

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

An introduction

I. The idea of creeds:

- A. A definition: Creeds are officially adopted declarations or confessions of a church or group of churches which set forth what such a church believes to be the truth of the Word of God.
1. We speak of these as creeds (from the Latin: credo) to express that this is what the church believes (credo means: to believe).
 2. Or these are called confessions, from the Latin (meaning: to express, to say with), because in them the church expresses what it believes to be the truths of Scripture.
 3. They are called standards either (a) in the sense of a flag which leads an army to battle, or (b) a norm or rule which guides in the determination of that which is right or wrong.
 4. They are called symbols, that is, a sign which represents the church and its belief overagainst the world, or overagainst other denominations of churches.
- B. How creeds originate:
1. The truth of God's Word is always confessed within the church though it was not immediately clearly understood nor formulated.
 2. Under various circumstances, particularly the rise of heresy and coming of persecution, specific Scriptural truths became more definitely formulated in the minds of the church.
 3. When the time was ripe, these truths were contracted into brief statements and expressed in creeds.
- C. The relation of creeds to Scripture:
1. Historically, creeds are reflections of specific Scriptural truths.
 2. Creeds must be based upon Scripture and never placed on a par with it.
 3. Creeds must always be judged in the light of the Word of God.
 4. Churches are called to revise creeds in a proper way when it can be shown that these are in conflict with Scripture.
- D. The value of creeds:
1. Serves to give a united expression of the faith of a church overagainst the world and other churches.
 2. Serves to preserve the expression of the truth from generation to generation.
 3. Serve as the basis upon which churches of like faith can unite.
 4. Serves as a means of instruction to the covenant seed.
- E. Our three forms of unity.
1. The Netherlands or Belgic Confession
 2. The Heidelberg Catechism (chief author: Zacharias Ursinus; assisted by: Casper Olevianus; composed, and adopted by the Synod of Heidelberg in 1563)
 3. The Canons of Dordt (Written by and adopted at the Great Synod of Dordt 1618-1619)

II. The Netherlands Confession:

- A. Its composition:
1. It was first written in 1561 under the stress of great persecution. The first known publication date: 1566.
 2. Its chief author was Guido De Bres (Guy De Bray); he had assistance and advice from Adrien de Saravia, H. Modetus, and G. Wingen.
 3. Originally was composed in French; soon it was translated into Latin, German, Dutch.
 4. It was composed as an answer to Roman Catholic civil authorities (who were conducting a terrible persecution under Philip II of Spain, son of Charles V) to prove that the Protestant Christians were truly faithful children of God and loyal subjects of the king.
 5. It was approved and adopted by various synods and finally by the Great Synod of Dordt of 1618-1619.
 6. It is called either "Netherlands" or the "Belgic" confession. It was written in what was then Southern Netherlands--now the country of Belgium--hence this variation in name.
- B. The general division of this Confession:
1. It follows a dogmatical division.
 2. In a general way, the confession can be divided as follows:
 - a. Doctrine concerning God (Theology) articles 1-11.
 - b. Doctrine concerning man (Anthropology) articles 12-17.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
An introduction (continued)

- c. Doctrine concerning Christ (Christology): articles 18-21.
- d. Doctrine concerning salvation (Soteriology): articles 22-26.
- e. Doctrine concerning the church (Ecclesiology): articles 27-36.
- f. Doctrine concerning the last things (Eschatology): article 37.

III. The author of the Netherlands Confession: Guide De Bres

- A. He was born at Mons, the capital of Hainault (a province of Southern Netherlands) in 1522 (or 1523).
 - B. He was born and raised a Roman Catholic but was converted to Protestantism before his 25th year.
 - C. He was forced to flee to England when persecution broke out in 1548 and was there 4 yrs.
 - D. In 1556 he was compelled to flee once more because of persecution--first to Frankfort and then to Switzerland (where he likely met with John Calvin).
 - E. In 1559 he returned to Southern Netherlands (Belgium) and served various churches (though often in disguise for safety's sake).
 - F. In 1561, when a new investigation of Protestantism began, De Bres wrote this confession to show that Protestants were not dangerous revolutionaries but that they held to God's Word and were subservient to earthly authorities.
 - G. When De Bres was recognized as the author of this confession, his life was in constant danger. He was finally captured and hung at Valenciennes on May 31, 1567 (age: 45).
-

CLASS PREPARATION AND REVIEW:

Study materials: read through our three forms of unity.

1. Point out the differences in approach and contents in each of our three confessions.
2. Name other creeds used in other denominations.
3. Here follows a list of objections to creeds. Consider them and try to give answers.
 - a. Creeds are human productions--and Scripture must be considered sufficient.
 - b. Creeds force and bind the conscience.
 - c. Creeds create divisions.
 - d. Creeds impede the development of the truth.
 - e. Creeds exclude new subjects and hold to out-of-date doctrines.
 - f. Creeds are too long or too broad.
 - g. Creeds encourage hypocrisy.
 - h. Creeds prevent progress and development.
4. What is the value of creeds to the church?
5. How do creeds arise?
6. What is the relation of creeds to Scripture?
7. Give the author of the Netherlands Confession, his date of birth and death, and the date of his composition of this Confession.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 1

I. A personal confession.

- A. The Creed presents the Scriptural truths objectively.
- B. Yet, it remains a personal confession.
 - 1. The emphasis is upon what we all believe (that is, the Church).
 - 2. And: it is set forth as a sincere belief:
 - a. Not mere outward confession.
 - b. But it is both from the mouth and heart.
 - 1) The wicked, from the heart, deny God.
 - 2) But the regenerated believes and confesses.
 - a) Confession begins from the regenerated heart.
 - b) One regenerated also must and does confess with the mouth.

II. Our confession concerning the One God:

- A. We acknowledge that God is.
 - 1. Faith does not argue whether or not God exists; but faith believes.
 - 2. Faith holds this truth on the basis of God's own revelation to us.
 - a. It needs no philosophical argument to prove His existence (proofs, other than Scriptural, which have been given are: the Ontological Proof; the Cosmological Proof; the Teleological Proof; the Moral Proof).
 - b. But faith holds to the revelation of God's Word to us in Scripture.
- B. We believe concerning the Being of God:
 - 1. That God is ONE.
 - a. Heathen religions usually teach: polytheism (many gods); pantheism (all is god); atheism (no god).
 - b. We confess:
 - 1) There is one Infinite, Eternal, Almighty God (Deut. 6:4).
 - 2) He is one in Being (that He is Triune does not make Him to be three Gods).
 - 2. God is simple.
 - a. He is not composed of parts; He has no body; God is pure Spirit.
 - b. His perfections or attributes are not "parts" of God, but these are God. I Jn.1:5.
- C. The attributes of God:
 - 1. Incommunicable attributes, that is, those which are not nor can be reflected in the creature.
 - a. Eternal (Ps. 90:2): though completely different than time, it could be described as existence without beginning or end.
 - b. Incomprehensible (Job 11:7): that God is beyond any definition or limits.
 - c. Invisible
 - d. Immutable (I Tim. 1:17): unchangeable.
 - e. Infinite (I Kings 8:27): God is not limited by space or creation.
 - f. Almighty.
 - g. Other attributes: Omnipresence (Acts 17:27,28); Independence (Is. 40:13); Simplicity (Gal. 3:20);
 - 2. The communicable attributes, that is, those which in a limited measure can be reflected in the creature.
 - a. Those belonging to the intellect (prophet): Knowledge (Rom. 11:33) wisdom (Acts 15:18).
 - b. Those belonging to His will (priest):
 - 1) Holiness (Rev. 4:8)
 - 2) Righteousness (Ps. 119:132).
 - 3) Goodness:
 - a) Love (John 3:16)
 - b) Grace (Acts 14:17)
 - c) Mercy (Ps. 25:6)
 - d) Longsuffering (II Peter 3:9)
 - c. Those belonging to His power (king): His sovereignty; His almighty power.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 1

Worksheet

1. Supplementary reading: (First read questions below--then these recommended passages.)
 - a. Psalm 90
 - b. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 1, 9, 10
 - c. Canons of Dordt, I-A-11; II-A-1,9; III-IV-A-1
 - d. Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter II
2. Proof-text to be committed to memory: (proof for the eternity of God) Psalm 90:2 "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."
3. Questions for study and consideration: (use the supplementary reading list above--but the questions are not necessarily limited to that material).
 - a. Try to find the meaning of the four "proofs" for the existence of God as given on the preceding page (II.A.2.a.). What reasons could be advanced for the failure of this "proof" to convince the unbeliever?
 - b. What are "anthropomorphisms"? (see a dictionary). Find several instances of these in Scripture.
 - c. If God is immutable, how would one explain Gen. 6:6-7 which speaks of the "repentance" of God?
 - d. What happened to the "communicable" attributes in man after the fall?
 - e. What comfort does the confession and knowledge of the "incommunicable" attributes of God afford the Christian on this earth?
 - f. How do the attributes of God assure His punishment upon the wicked?
 - g. If God is almighty, can He do anything? (for instance: can God sin?)
 - h. List the attributes of God as given in the Westminster Confession.
 - i. How great is the knowledge of God according to the Westminster Confession?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 2

I. The knowledge of God.

A. This article emphasizes the knowledge of God.

1. Belief implies knowledge.
2. Knowledge is to be distinguished from comprehension.
 - a. Comprehension suggests that the mind of man can fully grasp God within the understanding. But: the finite can never comprehend the Infinite.
 - b. Knowledge is the understanding of God insofar as He has revealed Himself.

B. Knowledge is possible only through revelation.

1. Human reason can never bring one to a true knowledge of God.
 - a. As the stream does not rise higher than its source, so the finite can not rise to the Infinite.
 - b. Denial of this is seen in the errors of human philosophy, especially Rationalism.
2. There must be Divine Revelation:
 - a. God must be pleased to reveal Himself.
 - b. God must reveal Himself in a form which man can grasp.
 - c. He must prepare men even for the reception of this revelation (by forming man in His image).

II. THE REVELATION OF GOD.

A. In creation:

1. It is God's purpose to reveal Himself in creation.
 - a. It is the very reason for creation--that God might reveal Himself.
 - b. Creation indeed serves as a "most elegant book."
 - 1) Creatures are as "letters" or "characters" comprising the whole of this book.
 - 2) This "book" can be read too--but one must carefully distinguish between the "book" and man's conclusions which are drawn from this "book."
2. What creation reveals of God:
 - a. It shows forth His power (Rom. 1:20).
 - b. It shows forth His Godhead or divinity (Rom. 1:20).
 - 1) Particularly is revealed His righteous wrath (Rom. 1:18).
 - 2) But also His glory (Ps. 19), providence (Ps. 145:15-16), etc.
 - c. Creation serves in a picture as a revelation of the heavenly to come:
 - 1) The colors (red, white, black, etc.), numbers (1,3,4,7,10, 12, etc.), and various creatures (sun, sheep, bread, water, etc.) do this.
 - 2) Though we must add that these things can be understood only in light of Scripture
3. Man's understanding of this revelation:
 - a. It is sufficient to leave him without excuse (Rom. 1:20).
 - 1) What natural man beholds in creation does not convince him; but on the contrary, his heart is hardened so that he holds this truth under in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18-22).
 - 2) But this revelation is sufficient to convince man and leaves him without excuse.
 - b. Why man does not understand and believe what creation reveals:
 - 1) Adam could understand in the state of perfection; he could see all the "characters" and their interrelationship in the whole of the "book."
 - 2) But now man can not and will not believe:
 - a) Creation itself is affected by sin and its curse.
 - b) And man in his totally depraved state does not read aright in this "book".
 - 1/ He denies the existence of God.
 - 2/ And he attributes the work of creation to chance (evolution).

B. In Scripture:

1. Scripture reveals "more clearly and fully," i.e., it shows the love of God toward His people in Jesus Christ. It shows the only way of salvation.
2. Its relation to the revelation of God in creation:
 - a. It is not a differing or contradictory revelation, but the same--only it comes clearly in human language and specifically relates of salvation in Christ.
 - b. Scripture is not a "textbook," nevertheless, its revelation must be the guide for our understanding of creation.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 2

Worksheet

- A. Supplementary reading: (First read questions below--then these recommended passages.)
1. Psalm 19; Romans 1 and 2
 2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 9, 10.
 3. Canons of Dordt, I:A:4; III-IV:A:4,5
 4. Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter I, paragraph I.
- B. Prooftext to be committed to memory: (proof for revelation in creation--and natural man's accountability before God) Romans 1:20 "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."
- C. Questions for study and consideration: (use supplementary reading list above--but the questions are not necessarily limited to that material.)
1. What do the "light of nature" and the "works of creation" manifest of God?
 2. How does the "firmament show his handiwork?"
 3. Is revelation in nature a matter of "common grace?"
 4. What must we say of the "glimmerings of natural light" remaining in man since the fall?
 5. What does man do with the revelation of God in creation?
 6. How must we understand Romans 2:4? 2:14?
 7. What assurance does the Christian have in the confession that God of nothing made heaven and earth and upholds and governs the same?
 8. Why was Scripture committed to writing?
 9. In what way is the "work of the law" written in the heart of the heathen?
 10. What does the revelation of God's law do to man?
 11. Upon whom does the wrath of God abide?
 12. What does Quakerism teach in opposition to this article of the confession?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 3

I. The Revelation through God's Word.

A. By tradition.

1. God revealed Himself in many ways.
 - a. Directly; through dreams, visions, trances; by angels; in signs and wonders.
 - b. Through His Son, Jesus Christ.
2. Nor was all of this revelation recorded.
 - a. More was revealed than was recorded (Jn. 20:30,31; 21:25).
 - b. Revelation was passed on through tradition.
 - 1) This was true til the days of Moses; it was possible because of the long life of the saints of that day.
 - 2) Now we need the Word written.

B. In written form: Holy Scripture.

1. This is the Word of God
 - a. Many deny this:
 - 1) Roman Catholics deny the sufficiency and sole authority of Scripture.
 - 2) Modernism denies that the Bible is the Word of God.
 - a) They speak of the Word of God in the Bible.
 - b) This is their idea of the "human factor" of Scripture.
 - 3) This is questioned even in orthodox circles:
 - a) The first chapters of Genesis are denied to be literally true.
 - b) Scientific and historical errors are "discovered" in Scripture.
 - c) Differences are discovered in Scriptural passages; lack of harmony.
 - b. We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God by faith.
 - 1) One can never "prove this to the satisfaction of natural man and human reason.
 - 2) But the Christian believes by faith through the testimony of the Spirit.
2. God is the Author of Scripture.
 - a. He uses men as instruments--but the product is wholly His Word.
 - b. And this we need for knowledge and assurance of our salvation.

