

low countries, as they were then known, consisted of seventeen provinces in Netherlands and Belgium and were under the sway of the Roman Catholic Spaniards. The instigator of the violent persecutions was the sovereign Phillip II, son of Charles V, and he used as his instruments the members of the Spanish Inquisition. This organization had its agents everywhere who sought out the opponents of the Romish faith. And when they found them, they would subject them to the most cruel tortures that perverted minds can imagine, and finally kill them with most cruel deaths. The chief leader of this inquisition later became the well-known Duke of Alva. It is estimated by some that no fewer than 100,000 suffered martyrdom for the cause of Jesus Christ at this time.

Guido de Bres was born in Mons in the year 1522. He was born a Roman Catholic but was converted to Protestantism before the age of 25 after a careful study of the Scriptures. When persecution broke out in 1548, he was banished from his country, and went to England for a time where he studied for the ministry. He soon came back and settled in Ryssel as a preacher. Persecution became so intense that his congregation was scattered and he fled to Frankfurt in Germany and later to Switzerland. In 1559 he returned and served various churches in the southern part of what is now Belgium, but often in disguise for safety's sake. It was at this time that the confession was composed with the aid of Adrian de Saravia, Professor in Leyden; H. Moditus and G. Wangen. In 1561 when a new investigation of Protestantism was instituted, de Bres presented his confession to the authorities to prove that he was not a revolutionist, but that the protestant doctrines were founded upon the Word of God. It had no effect upon the authorities at all, and the life of de Bres was in constant danger. He was forced to flee from place to place seeking refuge, until in 1566 he settled in Valenciennes, a protestant stronghold, where he served as minister. But shortly thereafter the city was besieged by the Roman Catholic governor who forced the city to surrender. Guido and several ministers fled, but were captured in a few hours, and brought back to the city. It was but the work of few hours to try him, convict him and hang him. So the author of this confession died in the public place of Valenciennes for the faith he had so valiantly defended.

The creed itself was soon accepted by the reformed churches in the Netherlands. It was first printed in 1566 after revisions by Francis Junious of Bourges, and afterwards translated in German, Dutch, and Latin. It was approved and adopted by several Synods, and was finally revised and adopted by the great Synod of Dordrecht together with the Canons, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Church Order. Since then it has been recognized by the reformed churches in the Netherlands, Africa and America as part of their confession.

A Brief Outline of the Creed.

Belief in God--Art. 1.

Revelation--Art. 2.

The Reformed faith concerning the Scriptures--Arts. 3-7

The Doctrine of God (Theology)--Arts. 8-11.

The Doctrine of Man (Anthropology)--Arts. 12-15.

The Doctrine of Election--Art. 16.

The Recovery of Fallen Man--Art. 17.

The Doctrine of Christ--Arts. 18-22. (Christology)

The Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology) Arts. 22-24.

Abolishing of the Law--Art. 25.

Christ's Intercession--Art. 26.

The Doctrine of the Church (Ecclesiology)--Arts. 27-35.

The Magistrates--Art. 36.

The Doctrine of the last things (Eschatology)--Art. 37.

As you notice, the outline follows the well-known division of doctrine into 6 parts.

