Thus nourishing and strengthening our souls by His body and blood.
 - c. For this reason there is nothing common in the sacrament to all men: (1) This would be the case if it were a question of eating with our mouth. Then all can partake of the sacrament outwardly. (2) Not now. It is a matter of faith and of the impartation of Christ to us. Only believers can do this. (3) Hence, while ~~there~~ they receive a blessing, unbelievers eat and drink condemnation to themselves. (The article here mentions Judas, though it is questionable whether he partook of the sacrament, and Simon the sorcerer, who sought to obtain the power of the Holy Ghost for money.)
5. A designation of the proper sphere of this sacrament:
 - a. In the assembly of the people of God: (1) With thanksgiving in the remembrance of Christ's death. (2) With confession of our faith and of the Christian religion.
 - b. Hence, in the proper spiritual state of mind and heart, in true love of God and the neighbor.
6. A statement in which all human forms and additions to this sacrament are rejected.

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION

Art. 36

Of Magistrates

"We believe that our gracious God, because of the depravity of mankind, hath appointed kings, princes and magistrates, willing that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies; to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained, and all things carried on among them with good order and decency. For this purpose he hath invested the magistracy with the sword, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the protection of them that do well. And their office is, not only to have regard unto, and watch for the welfare of the civil state; etc."

1. Occasion for this article, and its wording:

- a. There were the extravagances and licentiousness of the Anabaptists of those days, really refusing to acknowledge the power of the state and attempting to establish a kingdom of God in the world, a kingdom of their own. (Jan van Leiden, David Joris, in Munster.)
- b. They put the cause of the Reformation in a bad light, and caused it to be viewed with apprehension as revolutionary.
- c. Hence, the care of the fathers to express their submission and obedience to existing orders of the state.

2. About the institution of the magistrates:

- a. It is from God. (1) How it is instituted by God the Confession does not state. It merely states the fact. (2) The Heidelberg Catechism connects it with the Fifth Commandment and the authority of the home, of the parents. This is undoubtedly correct. Government was not instituted at a certain period, but developed organically. (3) Kings and magistrates, therefore, are in a position in which they have to rule in the name of God.
- b. He further invested the magistrates with the power of the sword, that is, with authority to inflict punishment even unto death. This implies capital punishment. (The church has not the sword, but the keys.)

3. The purpose:

- a. According to the article, the magistrates are instituted that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained. (1) This has reference only to the outward acts. The magistrates cannot restrain sin, though sometimes they can restrain the sinner. (2) Besides, this is the purpose. The institution of government itself also develops in sin. Sin, therefore, is not checked by the magistrates, but only assumes another form and runs in another channel of development.
- b. That all things may be carried on with good order and decency. This means, of course, that the government has legislative as well as executive power.

4. The calling of the magistrates in general:

- a. The punishment of evildoers. (1) Certainly not all evil is punished by the state. (2) Only that which is committed in its own sphere.
- b. The protection of the good.
- c. Also here we must remember that this is the calling of the magistrates. In history the sword-power is frequently turned against the righteous. It all depends who is in office.

5. Church and state:

- a. The phrase stating that the magistrates must prosecute heretics has been rejected. (1905, 1910). Not that the magistrate must countenance the preaching of the gospel.
- b. Yet it is evident that church and state cannot be absolutely separate. This is still regarded a difficult question in Reformed churches, which has not been settled. (1) On the one hand, it is evident that the church in the world has an earthly and temporal side, as well as a spiritual side. (2) On the other hand, it is

Art. 34, continued.

5. (cont.)

e. That this does not mean that all the children that are born of De-
living parents, and for that matter, all the children of the
Lord and are children of the promise is evident from Rom. 8:16.

Art. 36, continued.

5, b, (2) cont.

too that the state has to do with spiritual principles. Must not
the state maintain the first table of the law as well as the second
(3) The result is that there is often conflict. Our calling is sub-
mission and obedience, limited by the Word of God.

THE NETHERLAND CONFESSION

Art. 37

Of the Last Judgment

"Finally, we believe, according to the Word of God, when the time appointed by the Lord (which is unknown to all creatures) is come, and the number of the elect complete, that our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as he ascended, with great glory and majesty to declare himself judge of the quick and the dead; burning this old world with fire and flame, to cleanse it. And then all men will personally appear before this great judge, both men and women and children, that have been from the beginning of the world to the end thereof," etc.

1. This article speaks of the following truths:
 - a. The second coming of the Lord.
 - b. The resurrection of all the dead, righteous and wicked alike.
 - c. The judgment.
 - d. Reward and punishment.
 - e. The end of the world.
2. The second coming:
 - a. The time appointed is unknown to all.
 - b. Nevertheless, there are signs of the coming of the Lord, and these signs increase in intensity as the end approaches: the preaching of the gospel, the ingathering of the elect, wars and rumors of wars, pestilences, earthquakes, apostacy, the development of Antichrist and the false prophet. Hence, all things must be accomplished according to God's counsel before the coming of the Lord. Not at any time, therefore, can the Lord come, as is the view of the Chiliasts with their conception of the rapture.
 - c. The Lord will come from heaven: (1) Corporally and visibly. (2) With great glory and majesty. (3) To declare Himself judge of all.
3. All the dead shall be raised:
 - a. The wicked and the righteous.
 - b. Their souls shall be united with their own bodies, in which they lived in the world. (1) This, of course, does not mean that their souls and their bodies shall be unchanged. (2) On the contrary, they will be adapted either unto glory or unto everlasting desolation and perdition in hell. (In this connection we must also note that the article uses the term "immortality" in the philosophical, not in the Scriptural sense of the word. The sense is: everlasting existence.)
 - c. And all the living shall be changed. This also refers not only to the godly, but also to the ungodly. Those are changed unto glory; these are adapted to perdition.
4. The judgment:
 - a. Christ shall be the judge. All judgment is committed unto Him.
 - b. This judgment shall take place undoubtedly immediately after the resurrection, while the place of judgment will probably still be the earth.
 - c. The things judged shall be all the works of men: (1) Their deeds and their words. (2) Good and evil. (3) Even "amusements and jests". (4) All secret things and hypocrisies.
 - d. And they shall be exposed to all. For the books (according to the article, the consciences of men) shall be opened. All shall see their own works in the correct light of God's justice.
5. Reward and punishment:
 - a. The judgment will be terrible for the ungodly. They shall be condemned by the testimony of their own consciences, and sent into everlasting torment. There is no universal redemption, nor a conditional immortality, nor a second chance.