II. The inspiration of Scripture.

A. This treats the subject of how God recorded His Word for us.

1. II Tim. 3:16 emphasizes that Scripture is "inspired," literally: "God-breathed."
 - a. The text uses the singular "all Scripture"--allowing for no exception.
 - b. Scripture is all the result of God's "in-breathing", hence, infallible.
2. I Pet. 1:20-21. Prophecy is not of "private interpretation" but holy men were moved by the Spirit.
 - a. The Bible presents the facts and explains them. This explanation is not private interpretation of the writer, but is also itself inspired revelation of God.
 - b. Thus emphasizes that prophecy is not by the will of man but of God.

B. Proper understanding of inspiration:

1. Negatively (views which desire to maintain a "human factor" in Scripture.
 - a. Mechanical inspiration--presenting the human "authors" as dictation machines.
 - b. Dynamic inspiration--The Spirit gave the thoughts, the writers expressed these in their own words and style.
 - c. Dualistic inspiration--That the Spirit simply preserved men from writing the error.
2. Positively:
 - a. Organic inspiration:
 - 1) God determined all of Scripture eternally with Christ as its center.
 - 2) God likewise determined the writers of Scripture eternally.
 - 3) In time God prepared His ordained writers from birth on to prepare them for their task of writing His Word.
 - 4) Thus Scripture is recorded in the distinctive style of the specific writer--yet is wholly God's Word.
 - b. Plenary inspiration: the whole and all of its parts is inspired.
 - c. Verbal inspiration: the words and the style is also part of inspiration.
 - d. Graphic inspiration: God's Word is written for the sake of the Church in the evil day.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 3

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading: (First read the questions below--then these recommended passages.)

1. Genesis 3; II Peter 1
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day VI; question 19
3. Canons of Dort, V:B:5
4. Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter I

B. Prooftext to be committed to memory (Proof for inspiration):

II Peter 1:21 "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

C. Questions for study and consideration: (use supplementary reading list above--but the questions are not necessarily limited to that material.)

1. Was the gospel published already in Paradise? Explain.
2. How is the gospel represented in the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law?
3. Give reasons why Scripture was committed to writing?
4. Why does Peter believe he is called to record Scripture?
5. Why is it so important to insist upon the infallibility of Scripture?
6. According to the Westminster Confession, from what is derived the Authority of Scripture?
7. In what way is prophecy a "more sure word?"
8. Criticize the statement: The Word of God is contained in the Bible.
9. Are the words of Genesis 3:4b and 5 also the inspired Word of God?
10. Does the Christian need some special revelation apart from Scripture to give him the assurance of perseverance in this life? Explain.
11. What is the infallible rule for Scriptural interpretation?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 4

I. The canonical books called Scripture.

A. As such.

1. Names given to these:

- a. Holy Scripture (Often: Holy Writ); Scripture means literally: writings; Holy in the sense of Sacred or separate from all other writings.
- b. Bible--from the Greek and meaning: books.
- c. Testament (or, covenant) : the revelation of the will of God for His people.

2. Scripture as "Canon."

- a. The word means that which is straight; a canon is a rod or wooden rule which accurately measures and determines the straightness of a thing.
- b. Such is the position of Scripture in the life of the Christian.
 - 1) It determines and sets forth the way in which we must walk.
 - 2) And Scripture determines the correctness or error of our way.

B. The determination of the Canon of Scripture.

1. The Old Testament:

- a. This contains 39 books, originally written in Hebrew (except for parts of Ezra, Daniel, and Jeremia which were written in Chaldee--a similar language to Hebrew).
- b. It can be divided into the (1) Pentateuch (5 books or books), the first five books of Moses; (2) History (12); (3) Poetical (6); (4) Prophetical (four major and 12 minor prophets).
- c. The determination of this as part of the Canon of Scripture:
 - 1) Historically, all the O.T. books were collected to form one book by a body of learned Jewish scribes about the year 300 B.C.; others recognize the Jewish "Synod" of Jamnia (about 90 B.C.) as first officially and finally determining the O.T. Canon.
 - 2) More significantly, Jesus and the apostles refer to the Old Testament Scriptures repeatedly and recognize these as God's infallible Word (cf. Matt. 7:12; Luke 24:25,27; Acts 28:23; II Tim. 3:15-16).

2. The New Testament:

- a. Contains 27 books originally written in Greek.
- b. These can be divided into (1) Four gospel accounts; (2) Historical (Acts); (3) 21 epistles; (4) One prophetical.
- c. The determination of this part of Scripture as truly Canonical:
 - 1) Historically, these 27 books were soon recognized by the early N.T. church as canonical (though there was dispute concerning some--as II Peter; Revelation), and were officially declared canonical by the Council of Hippo Regius (393 A.D.) and were again ratified by the Synod of Carthage in 397.
 - 2) Some factors leading to the determination of their canonicity:
 - a) Were they written by the apostles or one closely connected with them?
 - b) Were they used and received by most of the churches?
 - c) Do the contents give evidence of its worthiness to be included?
 - d) Most important: does it reveal evidence of divine inspiration?
 - 3) The Canon, in the final instance, is the work of God:
 - a) He determined it from all eternity.
 - b) By His Spirit, He led the church in the determination of the Canon by (1) working in their hearts the certainty that this was the Word of God, and (2) by showing them thru the very books themselves that it was His Word.

C. Further information:

1. The principal translations of Scripture: (a) the Septuagint (literally, 70--because this was the number of men engaged in the translations), a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament; (b) The Vulgate (common, or, people's) Bible--Latin translation by Jerome in 390 A.D. upon which the present R.C. Bible is based; the Dutch "Staten Bibel" of 1637; (c) Luther's German translation of 1534; (d) English King James Version of 1611; (e) Revised Version in 1885; (f) American Standard Version in 1901.
2. The chapter divisions of the Bible are attributed to Cardinal Hugo of the Middle Ages; the verse divisions by Robert Stephen, a protestant, in the 16th century.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 4
(continued)

II. Our confession concerning these Canonical Books:

- A. We believe this to be the Word of God by faith.
1. Note how this article begins: we believe.
 2. This implies that faith only confesses thus concerning the Holy Scriptures.
 - a. Mere human reason will not lead to a confession that this is God's Word.
 - b. But God thru the Spirit must work that in us.
- B. And we confess that against these nothing can be alleged.
1. This suggests that nothing can be alleged against the inclusion of these 66 books in the Canon of Scripture.
 2. But also: nothing can be alleged against the individual books as far as their spiritual content is concerned. It is all the infallible Word of God.

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Luke 16:29-31; Matthew 5:17-18
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day VII.
3. Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 4.

B. Proof-text to be committed to memory (Proof for inspiration of Scripture)

II Tim. 3:16 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

C. Questions for study and consideration:

1. Concerning this article:

- a. How do you account for the fact that one Bible-book is missing from the list?
- b. Is it correct to ascribe Hebrews to Paul as author?
- c. What is the meaning of "Paralipomenon"?
- d. Why are Ruth and Judges reversed in order?
- e. Why does it speak of "first of Ezra"?

2. From what facts does the Westminster Catechism conclude that Scripture is God's Word?

3. In Luke 16, what do "Moses and the prophets" represent? What does this prove?

4. In Matt. 5:17-18:

- a. What are the "law and prophets" of which Jesus speaks?
- b. What was the relation of Jesus to the "law and prophets"?

5. How is the knowledge of Scripture related to faith?

6. What must we say of the discussions or arguments regarding the "authorship" of various of the books of Scripture?

7. Which version of the Bible ought we to use? Why?

8. What if another book, written by an apostle, should be discovered? Ought we to add it to the Bible now?

9. What could you say of other "missing" books mentioned in the Bible? (cf. Numbers 21:14; Joshua 10:13; II Chron. 9:29; 12:15; Col. 4:16)

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 5

I. The Bible:

- A. We receive the books of the Bible as truth.
 - 1. Not as a matter of conviction through human reasoning.
 - 2. But this is also by faith.
- B. We receive ALL these books AND THESE ONLY.
 - 1. This emphasis distinguishes us from others--particularly Rome.
 - a. Rome has accepted as Scripture some of the apocryphal books.
 - b. We receive only those 66 which are included in our Bible.
 - 2. Thus "authority and dignity" ~~are~~ are recognized only in these.
- C. These are both "holy" and "canonical."
 - 1. Holy also in distinction from other "good" books--they are free of error and set apart for our instruction and guidance.
 - 2. Canonical--which was considered in an earlier lesson.

II. Its authority.

- A. Evident from the fact that the church receives and approves them.
 - 1. We must not use this expression in the sense of Roman Catholicism.
 - a. The Romish Church declares that the authority of Scripture rests upon the Church.
 - 1) The Church can add to Scripture by the power of its infallibility.
 - 2) The Church only can rightly interpret scripture.
 - 3) In some cases, the Church must add doctrines which are not found in Scripture.
 - b. The authority of Scripture is not derived from the fact that the church is willing to recognize it.
 - 2. Nevertheless it is important that the Church recognize and confess the Scripture.
 - a. It has done this in the past (cf. past lessons)--and we believe this was done under the guidance of the Spirit.
 - b. And it bears weight with the Christian that not just I, but the Church throughout the ages has recognized what is the infallible Word of God.
- B. The testimony of the Spirit in my heart.
 - 1. Not some sort of mystical "voice" which conceivably could speak differently to different individuals.
 - 2. But:
 - a. The Spirit applies the Word as preached and read in Scripture itself.
 - b. So that within the Christian there is the certainty: This is God's Word.
 - 1) Natural man does not have this certainty--rather he scoffs at it.
 - 2) But this is worked within the heart of the regenerated.
- C. The testimony of Scripture itself.
 - 1. Scripture has survived all the many attacks upon it throughout the ages.
 - 2. Christ and the apostles recognized the authority of Scripture Lu. 24:44, etc.
 - 3. Some 3,800 times Scripture declares: Thus saith the Lord (and similar expressions).
 - 4. Its Word of prophecy is being fulfilled.
 - a. The prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled (concerning the coming of the Messiah; prophecies concerning various nations as Babylon; prophecies concerning men as Cyrus).
 - b. The signs of the times mentioned in the N.T. are clearly being fulfilled.

III. Its relation to faith:

- A. It guides faith in an understanding of what is the lie and what is the truth. (Regulates)
 - 1. Man can not simply have his own standards.
 - 2. But must have this revelation to know WHAT he is to believe.
- B. It is the foundation of our faith--our faith rests upon this.
- C. It confirms our faith:
 - 1. God uses His Word to strengthen and encourage our faith.
 - 2. Therefore also we are called to use this Word diligently.

Worksheet
Article 5

Questions for study and consideration:

1. If the Bible is as important and significant as this article maintains, why did not God also provide us with the original documents of this Scripture--so that there could be no doubt concerning any part of it?
2. What is the idea of the heading of the article which speaks of the "dignity" of Scripture?
3. Is there not a danger that we begin to worship the Bible?
4. How can or how does doubt begin to arise with respect to Scripture?
5. What is the relationship between the three points which reveal the authority of Scripture? Can any one exist independently of the others?
6. Find some of the prophecies fulfilled in the Old Testament.
7. Which prophecies of the New Testament are in process of fulfillment now?
8. Is the testimony of Scripture about itself ("Thus saith the Lord") to be considered a valid testimony?
9. If the "very blind are able to perceive", how is it that all men do not believe that Scripture itself is the Word of God?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 5

- I. The Apocryphal Books as such.
 - A. Today we know little about them.
 1. Originally were printed in the Bible in smaller print; some pulpit Bibles yet do this.
 2. But the contents are rather unknown.
 - B. Meaning of the term:
 1. "Apocryphal" means "hidden" or "obscure".
 2. This could be understood in various ways:
 - a. Their origin or source is hidden.
 - b. The meaning of the books themselves can be unclear and thus "hidden."
 - c. Or, hidden in the sense that these books are not readily available.
- II. We reject the Apocryphal books as inspired, canonical books.
 - A. First, because this has always been done in the church.
 1. The Jews did not include these books in their Canon of the Old Testament (although the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the O.T., did).
 2. Christ and the apostles did not quote from them (even though they often did quote from the Septuagint which included those books).
 3. Jerome who translated the Bible into Latin rejected them.
 4. The early church councils rejected them (Laodicea in 364 A.D. and Constantinople 681)
 5. Only the R.C. Council of Trent (1545-1565) recognized them and declared them to be canonical.
 - B. Secondly, the internal evidence in these books reveal them to be not inspired.
 1. They contain errors and fantastic events.
 2. There is conflict between them and Scripture and within the books themselves.
 3. They were written after the prophecy of the O.T. was completed (Mal. 4:4-6).
 4. Most important, there is no emphasis upon that central line of the covenant and the fulfillment of promise.
- III. The benefit of these books:
 - A. They have a certain historical value and can be read profitably.
 - B. But they can not be used to prove points of faith--nor may they detract in any way from Scripture.
 - C. Thus they are regarded as any other book written by man.

Worksheet

- A. Supplementary reading: Try to find a copy of, and read some of, the Apocryphal Books.
- B. Questions for study and consideration:
 1. Can you find contradictions or distortions of truth in these books?
 2. What false doctrine or doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church is supported by instruction from these books?
 3. On what basis does the Roman Catholic Church declare that these books are also part of the Scriptures of God?
 4. Should not the book of Esther be included with these Apocryphal Books? How many times is the name of God (or Christ) mentioned in the book?
 5. Are there also books written during the New Testament period which are also "Apocryphal" that is, that were recognized by some as Scripture but have since been discarded?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 7

I. The sufficiency of Scripture.

A. What this is:

1. Completeness; that which "fully contains the will of God."
 - a. Reveals not simply the "ethical will" of God--that which speaks of good and evil.
 - b. But God's "will" in the sense of His Counsel. 17
 - 1) All that God would have us to know--particular about salvation--is there.
 - 2) Therefore we do not need other than this Scripture God has given.
2. A united whole.
 - a. The 66 books comprise one unit.
 - b. Within the whole there is neither a lack of books--nor too many.
3. It is binding upon the child of God--can not be questioned or denied.
4. It is incomparable--no writing of any man can compare with Scripture in value.