THE NETHERLANDS CONFESSION
Article 1 - That there is One Only God

--Page 3

- A. The opening words of this article are important:
1. It emphasizes first of all that what is contained in the confession is the object of faith. Natural understanding and a corrupt heart can never believe what is contained in the creed, but will always corrupt the truth.
 2. What the believer believes in his heart, he also confesses with his mouth, even in a wicked world that hates the truth. A true faith inevitably results in an oral confession.
 3. The confession proceeds theocentrically. This is a mark of the reformed faith. Lutheranism was always rather soteriological and anthropological. But the Calvinistic reformation always emphasized God. To begin with God means:
 - a. To find in Him the beginning of all truth.
 - b. To speak essentially of nothing else but God in the entire confession.
 - c. To end with His glory.It is important to understand the truth concerning God, therefore, for how we say "God" will profoundly influence how we say "Man", "Salvation", "Christ", "Church", and "Last Things".
- B. The article first speaks of God's Being. Of His being it says that He is
1. One. This means that He is the only God. There is none besides Him in heaven or on earth. This also means that He is the absolutely self-sufficient One. He is wholly complete and perfect in Himself and has no need of anyone or any being outside of Himself to perfect His glory or to make His life more rich.
 - a. Overagainst the error of Deism the church has always confessed that God is immanent. I.e., that God's whole being is in every particle of all the creation.
 - b. Overagainst the error of Pantheism, the church has always confessed that God is transcendent. That is, that He is absolutely above all the creature, infinitely to be distinguished and separated from it.
 2. Simple. God is not divisible, but remains One in all His attributes and works. There is never any division or essential difference between any of God's attributes. For His attributes are His Being and are one in Him. And in all His works He remains the one true God, Who does all things.
 3. Spiritual. His being or essence is essentially different from ours or from the creatures. There is no similarity at all between the being of creation and the being of God. And this includes the world of spirits. God is not like the angels in that they are spiritual beings; He is also infinitely different from them. For this reason God is not knowable by man. Man can never know God by Himself. The powers of his intellect and the reasonableness of His logic will never bring him to a knowledge of God. No mystical experience and no emotional inner movement will cause him to know the Most High. If God is to be known, He must reveal Himself.
- C. Some of God's attributes are also mentioned in this article. Usually the attributes of God are divided between communicable and incommunicable attributes. The former refer to those which belong to God alone; the latter to those which are reflected in man.
1. The incommunicable attributes mentioned are:
 - a. Eternity--God's eternity is not time infinitely extended. This is a rather common misconception. The eternity of God is His transcendence above time. That means that God is essentially above time, is not bound by it, is not influenced by it, and is above it with all His being and counsel.
 - b. Incomprehensibility--Although God can be known, He cannot be comprehended. If the creature could comprehend God, God would not be God any more, for He would be bound by the limits of the human mind. He is infinitely extended beyond man's knowledge of Him, and even beyond His own revelation in creation and Scripture.

Article 2 - By what means God is made known unto us

- A. The knowledge of God.
1. Relation between this article and Article 1. The confession of God by the believer presupposes that God can be known. One cannot confess anything concerning God except one know Him.
 2. And yet there is a difference between knowledge and comprehension. To know God does not imply comprehension. "Can'st thou by searching find out God?" Job. 11:7. To say that the human finite mind can comprehend God is to deny His infinity.
 3. But this knowledge of God is not merely an intellectual knowledge, but is spiritual and ethical and comes from the heart. "For to know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent is life eternal." John 17:3.
 4. Thus the only way to know God is through revelation.
 - a. Neither reasoning nor some subjective "inner light" or false mysticism can ever result in a knowledge of God. To say that the powers of reason can result in a knowledge of God is to fall into the error of rationalism which is ultimately skepticism. All quakerism and subjective religion speaks of an inner light as the means to the knowledge of God. This is impossible.
 - b. This implies:
 - 1) God must reveal Himself. God knows Himself, and He alone. And because He is God, no man can ascend to heaven to discover God. God must come down to man in revelation and make Himself known. Then alone will we know Who and What God is. We can only listen and bow.
 - 2) God must reveal Himself in a way that can be understood by man. For man is the creature and God is the Creator. There is an infinite gap between the two. The wonder of revelation is that the infinite God adapts a correct revelation of Himself to the understanding of a finite creature. The result is that revelation is complete and adequate for our salvation, or in the words of this article, it is "full...as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation." But revelation also always points to infinite depths in God that still remain.
 - 3) God must make us capable of receiving this revelation. In perfection this was by virtue of man's very creation in the image of God. This he lost through sin. This is renewed by the operation of the Spirit of Jesus Christ whereby we are given eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to understand." Without the Spirit we are blind and deaf to the revelation of God.
- B. The revelation of God in nature.
1. Creation and providence are the handiwork of God. In the words of Scripture, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night sheweth knowledge." Ps. 19:1, 2. Or in the words of this article, "It is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God...." Or as Augustine once wrote in his Confessions, "And what is this? I asked the earth, and it answered me, 'I am not He;' and whatsoever are in it, confessed the same. I asked the sea and the deeps, and the living creeping things, and they answered, 'We are not thy God, seek above us.' I asked the moving air; and the whole air with his inhabitants answered, 'Anaximenes was deceived, I am not God.' I asked the heavens, sun, moon, stars, 'Nor (say they) are we the God whom thou seekest.' And I replied unto all the things which encompass the door of my flesh; 'Ye have told me of my God, that ye are not He; toll me something of Him.' And they cried out with a loud voice, 'He made us.'"
 2. Through creation God reveals His power and Godhead by a general testimony of the Spirit in the hearts of all men. And although this is sufficient to leave men without excuse, by it they can never come to a saving knowledge of God, or construct what is sometimes called a "natural theology".