B. The denial of this truth:

1. Denied by Mormons; by Quakers; by Christian Science; etc.
2. But particularly was the article written to combat Roman Catholicism which also denies the sufficiency of Scripture.
 - a. Rome maintains:
 - 1) The apocryphal books are also to be added to the 66 books of Scripture.
 - 2) They also insist on written tradition.
 - a) "Tradition" is that which is handed down.
 - b) They refer to that which was handed down and written by the church in its church councils, its papal decrees, the writings of the church fathers.
 - c) These "traditions" are given equal authority with Scripture.
 - b. Reasons Rome gives for its view on "tradition:"
 - 1) Before Moses, tradition was the only means of conveying the Word of God from father to son.
 - 2) The Bible refers to the importance of tradition (cf. John 16:12; 20:40; I Cor. 11:23; II John 12).
 - 3) Also the Protestant churches hold to certain practices not on the basis of Scripture but on basis of tradition: Christmas and Easter celebrations; our Sabbath on Sunday; baptism of infants; etc.

II. Reasons for maintaining the sufficiency of Scripture:

A. The whole manner of worship which God requires is written in them.

1. Not simply liturgy--or the form of proper worship.
 - a. Scripture requires certain basic things in proper liturgy: the preaching; administration of sacraments; prayer.
 - b. But Scripture does not regulate the number of songs to be sung; the length of worship service, etc.
2. But the idea of the Confession is that Scripture sets forth all that is necessary to guide us in all things that these be done in proper worship to God.
 - a. Nor may man change any of this (cf. Deut. 12:32; Is. 8:20; Col. 2:8; Matt. 15:6-9)
 - b. And the Confession quotes Paul specifically in support of this truth.

B. Because "the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects."

1. The "doctrine" is not to be limited to the dogmas of the church.
2. But every instruction in any sphere presents all that God would reveal to us.

III. The importance of this instruction:

- A. We here confess what is the only infallible rule or guide for the church: Scripture.
- B. Confessing this, we are governed in our approach to the study of Scripture.
 1. Not an approach whereby we question and doubt Scripture (or come with an "open" mind).
 2. But we come to Scripture by faith with that pre-supposition that it is God's Word.
 3. And we try the spirits (I John 4:1) to see if they be of God or not.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 7
Worksheet

- A. Supplementary reading:
1. Check the passages of Scripture listed in the outline.
 2. Westminster Larger Catechism, questions 3,4.
- B. Proof-text (sufficiency of the Word of God): Deut. 12:32 "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."
- C. Questions for study and consideration:
1. What, if anything, is the relationship between "sufficiency" and "perspicuity" of Scripture?
 2. The article states that Holy Scriptures the will of God concerning what man ought to believe UNTO SALVATION.
 - a. Does this imply that other things mentioned in Scripture, unrelated to salvation, is not "sufficient" for us?
 - b. Is it not true that Scripture is then only binding for us as far as the doctrine of salvation is concerned?
 - c. Does it not follow that Scripture is not authoritative in matters historical or scientific?
 3. How are we to answer the Roman Catholics concerning their "proofs" for tradition?
 4. How do we explain our church activities which are based on tradition (Christmas)?
 5. How is the sufficiency of Scripture being denied today?
 6. See if you can find out anything on the "Book of Mormon".
 7. Find the passage mentioned in the article which quotes what "the apostle Paul saith."
 8. Can you find other passages of Scripture which speak of, and warn against, adding or taking away from a certain book? Does this apply only to that one book--or all of Scripture?
 9. Where is the last sentence of the article quoted from?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 8

I. The "Unity" of the Trinity.

A. The term: Trinity.

1. It is not to be found as such in Scripture.
2. It was coined, as far as we know, by Tertullian who died in 220 A.D.
3. The subject was one which was disputed and settled early in the history of the church in the New Testament.
 - a. Because of its fundamental character, the devil doubtlessly sought to attack this first.
 - b. And suggests the evil of all error: the attempt in one way or another to destroy the truth that God is.

B. Our God is One God.

1. There is no other God.
 - a. There is no God outside of Himself.
 - b. Nor is God composed of parts; He is One. Deut. 6:4.
2. This oneness is oneness of Essence or Being.
 - a. God's will, mind, virtues are one.
 - 1) There are not three wills, three loves, etc. of God.
 - 2) But these are one, infinite, and inseparable in Him.
 - b. Thus avoid the heresy of Tritheism.

II. The "threeness" of the Trinity.

A. A person is a moral, rational individual; the subject of one's action and thought.

1. Within the Godhead there are three Persons--three that say, "I."
2. These three have their "incommunicable properties."
 - a. This has nothing to do with "incommunicable attributes" which are One in God.
 - b. Rather, these three are personally distinct.

B. The personal properties of the three Persons of the Trinity:

1. The Father:
 - a. This Name points to that distinct personal property according to which He eternally generates the Son.
 - 1) In that generation there is neither beginning nor subordination.
 - 2) But the perfections of the Father are reflected perfectly in the Son.
 - b. The Name "Father" has other ideas too; in the Apostle's Creed Creation is particularly ascribed to the Father.
 - 1) Not as though the Father only is involved in Creation; so are Son and Spirit.
 - 2) But the Person of the Father is particularly manifest in creation.
2. The Son:
 - a. Indicates the fact that He is begotten of the Father.
 - b. The Son is associated with redemption.
 - 1) Again, not because ONLY the Son is involved in that.
 - 2) But the Son is specially manifest in the work of redemption.
3. The Spirit:
 - a. He is Spirit in the sense of that "breathed forth". He proceeds from Father and Son.
 - b. The Spirit is manifest in the work of sanctification.

III. The relationship within the Trinity:

A. The relationship of the Persons to the Essence:

1. They are not one subordinate to the others; nor is there division or separation.
2. The three are co-equal and co-eternal.

B. The relationship of the Persons to each other:

1. Each is personally distinct from the other.
2. But there is also perfect harmony with the three.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 8

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 8.
2. Canons I-7; II-4.
3. Baptism Form
4. Westminster Catechism, Questions 8-11.

B. Proof~~text~~ (the Trinity): Matt. 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

C. Questions for study and consideration:

1. How does the Apostle's Creed reflect the idea of the Trinity?
2. In Lord's Day 8, is there not a distinct division in the work of God? Is not God's work also one?
3. Show how the two articles in the Canons reveal the idea of the Trinity.
4. How does the Westminster Catechism speak of the personal properties of the three Persons?
5. How does this same Catechism emphasize the equality of the Persons?
6. Can the truth concerning the Trinity be seen in Creation about us (apart from Scripture)?
7. Are there groups of threes in Creation that might suggest the idea of "Trinity"?
8. Should we use the term "Trinity" since it is not found in the Bible?
9. Which religious groups today deny the Trinity?
10. Can one be a Christian--and deny the Trinity?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 9

I. Scriptural proof:

A. In the Old Testament.

1. Genesis 1:26,27 and Genesis 3:22.
 - a. God here speaks to Himself.
 - b. God speaks as One (God said--the word "God" is "Elohim", a plural word; but the verb is in the singular).
 - c. Yet the pronouns are plural--indicating more than one person.
2. (Not mentioned in the article) Ps. 33:6
 - a. By the WORD of the LORD were the heavens made--cf. John 1:1ff.
 - b. "...and all the host of them by the BREATH of His mouth. (Breath is "Spirit")
3. The passages of the Old Testament appears to "us somewhat obscure."
 - a. In the Old Testament the Word of God emphasized especially the Oneness of God overagainst the views of the heathen who maintained polytheism.
 - b. There is a definite development in the revelation of God--not NEW things are introduced, but the revelation is made ever more clear.
 - c. Pentecost marks a radical change in the understanding of the Christian.

B. In the New Testament.

1. In the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; Jn. 1:32-33)
 - a. The Spirit descends in the form of a dove.
 - b. The Father speaks from heaven.
2. The formula for baptism (Matt. 28:19) in which the three Persons are mentioned.
3. The conception and birth of Christ (Luke 1:35)
 - a. Speaks of the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. And the birth of the Son of God.
4. The apostolic benediction in II Cor. 13:14.
5. I John 5:7 mentions the three Persons specifically.
 - a. This passage has been denounced as an "addition" to Scripture and not part of the original.
 - b. But the truth of the Trinity does not rest on this passage alone; the passage surely does present the teachings of all of Scripture.

II. The value of this proof:

A. Negatively:

1. It is true: there are no direct statements in Scripture stating: God is Triune, Three Persons in One Being.
2. This is true because Scripture is not meant to be a book of dogmatics.

B. Positively:

1. Scripture is the only basis upon which this doctrine can possibly rest.
 - a. The Trinity is not a doctrine which is discovered by human reason.
 - b. But God Himself must reveal Himself to us.
2. On the basis of that Scripture comes also that "we feel in ourselves."
 - a. The confession does not mean to imply that belief of the truth of the Trinity in part is based on one's "feeling."
 - b. Rather, the "feeling" or experience of the Christian is based on Scripture.
 - 1) Scripture tells us what is the work of the Persons of the Trinity.
 - 2) And we, by God's grace through Christ, have experienced that of which Scripture testified.
 - a) We experienced the Father as our Creator; the Son as our Savior; the Spirit as our Sanctifier.
 - b) Thus the knowledge of the Trinity for the Christian is more than intellectual.

III. Historical development of the Trinity:

A. Opponents:

1. The list of men includes those who in one form or another denied the Trinity--or the Personality of the Son.
2. Sects of our day follow these same old errors.

B. The church from the early period of the New Dispensation maintained this.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 9
worksheet

- A. Supplementary reading: same as that on Article 8.
- B. Proof-text (for the Trinity): Psalm 33:6 "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."
- C. Questions for study and consideration:
1. Could not the passage of Gen. 1 be what could be called a "majestic plural" or an "editorial plural"?
 2. Can it be shown that the Angel of Jehovah was the Son, or Second Person, of the Trinity?
 3. Here follows a list of other Old Testament passages. Examine them for evidences for the truth of the Trinity: Ps. 110 (cf. also Matt. 22:41-46); Ps. 104:30; Is. 61:1; Isaiah 6:1-3
 4. Could you give reasons why there are no direct statements or definition of the doctrine of the Trinity in Scripture?
 5. Can you find and read the three Creeds listed at the end of this article?
 6. Does not reference to these ancient creeds amount to the same thing as basing doctrine on the "tradition" of the church as does Roman Catholicism?
 7. Try to find out about Arius and Arianism mentioned in this article.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 10

I. The Deity of the Christ.

A. Negatively: Not made nor created.

1. Many heretics have so maintained: that Christ WAS created or made.
 - a. Arius (condemned by the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.) was willing to call Christ "the Son of God" as a title. He was "god-like" but not the essence of God.
 - b. Socinians (which arose after the Reformation) denied His eternal existence.
 - c. Modernists as well as Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses deny this truth.
2. The Confession rightly denies this:
 - a. This would make of the Christ a mere creature.
 - b. And it would prevent the payment of atonement for our sins.

B. Positively:

1. Christ is the only begotten Son of God.
2. He is begotten from eternity.
3. He is co-essential and co-eternal with the Father.
4. He is the express image of His person (substance) and brightness of His glory.
5. He is equal to Him in all things.

II. Proof of Christ's Deity:

A. He is given Divine Names:

1. Only begotten Son (or: only begotten God) John 1:18.
2. Jehovah our righteousness Jer. 23:6
3. The Word who is with God and is God John 1:1ff.
4. The brightness of His glory, the express image of His Person Heb. 1:3.
 - a. Presents a distinct personal subsistence.
 - b. A perfect likeness (express image--as that imprinted in wax).
 - c. Eternal generation (being the brightness of His glory).

B. To Him are attributed Divine works:

1. Creation Heb. 1:2; John 1:3
2. Judgment John 5:22
3. Resurrection from the dead John 5:25
4. He causes all to be subject to Him Phil. 3:31.

C. He has divine virtues.

1. He is eternal. Heb. 7:3; Micah 5:2
2. Mighty God Is. 9:6
3. Power is His Matt. 28:18
4. Omniscience John 2:24

D. Divine honor is ascribed to Him.

1. Honor the Son as we honor the Father John 5:21
2. To deny the Son is to deny the Father I John 2:23.
3. Worship is directed to Him Heb. 1:7
4. He is called God- John 20:28

III. Importance of this truth:

A. The truth of vicarious atonement depends on this truth.

1. Christ must be very God to bear the infinite wrath of God for our sins.
2. Any mere creature must succumb under that wrath.

B. The application of His work is possible only because He is Divine God.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 10

worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 6; 13.
2. Canons of Dordt II-2,3
3. Westminster Larger Catechism, Questions 11, 36, 38, 40.

B. Proof-text (Deity of Christ) John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

C. Questions for study and consideration:

1. Can you explain why heretics want to deny the deity of Christ?
2. What is the argument of the Jehovah's Witness concerning Christ's deity? What would they say of John 1?
3. In what sense does the Arminian deny Christ's deity?
4. How does the Name "Jesus" reveal His deity?
5. What explanation is commonly given to Is. 7:14 concerning virgin birth of Christ?
6. Can one deny Christ's deity and yet be Christian?
7. How do the Canons speak of the value of the death of the Son of God?
8. How do the Canons speak of the necessity of His Divinity?
9. How does the Westminster Catechism confirm the above?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 11

- I. The subject of this article: the Holy Spirit.
- A. His double procession: Filioque.
1. This question was that which separated the Eastern (Greek) from Western (Latin) Church.
 - a. The Greek Church denied procession of the Spirit from the Son.
 - b. The Western Church adopted this truth officially.
 - 1) The question arose already from the time of the Council of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381).
 - 2) In 589 the Synod of Toledo (Western) added "and the Son" to one Creed.
 - 3) Final separation took place in 1054 under Leo IX.
 2. Proof for the procession of the Spirit from the Son:
 - a. John 15:26--the Spirit proceeds from the Father and is sent by Christ.
 - b. Other passages: John 14:16-23; Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19.
- B. The Personality of the Spirit.
1. This is, and was, denied by many.
 - a. The Spirit is often considered simply an "influence" or "power" of God.
 - b. Such results in denial of the basic truths of Scripture.
 2. His Personality is plainly taught in Scripture:
 - a. John 14:26--He is called "Comforter".
 - b. John 16:8--He convicts the world.
 - c. Acts 13:24--He separates men unto the ministry.
 - d. Rom. 8:26,27--He makes intercession for us.
 - e. Eph. 4:30--He is grieved; He seals.
 - f. II Cor. 13,14--He has communion or fellowship.
- C. His Godhead:
1. To Him are ascribed Names of God: Acts 5:3,4 (God); He is called the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9; I cor. 2:10-11; etc.)
 2. Divine attributes are ascribed to Him:
 - a. Omnipresence (Ps. 139:7-10)
 - b. Divine knowledge (Is. 40:13-14)
 - c. Eternity (Heb. 9:14)
 3. Divine works are ascribed to Him:
 - a. Creation: Gen. 1:2; Ps. 33:6; Ps. 104:30.
 - b. Resurrection and life: Rom. 8:2,11; John 3:5
 - c. Adoption: Rom. 8:15
- II. The Spirit as the Spirit of Christ.
- A. We identify Him as the Third Person of the Trinity.
1. Co-equal with Father and Son (I Cor. 6:19; Matt. 28:19).
 2. He proceeds from the Father and Son: hence, He is called "Spirit".
 - a. Not referring to His Essence--for Father and Son are also Spirit.
 - b. But to "breath" or "proceeding."
 3. He is Third Person not in rank, but in procession.
- B. But this Spirit is manifest in a special way as the Spirit of Christ:
1. He is not another or a different Spirit.
 2. But He reveals Himself in different revelation and operation.
 - a. In the Old Testament the Spirit worked with God's people unto their salvation.
 - 1) But this was in the realm of type and shadow.
 - 2) Thus also in the O.T. the saints could not as clearly see the work of God.
 - b. At and after Pentecost the Spirit operates as the Spirit of Christ.
 - 1) He is given to the resurrected Lord in His ascension.
 - 2) He is poured out upon the Church.
 - a) He applies specifically Christ's completed work.
 - b) Note the difference manifest at Pentecost.

III. The significance of this doctrine:

 - A. This Spirit of Christ dwells in our hearts and bestows the benefits of Christ to us.
 - B. By Him we have fellowship and communion with God.
 - C. Emphasizes the certainty of God's fulfilling His work in His Church.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 11

worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 20.
2. Canons III-IV:11; V:4,5,6,7,8,10
3. Baptism Form, second part of the doctrinal section.
4. Westminster Catechism, Question 11

B. Proof-text (The Holy Spirit is God) Acts 5:3,4 "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy ~~Ghost~~ Ghost...? ...Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."

C. Questions for study and consideration:

1. What does the Heidelberg Catechism teach concerning the Holy Spirit?
2. Why is the "procession" from the Son essential?
3. What is the "sin against the Holy Ghost?" Why is it unpardonable?
4. How does one discern difference between this and other forgivable sins?
5. What does the Spirit do in the salvation of the sinner (Canons III-IV:11)?
6. How must one relate the ideas of perseverance of saints, irresistible power of the Spirit, and sins into which saints fall?
7. How does the truths concerning the working of the Spirit contradict the teachings of Arminianism?
8. What must we say of the 2nd and 3rd points of Common Grace--and the power of the Holy Spirit?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 12

I. Creation as such.

A. It is creation by the Triune God: The Father by the Word thru the Spirit.

B. The purpose of Creation:

1. "As it seemed good unto Him."

a. Creation is according to God's good pleasure--He is free to create or not to create as He wills.

b. Creation is a revelation of the perfections of God.

c. We behold the glory of His Name in Christ Who is the center of all creation.

(Cf. Prov. 16:4; Ps. 19:1; Is. 43:7; Col. 1:19,20)

2. God gives to every creature its "shape, form, and several offices...."

a. Creation shows that all things are fashioned by the hand of God.

b. Particularly the moral, rational creation has "offices" in which to serve God.

3. This creation is continually preserved by the Sovereign God (cf. next article).

II. The creation-day:

A. Negatively:

1. Theories which conflict with the Scriptural account:

a. Evolution which teaches the development from the lower to the higher form as a thing of chance or accident.

b. "Theistic" evolution: same as evolution with the suggestion that God directs the way in which all things evolve.

c. Period-theory: the days of Gen. 1 are long periods of time.

2. The above theories are based upon a "Uniformitarian Principle."

a. Man supposes that all things in the past can be explained in light of what is to be observed today.

b. Thus one is pointed to the decay of radioactive materials; the fossils; the light of stars; etc.

B. Positively:

1. According to Scripture:

a. "Day" in Scripture almost always means a standard day--and always does when preceded by a number.

b. "Evening and morning" always means the beginning and end of a normal day.

c. II Pet. 3:8 emphasizes God's eternity and can not be used to determine the length of creation days.

d. The week was also a part of the creation--emphasizing idea of labor with rest.

2. Scripture also shows that all things did not always exist as they do now:

a. The creation itself was a calling of those things which were not as tho they were (Ps. 33:9)

b. The curse after the fall resulted in great changes--including physical death.

c. The flood must have greatly affected the earth.

d. Scripture reveals that there will be an increase of natural disturbance and judgment as the end draws near (Cf. Rev.).

3. Scripture teaches that faith only can understand the creation of the worlds (Heb.11:3).

III. The creation of the angels:

A. The good angels are created as "God's messengers and to serve the elect."

1. We do not know when the angels were created. On the basis of Job 38:4-7 some maintain this was on the first day of creation.

2. The angels are given various names, probably indicating their rank and place in the angelic world: cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, powers, etc.

3. The angels serve the elect: Luke 9:26; Heb. 1:14; Ps. 103:21, etc.

B. The evil angels:

1. Satan was possibly created as head of the angel world; his sin was likely pride. (I Tim. 3:6).

2. These evil angels are "enemies of God" and seek the ruin of the church.

3. They are judged worthy of eternal perdition by their own wickedness.

C. The article rejects the errors of Sadducees and Manichees.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 12

worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 9,10.
2. Westminster Catechism, questions 15,16

B. Proof-text (for creation): Hebrews 11:3 "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

C. Questions for study and consideration:

1. Out of what were the heavens and earth made? (H.C.)
2. What is the advantage for the Christian to know that God created all things? (H.C.)
3. How does the Westminster Catechism explain the creation of the world? Of angels?
4. What definition could you give for "create"?
5. Did God create everything out of nothing?
6. What was created on each day? Is there an order in creation?
7. On what day was the sun created? How would this disprove the "period-theory"?
8. Can you find anything in Scripture indicating the cause of the angels' fall?
9. How must one explain the "scientific facts" which appear to prove a very old earth?
10. Is the question of the length of time of creation a matter of indifference?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 13

I. The idea of "Providence."

A. The word itself:

1. Means: to see beforehand.
2. According to the article: "He rules and governs all creatures according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment."

B. The elements in Providence:

1. Preservation:

- a. That God not only created but continues to uphold all things.
 - 1) This applies to the vastness of the universe.
 - 2) But equally to the atom and sub-atomic particles of matter.
- b. Proof: Acts 17:28 "In Him we live and move and have our being."

2. Government:

- a. "Government" suggests design or purpose in Providence.
- b. So God also directs all things:
 - 1) Not simply upholding all things by the Word of His power.
 - 2) But directing all things that these may serve His sovereign purpose.

3. Co-operation.

- a. The word means: to work together.
- b. The idea in this connection is that the moral acts of men and angels and devils are determined by God.
 - 1) Negatively:
 - a) This does not make God the "Author" of sin.
 - b) Nor does it deny the responsibility of the moral, rational creature.
 - 2) Positively:
 - a) We can not fully fathom the wonder of this work of God.
 - b) But we do confess that God so rules over all that:
 - 1/ The creature is responsible before God for his every act.
 - 2/ But God directs it that His own purpose may be served.
 - c) Proof: Prov. 16:1; 21:1; Acts 2:23.

II. The comfort in this doctrine:

A. Nothing befalls by chance or accident.

1. Neither a hair can fall from the head, nor a sparrow fall, without His will.
2. These statements emphasize the comprehensiveness of Providence.
 - a. If these apparently insignificant details are under His control,
 - b. Then we must maintain that all things are.

B. This truth affords unspeakable comfort for us with regard to our salvation.

1. Nothing can take us from the Father's hand.
2. But: All things work together for good to them that love God.

III. Errors respecting this doctrine:

A. The error of Deism:

1. Deists emphasize (though in a wrong way) the "transcendence" of God.
 - a. They teach that God has nothing to do with creation; He is far above it.
 - b. That He created it, and "wound it up" to run down of itself.
2. Such a view must necessarily deny revelation as well as redemption.

B. The error of Pantheism.

1. This takes the opposite tack: emphasizing (tho wrongly) the "immanence" of God.
 - a. Creation is itself God--and man is the revelation of God's intelligence and will.
 - b. One can not identify God apart from or outside of creation.
2. This denies the Personality as well as the Divinity of God.

C. The error of the Epicureans:

1. These were Greek philosophers who emphasized that idea: eat, drink, be merry...
2. They regarded God as One who had nothing to do with his creation.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 13

worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 10.
2. Westminster Catechism, questions 18, 19, 20.

B. Proof-text (for providence respecting moral creatures) Acts 2:23 "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

C. Questions for study and consideration:

1. Can you find any place in Scripture where the word providence is used?
2. What are "apparent contradictions?" What must one say of this view?
3. How are common grace and providence often identified? (So that the statement is made that what we believe concerning "providence", the C.R. church teaches under "common grace.")
4. Can we properly speak of "laws of nature?"
are
5. How ~~do~~ miracles to be explained?
6. Can we use the words: "luck", "chance", "accident"?
7. What must we say of "games of chance", of "raffles", etc.?
8. Can we speak of "Kind Providence"?
9. What is the comfort of the doctrine of providence to the Christian according to the Heidelberg Catechism?
10. How does the Westminster Catechism identify the three parts of providence?
11. What term does the W.C. use regarding the fall of angels? What do you think of this?
12. Any comment on answer 20 of the W.C.?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 14

- I. The good creation of man.
 - A. A unique creation:
 - 1. He is FORMED out of the dust of the earth.
 - 2. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.
 - B. The meaning of man's creation:
 - 1. He is made head over all things in the earth--its king.
 - a. He serves as representative of God in the earth.
 - b. And through Adam all creation is to serve God.
 - 2. In this connection we also speak of Adam and the Image of God.
 - a. He was created as Image-bearer.
 - 1) Adam was formed in a distinct way with mind and will--that he might bear the image.
 - 2) This is not itself the image of God.
 - b. And Adam bore the Image of God.
 - 1) True knowledge: he knew God perfectly as He was revealed in creation and through direct revelation.
 - 2) True righteousness: Adam conformed perfectly with God's law.
 - 3) True holiness: Adam, and in him all things, was consecrated to God.
 - c. Thus Adam enjoyed covenant friendship with the Living God.
- II. THE fall of Adam:
 - A. As such.
 - 1. Satan's temptation of Eve.
 - a. He comes in the form of the serpent.
 - b. He approaches her first with the question concerning which trees might be used.
 - c. Eve answered in a way that indicated that sin already entered her mind.
 - d. Then the devil deliberately lies concerning God's command.
 - 2. Adam also eats at the urging of Eve.
 - B. The character of the fall:
 - 1. It was wilful disobedience to God.
 - 2. As such, it necessarily affected the whole nature of man.
- III. THE consequences of the fall.
 - A. For Adam:
 - 1. Negatively, he lost the image of God completely.
 - a. He remained a moral, rational creature.
 - b. But now he bore the image of the devil:
 - 1) His limited knowledge is used only for sin.
 - 2) Righteousness and holiness are changed into the opposite.
 - 2. Positively: man died.
 - a. That death was three-fold:
 - 1) Physical death of the body.
 - 2) Spiritual death--in separation from God.
 - 3) Eternal death--final punishment in hell forever.
 - b. This death was the immediate sentence of God upon Adam after his sin.
 - B. For mankind:
 - 1. Adam's sin affected all mankind.
 - a. He was created as our representative head--consequently we become guilty of his "original sin."
 - b. He was our first father--consequently we are born with that "original corruption."
 - 2. And the result for Adam and his posterity is total depravity.
 - a. There is in man no remnant of good whatsoever.
 - b. This, we believe, is true in opposition to such false doctrines as common grace, and "free-willism."

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 14

worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Scripture: Genesis 1-3
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 3
3. Canons of Dordt, III-IV: 1,2,3,4,10,16
4. Westminster Catechism, Questions 21,22,23

B. Proof-text: Rom. 5;12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Proof for original guilt and corruption).

C. Questions for study and consideration:

1. What is the idea of the so-called "Covenant of Works"? The "Probationary Period"?
2. Can it be maintained that Adam was not the first man--but is presented as 'representative' of the developing man?
3. What is meant by the distinction of God's Image in the wider and narrower sense?
4. In what ways did Eve answer Satan wrongly in response to his first question?
5. Why should the serpent come to Eve rather than to Adam?
6. Did Adam die at once as God had said?
7. What are the "remnants of light" which remain in man after the fall?
8. What would you understand by ~~the~~ "total depravity" in distinction ^{from} "absolute depravity"?
9. What does the fall imply as far as man's "free will" is concerned?
10. What arguments are presented by proponents of "common grace" with respect to the fall?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 15

I. What original sin is:

A. The term itself.

1. It has reference to the first sin committed.
 - a. The term suggests that there is more to this sin than simply an act of rebellion.
 - b. For this sin had its fruit in Adam and his posterity.
2. The two parts of "original sin":
 - a. Original guilt.
 - 1) This emphasizes the legal consequences of Adam's sin.
 - a) The one act deserved the condemnation of God.
 - b) Points to the punishment of which God had spoken: death.
 - 2) That original guilt affects Adam's posterity.
 - a) Adam was the representative head of the race. What Adam did, he did for the entire race.
 - b) Thus original guilt means death for all those out of Adam.
 - b. Original pollution:
 - 1) This refers to the consequences, the results, of Adam's sin.
 - 2) It is the corrupting of the entire being:
 - a) The act of sin by Adam was of such a nature that his entire being became darkness.
 - b) And that darkness was transmitted to his posterity by virtue of the fact that Adam was first father of the race.

B. That original sin was the transgression of God's command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

II. ITS extent.

A. It affected the whole human race:

1. It affected Adam first of all.
 - a. He became immediately dead even as God had said.
 - b. The image of God was changed in him to its opposite.
 - c. Result was that Adam could not serve God at all of himself.
2. It affected his posterity:
 - a. This sin extends to all men.
 - 1) It is as a root-sin out of which proceeds all other sins.
 - 2) There are no exceptions to this--but Christ only.
 - b. This sin infects infants "even in their mother's womb."
 - 1) So also Scripture teaches: Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:10.
 - 2) Thus all are under condemnation from conception on.

III. Its significance:

A. Errors arise in connection with this doctrine.

1. The error of Roman Catholicism:
 - a. This teaches the removal of original sin by baptism.
 - b. We deny that the water of baptism itself washes away this sin; we also deny that union to Christ involves the removal only of this "original sin." The cross of Christ removes all the sins of His people.
2. Pelagians:
 - a. These "assert that sin proceeds only from imitation."
 - b. Thus:
 - 1) Infants are born as blank sheets of paper. If these later sin, it is the result of imitation.
 - 2) Thus there is no "original sin" and salvation is possible for all apart from Christ.
3. The Anabaptists:
 - a. In some instances these used the truth of deliverance as an occasion to maintain that we are no more "under the law" and then can live as we wish.
 - b. On the contrary, knowledge of this sin and deliverance from it, assures the Christian and incites him to a walk in godliness.