While Articles two through seven speak of the Holy Scriptures, Article 3 speaks of the Inspiration of the written Word of God.

A. Revelation.

1. In Article 2 is mentioned the revelation of God in the "creation, preservation and government of the universe." This article speaks of a special revelation of God--a different Word which He spoke by which He revealed Himself to His fallen people. This Word as such is not the Bible, but the Word which God caused His people to hear.
 - a. The Bible itself is, after all, of comparatively recent origin. There was no written copy of the Word of God for the first 2000 years of the history of the world. Then the writing of the Old Testament was spread over another 2000 years. The last book of the New Testament was probably written between 90 and 95 A.D. But even then the church as a whole did not have the Bible, for it was written on scrolls and in the hands of only a few scholars and monks for many years. It was not until the invention of the printing press about 450 years ago that it was possible for every believer to have possession of the Bible.
 - b. But the believers were never without the Word of God. For from the very beginning when God preached the Protevangel to our first parents in Paradise, God always caused His Word to be preached.
2. This revelation took on many forms:
 - a. Direct speech of God--To Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham etc.
 - b. By angels--To Abraham, Manoah, Zacharias, Mary, the Shepherds, the women at the tomb of Jesus.
 - c. By dreams--To Jacob, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Pilate's wife.
 - d. By visions--To Daniel, Zechariah, Ezechiel, Peter.
 - e. By signs and wonders--To Israel through Moses, Elijah, Elisha etc.
 - f. By direct revelation--For God spoke His Word to the prophets; Christ promised the Spirit of truth,
 - g. Or in the words of the Heidelberg Catechism: "...the holy gospel...which God first revealed in Paradise; and afterwards published by the patriarchs and prophets, and represented by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and lastly, has fulfilled it by his only begotten Son". Answer 19.

B. Inspiration.

1. When we speak of inspiration, we usually refer particularly to the recording of the Words of God's revelation. Although it must be understood that the revelation itself is also a part of inspiration.
2. There are several false views of inspiration which we will mention:
 - a. The Mechanical Theory--This theory teaches that the secondary authors of Holy Writ were nothing more than dictation machines, which the Holy Spirit used as machines to write the Scriptures. This is not according to Scripture, nor does it fit the character of Holy Writ.
 - b. The Dynamic Theory which teaches that the Holy Spirit only put certain general ideas in the minds of the authors, and they put them in their own words and with their own embellishments.
3. The correct view of inspiration is:
 - a. That the Scriptures are entirely inspired in every part. Their whole contents are the result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is referred to as plenary inspiration.
 - b. That the Scriptures are verbally inspired. Every word is just the word that was intended by the Holy Ghost. Even the use of a plural instead of a singular is important, for the distinction was made by the Spirit.
 - c. Inspiration is therefore the work of the Holy Spirit of Christ whereby He moved, guided, and directed certain authors to record the Words of the revelation of God.