B. This truth of original sin is important:

1. Because it emphasizes that scriptural truth concerning our total depravity.
2. And emphasizes that deliverance must come wholly outside of ourselves.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 15

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Scripture: Romans 5; Genesis 3.
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 27.
3. Canons of Dordt, III-IV:2,3; III-IV:B:1,3,4,5.
4. Westminster Catechism, Questions 24-29.

B. Proof-text: (total depravity) Romans 3:10 "As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one."

C. Questions for study and consideration:

1. Why should such a "minor" sin of Adam warrant such severe sentence?
2. Is the view of "original sin" peculiarly Reformed?
3. Can you find anything on the "Covenant of Works" in the Westminster Catechism?
4. What must we say of the expression: "innocent babes."?
5. Is the idea of "representative head" unjust or unfair? Can you cite other instances of this?
6. How is sin transmitted from parents to children?
7. Does Arminianism deny "original sin?" If so, how?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 16

I. The idea of "predestination."

A. The term itself.

1. It means: forordained; destination or end determined before.
 - a. The term is used in Scripture: Romans 8:30; Eph. 1:5.
 - b. It is the decree of God whereby He determined eternally the end of all creatures.
2. This pre-determination includes:
 - a. Angels (good and evil): I Tim. 5:21; Matt. 25:41; Jude 6.
 - b. Men (good and evil) : Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 5:9.

B. This decree of predestination:

1. Is centrally for the glory of the Name of our God.
 - a. It does not exist because of necessity outside of God.
 - b. But God determined it that He might receive all the glory. Prov. 16:4; Eph.1:6.
2. With respect to this decree we can state:
 - a. It is eternal decree.
 - 1) God does not choose in the process of time.
 - 2) But this takes place before the foundations of the earth. Acts 15:18; Eph. 1:4.
 - b. It is an unchangeable decree.
 - 1) God's plan does not change in process of time; He does not have to revise it to fit new circumstances.
 - 2) But His Counsel stands: Is. 46:10.
 - c. It is a sovereign decree.
 - 1) God does according to His own good pleasure--nor does He have to answer to man for His work.
 - 2) Scripture shows this: Eph. 1:5; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 9:21.

II. Election:

A. What it is:

1. Election is that "eternal good-pleasure of god's will to same some men through the means of faith in Christ to eternal glory" (Essentials of Ref. Doctrine).
2. Upon this basis rests the certainty of salvation for the church.
 - a. It is not based upon foreseen works--as Arminianism would maintain.
 - b. But wholly upon the sovereign good-pleasure of God.

B. Proof:

1. Eph. 1:4--we are chosen BEFORE THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE WORLD.
2. Rom. 9:11-13--Jacob is chosen apart from his having done good or evil.

C. Comfort of this doctrine:

1. It assures us of our salvation--which is not dependent upon our works but is only by Sovereign Grace.
2. Then nothing can destroy the church of Christ nor its individual members.

III. Reprobation:

A. What it is:

1. It is the "eternal good-pleasure of His will to condemn others to eternal damnation on account of their sin" (Essentials of Ref. Doctrine).
2. This has also been called "preterition", or, "passing by."
 - a. This idea of "passing by" appears to be in harmony with the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort.
 - b. Yet there is more involved in reprobation than a "passing by."
3. This doctrine is greatly despised in our day--and almost universally denied.

B. Proof:

1. I Peter 2:8 "...disobedient, whereunto they were appointed."
2. Rom. 9:13 "Even as it is written: Jacob have I loved, but Esau I hated."
3. Rom. 9:22; I Thess. 5:9; Jude 4; Rev. 13:8.

C. How this serves God's purpose:

1. Reveals the greatness of God's goodness and holiness which is contrasted with this terrible darkness.
2. God uses this for the gathering of His people and fashioning of them for their place in glory.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 16

Worksheet

- A. Supplementary reading:
1. Scripture: Romans 9
 2. Canons of Dordt, first head of doctrine.
 3. Westminster Catechism, questions 12, 13.
- B. Proof-text (Election and reprobation): Romans 9:11-13 "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.
- C. Questions for study and consideration:
1. Does not this article imply that election takes place AFTER the fall?
 2. What is the difference between supra-lapsarianism and infra-lapsarianism? What approach does this confession take?
 3. Why should reprobation be called a mere "passing-by?" Why is such an explanation of it given?
 4. Is predestination the "heart of the Reformed doctrine"?
 5. What does the Roman Catholic church believe concerning this doctrine?
 6. Show that election is not based on foreseen works.
 7. What can one say about the first point of common grace--and this predestination?
 8. How can we know of our own personal election?
 9. Can we call "election" also "selection"?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 17

I. The Covenant of Grace.

A. Covenants as such.

1. A covenant is:

a. Literally--a coming together.

b. Hebrew word means: a cutting--referring to the practice of dividing and walking between the pieces of animals which had been divided in half.

2. The various covenants:

a. Often is mentioned the "Counsel of Peace" of, Covenant of Redemption.

1) This idea is derived from Zech. 6:13.

2) Represents the agreement between the triune God and the Son to deliver God's elect through the way of the cross.

b. Covenant of friendship between Adam and God before the fall.

1) Some Reformed groups would rather speak of the "Covenant of Works."

2) God established a relationship in which Adam could serve as friend-servant.

c. Now, in the recovery of man, we speak of the Covenant of Grace.

B. The Covenant of Grace:

1. Its relationship to grace.

a. Grace is the loveliness or beauty of God Himself.

b. This beauty of His perfections He is pleased to reveal in creation--particularly in the creation of man.

c. That grace now is the unmerited beauty or favor which God works in us through His Son Jesus Christ.

2. The covenant is one of such grace:

a. The covenant is established by grace.

1) It exists only because of the favor or beauty of our God.

2) And established with those who do not at all deserve that favor.

b. The covenant serves to reveal the greatness of God's grace.

1) The covenant does not exist simply for the sake of man.

2) But to manifest the perfections of God--which this covenant does.

c. That covenant we enjoy by the grace of God in us.

II. The establishment of the Covenant of Grace:

A. Man's situation after the fall:

1. Historically:

a. Man had "thrown himself into temporal and eternal death."

1) That is: he is separated from the favor of God.

2) Thus also he is wholly miserable in all that he does.

b. That can be seen in the account of the fall and subsequent events.

1) Adam fled from God and sought to hide.

2) And seeks to place the blame of his sin upon another.

2. Such an one:

a. Has no right to the communion of fellowship in a Covenant with God.

b. Nor can he on his part fulfill any conditions to establish a covenant.

B. But God revealed His purpose in the establishment of a Covenant through Christ.

1. The "mother-promise" of Genesis 3:15 sets forth God's Covenant.

2. For:

a. There will be two seeds: of the woman and of the serpent.

b. There will be battle--in which the seed of the woman is victorious.

c. Points to the victory of Christ for His Church and their final glorification in Him.

III. The beauty of this covenant:

A. It is unilateral.

1. It has "two parts" but not "two parties." (cf. Baptism form).

2. God Himself establishes and realizes it--thus restoring "fallen man."

B. It reveals the greatness of God's love, wisdom, and goodness.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 17

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Scripture: Genesis 3; Genesis 15.
2. Canons of Dordt, Head III-IV:15,16.
3. Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. IV.
4. Westminster Catechism: questions 30-35.

B. Proof-text: (establishment of the Covenant) Genesis 17:7 "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

C. Questions for study and consideration:

1. What is the difference between "parts" and "parties" in the Covenant?
2. Trace the development of the covenant of grace in the Old Testament.
3. What do dispensationalists say concerning the covenant (s) of God?
4. In what way does the restoration of His fallen people show the wisdom and goodness of God?
5. What is the difference between the covenant of grace and that with Adam before the fall?
6. Does the covenant of grace continue also in heaven after the day of judgment?
7. What practical significance does God's covenant of grace have for the Christian?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 18

I. The Fulfillment of promise.

A. The promise which was given:

1. To Adam in paradise.
 - a. In Genesis 3:15 (the "mother-promise").
 - 1) Speaks of an enmity which exists between two seeds.
 - 2) An assurance of final victory of the one seed.
 - 3) The victorious seed of the woman is Christ.
 - b. In the clothing of skins which God provided for our first parents (Gen. 3:21).
 - 1) This served as a proper covering for them.
 - 2) A covering which could only be obtained through the shedding of blood.
2. That promise is repeated throughout the Old Testament.
 - a. Given to the patriarchs (find instances of this).
 - b. Spoken through prophecy (find instances of this).
 - c. Revealed through type and shadow.

B. Its fulfillment in the appointed time.

1. In the "fulness of time" Christ came (Gal. 4:4).
 - a. Negatively: that means that Christ could not come at any time.
 - b. Positively: there was an ordained and appropriate time for His coming.
2. Its evidence:
 - a. The world situation was such that it was suitable for His coming: one world power; a common language; etc.
 - b. The situation in Israel also showed this "fulness of time."
 - 1) His coming appeared completely impossible according to human standards.
 - 2) The situation in the "church" was one of spiritual corruption.

II. The Son of God enters our flesh.

A. We confess His eternal Sonship.

1. The second Person of the Trinity enters the flesh.
2. Scripture also proves this:
 - a. John 1.
 - b. Names, powers, attributes of God are ascribed to Him.

B. Its implications:

1. Our Mediator is very God.
 - a. He is God also in His suffering and death.
 - b. This explains the infinite worth of His death.
2. His birth into the flesh is a wonder of Grace.
 - a. It can not be explained through human reason or philosophy.
 - b. It is by faith that the child of God confesses this truth.

III. The real human nature of the Mediator.

A. We confess that this is Scriptural:and confessional.

1. In Scripture:
 - a. He is born of a woman (Matt. 1:18-22; John 1:14; Gal. 4:4)
 - b. Human attributes and characteristics are ascribed to Him: He had a human body (Lu. 24:39; human soul, Matt. 26:28; He weeps; He hungers.
2. A confession of His humanity is essential part of our faith.
 - a. It is man who sins that must die according to God's justice. Ez. 18:20.
 - b. Therefore our Mediator must be of us.

B. Its implications:

1. Christ has a complete human nature.
 - a. Not only a human body.
 - b. But complete: body and soul.
2. It was a central human nature.
 - a. Out of the line of the promise.
 - b. Pointing also to the truth that Christ is the center of all history.
3. A weakened but sinless human nature.
 - a. He had a body as we now do--not as Adam possessed before the fall.
 - b. But He was always without sin in mind and deed.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 18

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Scripture: Matt. 1; Luke 1; John 1.
2. Canons of Dordt, Head II:A:1-4.
3. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 13-14.
4. Westminster Catechism, Question 37.

B. Proof-text: (Incarnation) John 1:14 "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

C. Questions for study and consideration:

1. What is the explanation of the Roman Catholic Church for the immaculate conception of Christ?
2. Can we explain how Christ is born of the line of Adam--yet without the original guilt and corruption of Adam? If so, how?
3. Give instances of type and shadow in the Old Testament which pointed to the work of Christ.
4. Can it be shown that the "seed of the woman" in Genesis 3:15 is the Christ?
5. How must we understand "the fulness of time" of Galatians 4:4?
6. What do Jehovah Witnesses say of the Divinity of Christ? How would they explain John 1? In what way must they be answered?
7. Try to find further information on the heresy of the Anabaptists mentioned in this article.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 19

I. The Natures of Christ.

A. What these are:

1. The Divine Nature.

a. It is that which God is.

b. The Divine Nature includes possession of all the attributes of God: eternity; omnipotence; wisdom; etc.

2. The human nature.

a. Though it is difficult to separate the human nature and person, this nature of man is that which he is.

1) It is that he is creature with all the limitations this implies.

2) And includes the human body and human soul.

b. This also did the Mediator possess.

B. These two are united in the Divine Person.

1. The Mediator could not have had a human person.

a. A human person would have been responsible for the sin of Adam.

b. A human person could not have performed that which was required of the Mediator.

2. But He must be the Divine Person:

a. Through the Divine Person He consciously acts in each nature.

1) That is true for the Divine Nature.

2) But also that the Divine Person acts through the human nature.

b. The Divine Person inseparably unites the two natures of Christ.

II. The union of these two natures.

A. As such.

1. They were united in His conception and birth.

2. They remain united in His suffering and death.

a. He suffers as the Son of God in our flesh.

b. Only thus does His suffering have infinite merit.

3. United in His resurrection and glory.

a. His human nature will eternally be in heaven--how perfected and heavenly.

b. Through that human nature, He will reveal His Godhead.

B. The confession of the church:

1. This was confessionally stated by the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D.

a. This opposed some of the following heresies:

1) Apollinarianism: Christ had a human body, animal soul, but not human reason; the divine Logos took the place of the rational soul.

2) Nestorianism: admitted both the humanity and deity of Christ--but not united in a vital, personal union.

3) Eutychianism: the absorption of the human nature by the divine.

b. The Council declared that these two natures exist: 1) inconfusedly, 2) unchangeably,

3) indivisibly, 4) inseparably.

2. That union we must maintain faithfully.

III. The necessity of the united natures.

A. The Mediator must be very God.

1. To bear the infinite wrath of the eternal God--no mere creature could do that.

2. To confer life--for only God can do this.

B. The Mediator must be very really man.

1. To bear justly the wrath of God.

a. God will not punish another for the sins of man.

b. Man must bear the sentence of death--or one who can legally represent him must bear it.

2. To merit for us human life.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 19

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Scripture: John 1;
2. Other references: same as for Article 18.

B. Proof-text: (Divinity of Christ) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

C. Questions for study and consideration:

1. What is the Lutheran view of ~~esse~~ ubiquity? How would this conflict with the confession of the church?
2. Did Christ in His human nature know all things? Prove your answer.
3. Why is it essential that the two natures be united in Christ's suffering?
4. What would be the error ~~of~~ ⁱⁿ maintaining that Christ had no human soul?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 20

I. Satisfaction in Christ.

A. What "satisfaction" involves:

1. A confession of the terrible character of sin.
 - a. Sin is not simply:
 - 1) Errors of judgment.
 - 2) Lack of ability--not this only;
 - b. Sin is rebellion against the Sovereign God--active, wilful rebellion:
 - 1) It is transgression of God's law.
 - 2) And such transgression against God deserves eternal death.
2. Satisfaction means that such transgression is fully paid for.
 - a. It can not be ignored or simply cancelled.
 - b. But payment must be made equivalent to the transgression committed:

B. How Christ satisfies:

1. Through His perfect obedience.
 - a. Sometimes this is termed: active and passive obedience.
 - b. Through such obedience He meets the demands of the law.
2. Thus are we delivered from the guilt of sin.

II. God's justice in redeeming His people.

A. Strict justice must be ~~exercised~~ exercised by God.

1. Negatively:
 - a. Animals can not satisfy the justice of God.
 - b. Nor can any other creature to this, as for instance, an angel.
2. Positively:
 - a. Justice requires that the man who sinned must bear God's wrath for the same.
 - 1) God can not justly punish another creature for man's sin.
 - 2) The man who sins must die.
 - b. But also: he must be able to bear the wrath of God and deliver us from it.
 - 1) Mere man can not bear eternal wrath.
 - 2) Therefore, the Mediator must be more than mere man.

B. Christ meets the demands of the justice of God.

1. As the Son of God in our flesh, He fully bears the wrath of God.
 - a. The Infinite Second Person can bear infinite wrath.
 - b. And in our flesh He justly suffers as our representative Head.
2. Thus obtains for us the verdict: not guilty.
 - a. Satisfaction is fully made.
 - b. And the sentence of death is taken away.

III. God's mercy in this redemption.

A. Evidence of the mercy of God:

1. God is indeed merciful:
 - a. Mercy is His sincere desire and intent to bless His people as He is Blessed.
 - 1) And this is more than a mere wish on the part of God.
 - 2) His Mercy also must accomplish that which He intends.
 - b. But mercy must be shown in the way of justice.
 - 1) Mercy can not be shown in a way of ignoring what is just and right.
 - 2) But mercy must be manifest thru the execution of perfect justice.
2. Christ, then, is the manifestation of both mercy and justice of God.
 - a. God's mercy is shown us in the way of Christ's suffering and death.
 - b. Thus is salvation accomplished.

B. The fruit of this mercy.

1. Justification--declared to be without guilt before God.
2. Glorification--the certain fruit of the completed work of Christ.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 20

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. REad: Genesis 3; Romans 5
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 5,6. Also: 4.
3. Canons of Dordt, Second Head, Articles 1,2,3,4.
4. Westminster ~~Confession~~ Catechism, questions 39,40.

B. Questions for consideration:

1. If man who sins must die, how is it that Christ can take our place?
2. Who do not believe in reconciliation through satisfaction?
3. Does the idea of satisfaction contradict the teachings of Arminianism?
4. For whom was Christ Substitute? What of Lord's Day 15, question and answer 37?
5. How did Christ begin satisfaction in his birth?
6. What was the purpose of the Old Testament sacrificial animals?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 21

I. Christ's Priesthood.

A. The idea of priesthood.

1. Normally understood as one who offers sacrifice.
 - a. This was the priest of the nation of Israel.
 - b. And this idea must not be excluded.
2. But a priest is properly one who is consecrated to God.
 - a. Personally, and with all that he has, he serves God.
 - b. It is this priesthood which continues forevermore.

B. Christ's priesthood.

1. His is a priesthood after the order of Melchisedec.
 - a. Not after the order of Aaron.
 - 1) Aaron's priesthood was limited principally to one nation and for one purpose.
 - 2) Aaron's priesthood ends when Christ comes.
 - b. But the priesthood of Melchisedec is a continuing priesthood.
 - 1) He was both priest and king--a more perfect picture of Christ's work.
 - 2) His was a universal priesthood--for Abraham paid him tithes.
 - 3) His was an unending priesthood--"without father or mother."
2. Thus did Christ function as priest:
 - a. Sacrifice was required of Him--as fulfillment also of all type and shadow.
 - b. But He remains priest forever.
 - 1) In Him we are consecrated to God eternally.
 - 2) He leads and directs us in spiritual service--now and eternally.

II. Satisfaction through priesthood.

A. Christ offers complete satisfaction.

1. This idea does not mean that Christ offered part of what was required.
 - a. Such is sometimes suggested; that then we offer the rest to God.
 - b. But such an idea would make salvation impossible.
2. Satisfaction involves full atonement:
 - a. God reckons up all our sins.
 - b. The punishment which God requires of us, Christ bears fully.
 - c. And He is triumphant--bearing this and delivering us from condemnation.
 - d. Then our sins can not be held against us anymore.

B. Erroneous views regarding atonement:

1. The governmental theory--suggested by the Arminian: Hugo Grotius (d. 1645), a Dutchman.
 - a. Christ is punished as an example of what God can do to every sinner.
 - b. If one recognizes this fact in the cross, and accepts God's Word, he is saved.
 - 1) Salvation is not thru the cross.
 - 2) But rather thru the action of man which God accepts.
2. The moral theory of atonement.
 - a. This presents Christ only as a good example; He does not atone at all.
 - b. We simply follow the example of this Christ.

III. Benefits of this priesthood to us:

A. Negatively: we do not seek other means of reconciliation.

1. The Roman Catholic Church points to saints and th Mary.
- 2/ The Arminian retains the idea of "free will" which must be exercised unto salvation.

B. Positively:

1. Christ must receive all our adoration and praise.
 - a. We acknowledge the salvation He worked when we speak of Him and pray to God.
 - b. And do not seek any credit or honor for self.
2. Such is in harmony with His Names:
 - a. He is "Jesus"--Savior of His people.
 - b. That truth the church must continue to maintain.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 21
Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Read: Hebrews 5-10.
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 15, 16
3. Canons of Dordt, II-3
4. Westminster Catechism, Q. 44

B. Questions for consideration:

1. What is the idea of "oath" mentioned in this article?
2. Find the passages quoted in the article.
3. In Lord's Day 15, there is mentioned "all mankind". To what does this refer?
4. What does the Canons mean in II-3 by "sufficient to expiate...."
5. What is the view of Prof. Dekker of Calvin Seminary on atonement?
6. Which Scriptural passages are used to support the idea of unlimited atonement?
7. Which Scriptural passages do we use to prove "limited" atonement?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 22

I. What faith is:

A. As such.

1. Potential and Actual (Active).

a. Potential faith is that given in regeneration.

1) It is the ability to believe--though it is not yet visible.

2) That ability is part of the work of regeneration.

a) Regeneration includes the entire seed of new life.

b) Faith, the potential, is part of that seed.

b. Actual (active) faith is the development of this potential.

1) This is the actual confession which the Christian makes.

2) A confession which arises under the preaching of the Word.

a) God's Word is applied to the heart.

b) Thus bringing forth this confession.

2. Elements of saving faith:

a. A certain knowledge:

1) A knowledge of facts of the revelation of God.

2) Also the certainty that these facts apply to me personally.

b. An assured confidence.

1) There is not fear, doubt, or question concerning my salvation.

2) But assurance that the just God delivers and preserves me for Jesus' sake.

B. Its necessity:

1. Faith is not a pre-requisite unto salvation.

a. Such a presentation separates faith from salvation itself.

b. Faith is part of the work of salvation.

2. But faith is a necessary part of salvation.

a. Salvation is not effected apart from faith.

b. But faith is the beginning of the consciousness of salvation in the Christian.

II. The evidence of faith.

A. Negatively:

1. Other forms of "faith."

a. Miraculous faith.

b. Historical faith.

c. Temporary faith.

2. These must not be confused with true faith.

B. Positively:

1. Belief.

a. Hungering and thirsting for righteousness.

b. The awareness that Christ is the Source of all blessings.

c. The eating and drinking, spiritually, of Christ.

d. Thus an appropriation of all the benefits of salvation.

2. Thus does one from the heart acknowledge that his whole salvation is out of Christ.

III. The benefit of faith.

A. What that is:

1. Negatively:

a. It is not a "work" which earns before God.

b. Therefore, nothing in which we can boast.

2. Positively:

a. That which brings to full consciousness of Christ's work.

b. That which keeps in the consciousness of Christ's benefits.

B. Faith as an instrument:

1. Set forth as a means ordained by God for the experience of God's blessings.

2. Thus repudiates the idea of meritorious faith.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 22

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Scripture: Romans 3 and 4; Gal. 3; Eph. 2.
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 7
3. Canons, III-IV; A; 14,15; rejection of errors: IV.
4. Westminster Catechism, questions 72 and 73.

B. Questions for consideration:

1. If justification is "by faith", does this not make of faith a work?
2. When is "potential faith" given to the elect of God?
3. What is historical faith?
4. What is temporary faith? What gives rise to this? Scriptural references to it?
5. What is miraculous faith? Can you find Scriptural instances of this?
6. Is faith always the same in believers?
7. What is the position of the Roman Catholic Church on faith and works?
8. What was the statement of Rev. H. De Wolf in the 1953 controversy relating to faith?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 23

I. The idea of justification:

A. A legal concept.

1. It is our state or position before the law of God; one's legal position.
 - a. The word means: to make just; to make right.
 - b. It indicates that God has judged us and declared us to be without guilt.
2. Specifically, the benefits of justification are two:
 - a. The forgiveness of sins.
 - 1) These God declares to be gone.
 - 2) Therefore the sentence of death is also taken away.
 - b. Adoption unto sonship.
 - 1) Are declared legally worthy to be sons of God.
 - 2) And are assured of all His benefits.

B. Aspects of justification:

1. Eternal justification--we are chosen in Christ before the foundations of the earth.
 - a. God did not simply choose.
 - b. But He chose us as justified children of God.
2. Justification on the cross:
 - a. There, in time, Christ fulfilled what God's justice demanded.
 - b. And this work is then the basis of all justification.
3. In the consciousness of the saint.
 - a. In regeneration and conversion we become conscious of justification.
 - b. Thus we speak of our personal justification.
4. Finally, there is eternal justification when Christ returns on the clouds of glory.

II. A sure foundation.

A. As such.

1. There can be no trust in self or in our merits in this truth.
 - a. Man's nature is always to boast and reveal pride.
 - b. But this view of justification allows for none of that.
2. For glory must wholly be ascribed to God for His work in saving us.

B. Errors which seek to destroy this foundation:

1. The error of Romanism.
 - a. These indeed teach that Christ merited faith for us.
 - b. With that faith, we can do good works which become the ground of our justification.
 - c. This view is false because it denies that scriptural truth that Christ's blood is the only ground of justification.
2. Arminian error:
 - a. These too insist that we are not justified by works but by faith alone.
 - b. But--they add that faith is a work of man which any can exercise and by which he is justified.
 - c. This view also denies the efficacy of the cross.

III. A sufficient cover.

A. As such.

1. Man has made many attempts to "cover" his sin.
 - a. He is interested in removing the certainty of punishment for sin.
 - b. Uses arguments to convince himself that either he has not sinned, or that God would not punish him for sin.
2. But sufficient "cover" is to be found in the blood of Christ alone.
 - a. This satisfies completely the demands of God.
 - b. Thus are the sins of His people removed.

B. Assurance in such a cover.

1. All our sin is covered without exception.
2. Then gives confidence in approaching to God.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 23

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading;

1. Psalm 32; Romans 4 and 5
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 23, 24
3. Canons of Dordt, II-8; III-IV-10
4. Westminster **Catechism**, question 74.

B. Questions for consideration:

1. Which is first, justification or sanctification? Why?
2. How were the saints of the Old Testament justified?
3. What differences are there between justification and sanctification?
4. Prove that justification is from eternity.
5. What does James teach concerning justification and works?
6. Can you prove from Scripture that the ground for our justification is the resurrection of Christ? What does this mean?
7. What is the proof of our justification?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 24

I. The work of sanctification (the word means: to make holy):

A. As such.

1. It includes two elements:

a. The mortification of the old man.

- 1) Principally, the old man was crucified with Christ.
- 2) And more and more the Christian flees from all sin.

b. The quickening of the new man.

- 1) Principally we are raised again in Christ.
- 2) More and more we then seek those things which are spiritual.

2. Sanctification involves a change in one's spiritual condition.

a. In justification our state before God's law changes.

b. In sanctification, our condition is changed.

- 1) We are led in walk of holiness.
- 2) Our lives reflect a conformity to the law of God. We are not only DECLARED to be righteous, but we ARE righteous in walk.

3. Sanctification is a process which is completed finally at death.

a. Justification is a single, once-for-all, act.

b. But one is led in holiness throughout his life.

B. The importance of this truth:

1. Negatively:

a. It is opposed to the idea of perfectionism.

- 1) This view maintains that the Christian can attain to perfection on this earth.
- 2) But such view can only be based on a distorted idea of God's law.

b. It is opposed to the idea of anti-nomians.

- 1) These maintained that Christ fulfilled the law--hence, we need not observe it.
- 2) Thus opened the way for gross wickedness by the Christian.

2. Positively:

a. The truth of sanctification emphasizes the continuing work of the Spirit upon the child of God.

- 1) God does not merely provide for the removal of the guilt of sin.
- 2) But He directs in all holiness and truth.

b. It suggests a proper emphasis upon good works.

- 1) In every sincere child of God there is a desire and longing to obey God.
- 2) All this: as a fruit of God's work in us.

II. The means unto sanctification:

A. Sanctification follows out of justifying faith.

1. Faith is not dead--that is, belief without works.

2. But justifying faith becomes the very basis of a holy walk.

B. This is through the Word and Spirit.

1. The Word of God directs in a walk of righteousness.

2. The Spirit of Christ applies this and directs us in righteousness.

III. Evidence of sanctification:

A. Good works:

1. These are performed only by the regenerate.

- a. Without faith, the works of man are only "out of self-love or fear of damnation."
- b. Only a holy, living faith is fruitful.

2. The article points out concerning good works:

- a. Performed by or out of justifying faith only.
- b. That they do not merit before God.
- c. If salvation were based on works, man must always live then in doubt.
- d. There is a reward of grace upon works.
- e. True faith desires to perform good works.

B. Benefit of good works:

1. They, then, are not unto salvation.

2/ But these assure the Christian that he indeed possesses the life of Christ.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 24

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Scripture: Romans 6; Ephesians 4; I John; Romans 8
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 24; 32; 33.
3. Canons, Head III-IV-16
4. Westminster Catechism, questions 75-80.

B. Questions for consideration:

1. Does not I John 3:9 prove that there is perfection possible for Christians on the earth?
2. How must one oppose "perfectionism"? Can passages of Scripture be quoted?
3. What dangers are inherent in the view of perfectionism?
4. If Christ fulfilled the law, why does not the view of the antinomian follow?
5. Where in Scripture are we taught that it is impossible to sin that grace abounds?
6. What is the idea of the word "regeneration" in this article?
7. What is the idea of being an "unprofitable servant" even though one performed all good works without sin?
8. What is the view of the Roman Catholic Church on good works?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 25

I. The Ceremonial Laws abolished.

A. Ceremonial Laws:

1. Various forms of law . . . were given to Israel.
 - a. The Moral law.
 - b. Civil law.
 - c. And ceremonial law.
2. Ceremonial laws governed various things:
 - a. Laws governing the priesthood, etc.
 - b. Laws governing the temple worship.
 - c. Laws governing sacrifice, tithes, things in the temple, etc.
 - d. Laws governing the feasts: Passover, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacles, etc.

B. Their abolishment.

1. These were abolished at the time of the coming of Christ.
 - a. These pointed to the coming of Christ.
 - b. Served as types and shadows--are not needed now with our Fulfillment here.
2. Therefore also the church need no more observe these.
 - a. The Roman Catholic Church yet does to a certain extent.
 - b. Protestantism has insisted that observance is no more required.

II. What does remain of ceremonial laws.

A. Behind these laws are various spiritual principles.

1. They pointed to remission of sin; proper worship of God; etc.
2. Israel was called to observe these with a spiritual motive.

B. The principles of these laws are now seen in Christ.

1. He is the fulfillment of them.
2. What the Old Testament ceremonial laws pointed to, Christ now represents.

III. The benefit of ceremonial laws for us:

A. Confirms us in the gospel.

1. We do no longer . . . observe these laws.
2. But we can be instructed and strengthened through them.
 - a. In studying them, we learn more of the significance of the work of the cross.
 - b. For these always point us to the Christ.

B. It regulates our lives.

1. Directs us in the Word of the Lord.
2. That thus we too, in Christ, serve Him properly.

QUESTIONS:

1. Was the Moral Law of the Old Testament abolished?
2. Who are antinomians and what do they maintain?
3. Which ceremonial laws does Rome yet observe?
4. Ought we not abolish also the reading and study of the Old Testament?
5. Do we not err in observing yet certain church holidays?
6. Who are the Nazarenes?
7. What was the Feast of Tabernacles?
8. Show that there is "gospel" also in the Old Testament.
9. What would be the idea of Christian Liberty?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 26

I. The only Intercessor.

A. Our Mediator and Advocate:

1. Access to God must be through a Mediator.
 - a. For the sinner in himself has no right to stand before God.
 - b. One must have the guilt of sin taken away--then only can God bless.
2. The only possible Mediator is Christ.
 - a. He is the Divine Person uniting both human and divine natures.
 - b. Only thus can mediation be provided.

B. Our confidence in His work.

1. Negatively--arguments for not coming directly to Christ:
 - a. We might be "affrighted...by His majesty."
 - 1) The argument seems to bear some weight--considering Who and what Christ is.
 - 2) Thus convince ourselves that we do not dare to come directly through Christ.
 - b. Or: we seek another mediator "according to our fancy."
 - 1) That is: we set up our own standards for the mediator we would want.
 - 2) Then find another mediator instead of Christ Himself.
2. Positively: We can come to Christ with confidence and assurance.
 - a. First: He has revealed His infinite love toward us.
 - 1) He laid down His life for His people--greater love can not be found.
 - 2) And did that for us who were His enemies.
 - b. Secondly: His is the power and majesty.
 - 1) He sits now at the right hand of God--a sign of the highest power and glory.
 - 2) God will surely hear His Son pleading on our behalf.

II. The erroneous Romish view:

A. As such.

1. The argument of Rome:
 - a. These suggest that the saints are in a better position to plead for us than we are.
 - 1) These saints have special places in glory now.
 - 2) and they can bring our needs to Christ and to God.
 - b. Rome implies that this is no different than when we now pray for each other.
 - 1) We do that on the earth: make supplication for another in his great need.
 - 2) And the saints in heaven can do that then for the church on earth.
2. This was the officially adopted view of Rome at the Council of Trent (1545-1563).

B. Its error:

1. It dishonors the saints.
 - a. The saints to whom Roman Catholics pray have discouraged such in their works.
 - b. The saints disapproved for obvious reasons:
 - 1) It would exalt them above what they actually are.
 - 2) It would detract from the intercession of Christ Himself.
2. Such a view is contrary to Scripture itself.
 - a. Peter and Paul and others refused to allow man to worship or pray to them.
 - b. Scripture presents Christ as the only Intercessor: I Tim. 2:5; etc.

III. Proper use of intercession:

A. Negatively:

1. Prayer is not that which is based upon our own worthiness.
 - a. One might argue that he can not come to God through Christ because of his unworthiness.
 - b. Implication is: only those worthy can pray to God through Christ.
2. One who comes through another intercessor, can not be heard.
 - a. Such an one would only fool himself.
 - b. For God is not pleased to answer our prayers except in that way in which He determines we shall pray.

B. Positively:

1. We can pray on the basis of Christ's worthiness.
 - a. Only that is glorifying to Him.
 - b. That is the only way we can pray.
2. And such prayer is always answered.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 26

worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Scripture: Hebrews 7;9; I John 2; Phil. 2; Rom. 8.
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12; 18
3. Westminster Larger Catechism, questions 54,55.

B. Questions for consideration:

1. What is an "intercessor"?
2. How does Christ now intercede for us?
3. Do the saints in heaven know what now takes place on the earth?
4. I John 2:11 mentions "Advocate". What is this?
5. Does not the Spirit also intercede for us? (Cf. Rom. 8).
6. Does Zech. 1:12 or Rev. 5:8 prove that others beside Christ intercede for us?
7. Why is the intercession of Christ a continuous thing?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 27

Article 27

I. The Church

A. The use of the term "church".

1. The English term: church.

a. Comes from a word indicating "house of the Lord."

b. This can be used in various ways:

1) In reference to the building.

2) Or: the total number of those comprising the organization.

3) Or: the elect of God chosen before the foundation of the earth.

2. The usual Hebrew and Greek terms for "church" suggest: to be called out.

a. This emphasizes the separation of the church from the world.

b. And suggests that such takes place through the power of the Word of God Who calls.

3. Its multiformity:

a. Negatively: the suggestion is often made that many churches are part of the multiformity.

1) That there can be many ways to "get to heaven."

2) That each denomination involves a different way of coming there.

b. Positively.

1) The church is manifested in many ways: its worship life; its mercy; its fellowship and communion; etc.

2) So is seen the beauty of God's work in His church.

B. The terms designating the church:

1. Militant--triumphant.

a. Militant represents the church yet on the earth which must fight the battle of faith. (Sometimes this is termed: the church in suffering.)

b. Triumphant is the church in heaven which has the final victory (sometimes termed: the church in glory).

c. Latent--a term referring to the church which must still be Born.

2. Visible--invisible.

a. The invisible church, we believe, is the elect church on earth in whose heart the Spirit has worked, but which work is not yet manifest.

b. The visible church is the invisible church as it comes to full revelation through word and work.

3. Institution--Organism.

a. Organism emphasizes the church which has its life out of Christ and is strengthened through the means He provides.

b. Institution is the same church as it is seen with its officebearers and government directing its life on the earth.

II. The attributes of the church.

A. Its oneness.

1. The Roman Catholic Church maintains that the oneness is found only in itself.

2. We believe that oneness emphasizes the unity of the many members in Christ.

a. There are many denominations now on the earth.

b. But the fact remains that the body of Christ is not divided--and this will become very evident in heaven.

B. Its holiness.

1. The church on this earth never attains unto perfection.

2. But its holiness is twofold:

a. A holiness merited for it in Jesus Christ.

b. A holiness which now belongs to it principally in Christ.

C. Its catholicity. (universality).

1. The Roman Catholic Church insists that this title belongs to it alone.

2. We believe that it refers to the gathering of the church from all the world.

D. Its apostolicity -- that the church is founded also on the infallible instructions of the apostles.

E. (The church endures forever). Never a time on the earth when there is no church.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
ARTICLE 27
Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Scripture: Ephesians 6
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21.
3. The Westminster Larger Catechism, questions 62-65.

B. Questions for further consideration;

1. What is the usual conception of the "invisible" church? How does it differ from the suggested usage in the outline? Any reason for this difference?
2. Is the church on earth also "triumphant"? If so, how?
3. What is suggested by the term "militant"?
4. What does Eph. 6 suggest about proper militancy?
5. Is it in any way the calling of the church to be militant in the sense that this is generally understood today?
6. Is there a difference between the militancy of the body of Christ in the Old Testament and in the New?
7. What is the principal part of the armor of the child of God?
8. Can you find other names of the "church" as given in Scripture?
9. When did the church have its beginning? Give reasons for answer.
10. What is the Roman Catholic view of apostolicity?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 28

I. The calling to belong to the church.

A. The relationship of the church to salvation:

1. The church represents the assembly of those saved.
 - a. These are called out of the world.
 - b. And in profession and walk seek as a body to praise the Name of God.
2. Out of that church there is no salvation.
 - a. Those in heathendom are not saved somehow apart from it.
 - 1) There is no knowledge of salvation apart from the proclaimed Word.
 - 2) The heathen can not come to such knowledge from "natural" revelation.
 - b. Nor may any simply maintain that he will have nothing to do with the church.
 - 1) One is called to belong to the purest manifestation of the church.
 - 2) One can not expect to be saved apart from proper membership in that church.
 - a) In it are the means of grace God has given for strengthening His people.
 - b) In it there is the foretaste of fellowship and communion of saints.

B. Therefore the elect Christian must belong to this church.

1. Negatively: he may not withdraw from it.
 - a. Sometimes one is inclined to do this when he doesn't get "his way."
 - b. Or maintains that the views of that church are not precisely what he believes.
 - 1) One might maintain: no smoking; or: no drinking in any way.
 - 2) In the case of certain "non-essential" things, these can not be the basis for withdrawing from the church.
 - 3) Nor may one withdraw without seeking to find a purer manifestation of the church to which to belong.
2. Positively: one is called to unite to the purest manifestation of the church.

II. Man's calling within the church.

A. Maintaining the unity of the church.

1. Not by the sacrificing of the truth.
- 2; But by maintaining it faithfully together.

B. Submitting to true doctrine.

C. Submitting to the discipline of the church.

D. Bowing under the yoke of Christ.

1. That one faithfully labors within the church of Christ.
2. That one is ready to suffer for His Name's sake.

E. Mutually assisting one another.

1. That one use his time, talents, possessions to that end.
2. Thus work as members of one body.

III. The duty of believers.

A. Negatively: separation from all who do not belong to that church.

1. From this world.
 - a. One has his duties and labor on the earth.
 - b. But can not have fellowship, communion, unity with natural man.
2. From the false church.
 - a. When the church departs from the truth, reformation is necessary.
 - b. But at any rate, one is called to unite with those who confess the truth.

B. Positively:

1. One is called to join the church.
 - a. That must be his primary concern--join it wheresoever it may be.
 - b. This duty takes precedence over all other activities.
2. Required to join that in the face of every difficulty.
 - a. There were and will be times when the result of union is persecution.
 - b. But not even the edicts of princes can change the demand of God.
 - 1) He who would spare himself persecution, acts contrary to the ordinance of God.
 - 2) And God must grant grace that one be so willing to maintain God's ordinance.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 28
Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Scripture: John 10; Eph. 5.
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21.
3. Westminster Larger Catechism, questions 62-65.

B. Questions for further consideration:

1. When does one "join the church?"
2. What difference is there between this article on the necessity of belonging to the church and the Roman Catholic view that salvation is only possible in their church?
3. How does church membership differ from society membership?
4. How does reformation take place within a church?
5. How can one use his time and talents most profitably within the church?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 29

- I. The marks of the true church:
- A. What must be distinguished:
 - 1. There are the "sects"
 - 2. Overagainst this stands the church--which also includes hypocrites.
 - B. The marks of the true church:
 - 1. The idea of "marks".
 - a. These are distinguishing characteristics.
 - b. Thus: that which can clearly be basis for identification of an object.
 - 2. These three marks are:
 - a. The pure preaching of the Gospel.
 - 1) This can not be the ideas or theories of man to better himself on the earth.
 - 2) But must present Christ and Him crucified--the center of all preaching.
 - b. The proper administration of the sacraments.
 - 1) Administered as Scripture sets this forth.
 - 2) Then too, the proper number of sacraments.
 - c. Christian discipline.
 - 1) Supervision of the life and walk of the members of the church.
 - 2) That thus God may be glorified in the members of that church.
 - 3. The relationship between these three marks:
 - a. The preaching of the Word is central.
 - 1) The sacraments must reinforce the truths of the preaching.
 - 2) And preaching is the first means of discipline too.
 - b. But all three must be present.
 - 1) Where one is lacking, the others soon fail
 - 2) Present ecumenical trends show how these break down.
- II. Marks of true Christians.
- A. As such:
 - 1. Faith.
 - a. By it one recognizes and confesses Christ as his Savior.
 - b. A principal mark out of which all the others proceed.
 - 2. One avoids sin.
 - 3. One follows righteousness.
 - 4. One loves the true God.
 - 5. One loves the neighbor.
 - 6. One turns not aside from the right way.
 - 7. There is the crucifixion of the flesh and the works thereof.
 - B. Yet the Christian remains imperfect while on the earth.
 - 1. The "perfectionist" is wrong.
 - a. He maintains that a sinless state is possible for the christian on the earth.
 - b. ut in this he deceives himself.
 - 2. But in us:
 - a. There remains great infirmities.
 - b. And we are called to fight against these through the Holy Spirit.
- III. Marks of the false church:
- A. Ideas of "false church."
 - 1. There have been suggestions that one denomination is "true", all else "false."
 - 2. We would rather say that there are different degrees tending toward the false.
 - a. No church is perfect and without sin.
 - b. But within some denominations, more than others, there is the maintenance of certain false doctrines--which lead eventually toward the totally false church.
 - B. Marks of that false church:
 - 1. Ascribes more power and authority to self and her ordinances than to the Word of God.
 - a. The Roman Catholic church is where this can be seen particularly.
 - b. For this "false" church will not submit to the yoke of Christ.
 - 2. It does not administer the sacraments aright.
 - 3. Persecutes those who live holly according to the Word of God.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 29

Worksheet

A. Suppelemntary reading:

1. John 8; II Timothy 4; Hosea 4
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Days 25; 31
3. Canons of Dordt, Head III-IV: 8,9,10.
4. Westminister Larger Catechism, Q. 159; 160; 161.

B. Questions for further consideration:

1. What do you understand by the term "sects?"
2. What is a "hypocrite?"
3. What is included in the "preaching of the gospel"? Why is this expression used?
4. Are there any completely false churches today? When does it become completely false?
5. What is wrong with the way the Roman Catholics celebrate their eucharist?
6. How does one know when the pure preaching of the Word takes place?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 30

I. Church government.

A. As such.

1. The church is "governed by that spiritual polity" of Christ given in the Bible.
 - a. The church is not an ungovernable and ungoverned body.
 - b. But its government is based upon the Word of God.
2. Specifically, this spiritual polity includes:
 - a. Christ as the King and Head of His church.
 - 1) Apart from Him, there can be no ~~xx~~ rule or government.
 - 2) He does this now through His Word and Spirit.
 - b. Christ appoints through the church men who execute His rule.
 - 1) These men have no right to rule in themselves.
 - 2) But exercise the rule Christ places in them.
 - c. The authority within the church is seen particularly in the "keys of the kingdom."

B. Various forms of church government:

1. Hierarchical form of government. (Rule from the top)
 - a. Roman Catholic Church is such--the pope rules.
 - b. Episcopal is a modified form of this.
2. Congregational form of government--the people rule.
 - a. Authority resides within the total membership of the local congregation.
 - b. Common form of government among congregationalists and also many baptists.
3. Presbyterian form of government.
 - a. In this, the elders have the rule within the congregation.
 - b. Within Reformed church government, the consistory governs; it is the highest ruling body of the church.
 - 1) Reformed government includes also classis and synod.
 - 2) These are advisory bodies--whose advice the churches agree to follow as long as they remain in denominational unity.

II. Officebearers in the church.

A. These are of three sorts:

1. Ministers of the Word--functioning particularly in the prophetic office.
2. Elders--functioning in the office of kingship.
3. Deacon--functioning in the office of priest.
 - a. Deacons are to reflect the mercy of Christ.
 - b. Were first appointed in Acts at the command of the apostles.

B. Special offices within the church:

1. Apostle.
 - a. This office is not continued after the death of the twelve--contrary to the belief of Rome.
 - b. A special office for the early new testament church for the purpose of its firm establishment.
2. Evangelist.
 - a. Many go under this name yet today.
 - b. But this appears also to be a special office at the time of the apostles.

III. Purpose for the establishment of offices within the church:

A. To preserve true religion.

1. God has given us these whereby the means of grace may be administered.
2. To be separated from this, would result in departure also from the Word of God.

B. The true doctrine is propagated.

1. This is through the regular preaching.
2. But also that in an organized way mission work is conducted.

C. Transgressors are punished through spiritual means.

1. The only authority in the church involves the key-power.
2. And serves then the purpose of pointing the sinner to his sin.

D. Poor and distressed are relieved and comforted.

1. This too is particularly the calling of the church through its diaconate.
2. That others also behold the significance of Christ's work in us.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 31

I. The officebearers chosen:

A. How these are chosen.

1. The article implies opposition to the Hierarchical system of Rome.
 - a. Romish church rules from top down with the pope as supreme authority.
 - b. Then officebearers are appointed by higher authority and imposed upon congregations.
2. The Confession suggests what is the proper and Reformed system of appointment:
 - a. God must call to office; Christ exercises His office through officebearers so chosen.
 - b. That choosing of officebearers is as follows:
 - 1) There must be a lawful nomination within the consistory of the church.
 - 2) From the nomination, an election is held at a "congregational" meeting.
 - 3) Those elected are properly installed and ordained into office.
 - c. All of this must be done in a spiritual manner.
 - 1) It must be done prayerfully. Why?
 - 2) And it must be done in the manner prescribed by God's Word--especially mentioned is the laying on of hands (I Tim. 4:14; I Tim. 5:22).

D. Significance:

1. Thus there is a proper emphasis upon the call by God.
 - a. The method must emphasize that God calls.
 - b. But God uses means to accomplish this purpose.
2. And there is an emphasis upon the call which comes in the way of good order.

II. Seeking the office.

A. There is presented the problem of intrusion into the office.

1. The danger warned against.
 - a. Some have used devious means to seek the office: simony; politicing; etc.
 - 1) These may feel themselves qualified--but seem never to be called.
 - 2) Or these have the desire for the office because of love of praise of men, etc.
 - b. Therefore the need to emphasize the proper way of obtaining the office.
2. There is a proper desire for the office: I Tim. 3:1.
 - a. One can desire the office that therein he may glorify his God.
 - b. And can prepare himself for that time when he may serve:
 - 1) Through careful study of Scripture.
 - 2) Through prayer to his God.

B. Preparation for the ministry:

1. There is the so-called "internal call".
 - a. That God works in the heart the desire to serve in the ministry.
 - b. That God provides the requisite talents for that purpose.
2. And there is the "external call"
 - a. That God provides the way whereby proper training can be obtained.
 - b. That God, through the church, calls to a particular place.

III. The position of officebearers:

A. The equality of ministers.

1. The Confession again by implication rejects the hierarchy of Rome.
2. And emphasizes that all ministers of the gospel are equally under Christ in the ministry of the Word.

B. The necessary respect for the office:

1. Respect for the office has been, and is today, lacking.
 - a. There is no care or concern about that calling.
 - b. This is evident in lack of respect in address and in action.
 - c. Basically, this is lack of respect for the office of Christ.
 - 1) This is violation of the fifth commandment.
 - 2) And must be severely condemned.
2. But respect must be on the basis of the fact that the office is a reflection of the power of Christ within the church.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 31

Worksheet

A. Supplementary reading:

1. Acts 1:23-26; 6:1-6; 14:23; I Tim. 3
2. Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 39
3. Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 124, 125, 158, 159
4. Church Order, Articles 2-28

B. Questions for further consideration:

1. Would you maintain that the Reformed method of election of officebearers is a democratic method?
2. What is "simony"? What is the origin of this word?
3. What is the significance of the laying on of hands?
4. Why do we not lay hands upon elders and deacons? Should we, perhaps?
5. Why does the consistory nominate those who are to be chosen to office?
6. Does the Church Order suggest other methods of choosing to office than that which we presently practice?
7. What of the choosing of officebearers by lot? Cf. Acts 1.
8. What are the qualifications for serving in office?
9. What must our evaluation be of one who maintains: I am not qualified to serve in an office?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 32

I. Church Ordinances.

A. Those given in Scripture.

1. These involve many spiritual relationships.
 - a. Concerning the means of grace: preaching and sacraments.
 - b. Concerning officebearers: who they can be; requirements for them.
 - c. Concerning discipline: Matt. 16:19; 18¹⁸,18.
 - d. Concerning proper conversation and walk.
2. But Scripture does not present all the details of order for the church.
 - a. There is no requirement concerning the form of our worship.
 - b. No stipulations concerning the number of worship services, etc.

D. Those given through decision of the church itself in the Church Order.

1. We have as a guide the Church Order of Dort. This is divided as follows:
 - a. Articles 2-28: on the offices.
 - b. Articles 29-52: on ecclesiastical assemblies.
 - c. Articles 53-70: on doctrines, sacraments, and ceremonies.
 - d. Articles 71-84: on censure and admonition.
2. Our church order has remained basically unchanged in 400 years.
 - a. We have added decisions which are appended as footnotes.
 - b. In recent years Reformed churches have drastically revised the Church Order.
 - c. But we believe there is something beautiful in it as it now exists:
 - 1) It is very brief--hardly all-comprehensive.
 - 2) But touches upon the essentials in which the church must be guided.

II. The limitations upon church ordinances:

A. As such.

1. The church must continue to maintain that which Christ has instituted.
 - a. This is being challenged today when the infallibility of Scripture itself is denied.
 - b. Yet the Word itself is the infallible rule for the Church of Christ.
2. But the church rejects all human inventions which bind the conscience.

B. Significance:

1. Opposed to Roman Catholicism.
 - a. These, over the years, had built up a vast catalog of rules and regulations.
 - b. And the Church in the Netherlands had recently been freed of these at the time of the reformation.
2. The church rather must be guided by Scripture itself.

III. The place of church discipline:

A. There is special emphasis upon this.

1. Already then there was the danger that this be forgotten.
 - a. Man prefers to be his own guide--he will not have Christ to rule over him.
 - b. The church then insisted that the Christian must walk in all holiness--and the church must see to this.
2. And this necessity of discipline is obvious especially today.

B. The method of discipline:

1. Centrally, this is done through the preaching of the Word of God.
2. Then, if necessary, this is done by the elders of the church.
 - a. There is first "minor excommunication" or "silent censure."
 - b. Then follows "major excommunication".
 - 1) There are the "steps" of admonition.
 - a) The announcement of the sin without identifying the sinner.
 - b) The announcement of both the sin and the sinner (after approval is given by classis).
 - c) The announcement that after a specified date the sinner will be cut off from the church unless there is repentance.
 - 2) Then follows final excommunication:
 - a) This does not declare that one to be reprobate.
 - b) But a means yet to lead to repentance--and to declare that except there be such repentance, there is no place in the kingdom of heaven for such an one.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 32

worksheet

A. Supplementary reading;

1. Matthew 18; Eph. 4.
2. Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 39
3. Review the contents of the Church Order.

B. Questions for further consideration:

1. What is the difference between "private" and "public" sins?
2. Why is our Church Order so very brief?
3. Is the church order out of date--since it is over 400 years old?
4. Do we observe every article of the church order completely?
5. What would rules of "human invention" be?
6. Why ought we to worship God twice each Sunday? Why not four times?

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION

Article 33

I. The sacraments:

A. As such.

1. These are "means of grace."
 - a. Means are things taken from the world about us and used to serve a definite end.
 - b. Here: Physical things are appropriately chosen to reveal spiritual reality.
 - 1) These physical means are necessary for the life of the Christian.
 - 2) But: these are used to sustain spiritual life--not give it.
2. These means are administered by the church.
 - a. These are not simply to be administered by anyone--nor apart from the church.
 - b. But God sets forth the proper way of using these for the benefit of His own.

B. Their number:

1. The view of the Roman Catholic Church.
 - a. These speak of seven sacraments.
 - b. And believe that grace is in the sacrament itself.
2. We maintain two--according to the following standard:
 - a. It must be instituted by Christ.
 - b. It must be given for regular use within the church.

II. Their purpose.

A. Our "weaknesses and infirmities" require this.

1. These are:
 - a. The fact that we are earthly.
 - 1) It is difficult for us to understand and grasp the heavenly.
 - 2) We are creatures dependent ~~xxxx~~ much upon sight and touch.
 - b. But also we are sinners.
 - 1) We remain sinners as long as we live on the earth.
 - 2) We also need many reminders of the promise of God to deliver us through Christ.
2. Therefore God, through the means of grace, provides:
 - a. Not only the hearing of the Word preached.
 - b. But also comes to us through our other senses: seeing, touch, taste.
 - 1) This impresses itself the more on the child of God.
 - 2) Thus is reassured in the promise of our God.

B. What the sacraments do:

1. Negatively:
 - a. These do not bestow grace upon one.
 - 1) It is not the eating that gives the grace of God.
 - 2) Nor are these sacraments in themselves essential unto salvation.
 - b. This view of a "grace" of God in things we reject.
2. Positively:
 - a. The Holy Spirit uses visible means to apply spiritual truths.
 - b. And there is a real benefit bestowed upon the Christian spiritually through the faithful use of the sacraments.

III. Their relationship to the Word.

A. The preaching of the Word is the central means of grace.

1. Central for several reasons:
 - a. It is God's revelation to us--apart from which we could not understand the sacraments.
 - b. Of the two (preaching and sacraments), the first is most indispensable.
 - c. The sacraments confirm in a visible way what is declared in the Word.
2. Together these serve to strengthen the saints.

B. The sacraments serve as signs and seals.

1. What these are:
 - a. A sign points to that which is as yet unseen.
 - b. A seal is a guarantee that a promise will be realized.
2. These serve as signs and seals of the righteousness by faith through Christ.
 - a. These confirm what Scripture declares.
 - b. Thus also serve to assure us of God's work in us.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 34

Introduction: there have been various views of the Lord's Supper.

- A. The Roman Catholic view: Transubstantiation.
 - 1. This teaches that the bread and wine change ~~into~~ into the body and blood of Christ when the priest speaks the word of consecration.
 - 2. It is based upon John 6 and the words of institution: "This is my body."
 - 3. But it is very wrong:
 - a. Suggests that the grace of God is in things.
 - b. God then would deceive with respect to the elements used.
 - c. It results in idolatry.
 - d. It misunderstands the words of Christ.
 - B. Lutheran view: Consubstantiation.
 - 1. These believe that the body of Christ is in and under the bread and wine.
 - 2. This is also based on the words of institution.
 - 3. We reject it for many of the same reasons listed above.
 - C. View of Zwingli: it is but a feast of remembrance.
 - D. Reformed view: the Christian partakes spiritually of the body of Christ as he partakes of the literal bread and wine.
- I. The purpose and work of the Lord's Supper.
- A. It is the sign of nourishment and support of the new life of Christ in us.
 - 1. This is seen:
 - a. In that the supper is repeatedly administered--even as we must repeatedly eat.
 - b. And administered to confessing believers.
 - 2. The elements are appropriate also for this:
 - a. The bread (the staff of life) is used to suggest nourishment thru Christ's body.
 - b. The wine suggests both the redness of blood and the spiritual joy in Christ.
 - B. Its work:
 - 1. It strengthens the Christian spiritually--particularly his faith.
 - 2. Thus it is more than a "memorial" feast.
- II. Proper partakers of the supper--and the manner of their partaking.
- A. Christ gave the supper for believers.
 - 1. Unbelievers partake to their condemnation (did Judas Iscariot partake?).
 - 2. Therefore we are to rightly examine ourselves:
 - a. To see our sins.
 - b. To behold the deliverance in the cross of Christ.
 - c. To see in us the desire to walk in all holiness.
 - B. It is received in the assembly of God.
 - 1. It may not be administered apart from the church.
 - 2. But it is given by Christ to the church:
 - a. To be administered to the church with its elders, deacons, and ministers.
 - b. To be administered with the preaching of the Word.
 - 1) The Word must also be central in this sacrament.
 - 2) The sacrament must serve to emphasize the truth of the preaching.
- III. Rejection of profanations:
- A. The Heidelberg Catechism calls the mass "an accursed idolatry." Is this too strong?
 - 1. Undoubtedly, this article has in mind especially the Romish celebration.
 - 2. And emphasizes how that such distortions are to be condemned.
 - B. Also all modern-day profanations are to be condemned.
 - 1. Many modern worship services have distorted the idea of communion at the Lord's table.
 - 2. One must beware of all of this too.

Questions:

- 1. What does the article mean when it says that we really partake of Christ's body?
- 2. What of the change made from common to individual cups?
- 3. What form must be used in the celebration of the Lord's Supper?
- 4. Ought communion to be administered more frequently than we do?
- 5. Are there other ways in which communion service could be improved?