4. It is sometimes objected, however, that because secondary authors were used in the preparation of the Scriptures, there is a human element as well as a divine in Holy Writ. Yet such can never be the case. Consider the following:
 - a. That God eternally determined who were to be the authors of the record of His revelation.
 - b. That God prepared from eternity the character, personality, ability, talent and other natural and spiritual gifts of each individual author.
 - c. That God prepared in time each man for that particular work. He prepared their birth, nationality, time of birth. He prepared Moses by instruction in Pharaoh's court, by forty years of solitude in the wilderness. He prepared David on the hillsides caring for sheep, in his fleeing from King Saul. He prepared Amos and called him from the herds, Matthew in the toll house, Paul at the feet of Gamaliel and one who persecuted the church. David, e.g., could only write Psalm 23 because he had cared for sheep when he was young. And many of his Psalms concerning the enemies of the Lord could only be written because he had fought the Lord's battles for many years.
 - d. And so God eternally prepared each author and in time called him for the particular work of writing a particular part of the Scriptures.
 - e. Therefore, also, although each word of Scripture is infallibly inspired by the Holy Spirit, nevertheless, the Spirit inspired only in harmony with the nature, personality, character and talents of each author. There is difference between John and Paul, between Moses and Joshua, between Isaiah and Ezekiel. But together, the Word of God forms one complete and organic whole.

Article IV - Canonical Books of the Holy Scripture

The main point of this article is an enumeration of the books which the reformed churches accept as constituting the Holy Scriptures. We may notice in connection with this article:

A. The books which make up our Bible are called "canonical books". The word "canon" means

1. Literally, a straight rod or a bar, as a ruler used by masons and carpenters. Thus it means keeping something straight, or testing for straightness.
2. With regard to Scripture, it is used sometimes metaphorically, and then means that the Scriptures are the rule or norm for Christian conduct. They are the standard for a walk according to God's will.
3. Sometimes the word is also used passively, and then means that the Scriptures are considered to be the Word of God as measured and accepted by the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

B. About this article in general we may notice:

1. The books are mentioned in the order found in our Bibles.
2. The two books of the Chronicles are also given the name "Paralipomenon". This word means literally "a brief passing over", and was probably given that name to indicate that the Chronicles record events passed over in the other historical books of the Old Testament.
3. The book of Lamentations is omitted, probably included in the prophecy of Jeremiah.
4. The author of the Hebrews is said to be Paul, which is doubtful to say the least.

Article V - From whence the Holy Scriptures derive their dignity and authority.

A. The main thought of this article is that we believe to be true all that is contained in this books of the Holy Scriptures; and we accept them as the regulation, foundation and confirmation of our faith. The proof for this is given as follows:

1. Negatively--We do not so much receive them because the church receives them and approves them as such. This is evidently included as a statement against the Romish church which teaches that nothing may be accepted as true by the laity but that which is approved by the church institute.
2. But rather because "the Holy Spirit witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God."
3. Also, they carry this same evidence in themselves.
4. This, it is said, ought to be evident from the fact that what the Scriptures foretold is now coming to pass.

B. In close connection with this however, we may ask the question as to how the Canon was determined, and how we may know what books belong to the Canon of the Scriptures. There was a period during Luther's life, for example, when he wished to throw the book of James out of the Bible. In answer to this we may remark:

1. The church determined which books belonged to the Canon as directed by the Holy Spirit. Christ Himself had promised them the Spirit that would lead them into all truth. John 14:26; John 16:13.
2. The old testament Church fixed the Canon before the coming of Christ. And Christ and His disciples always recognized that Canon referring to the whole Old Testament as the law and the prophets. They always made the Scriptures themselves the last court of appeal with their constant "It is written...."
3. The apostles themselves were deeply conscious of the fact that they did not write their own word, but the Word of God. I Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 3:16 etc.
4. So after the last book was written, the church gathered all the books together as the Scriptures. The Canon was definitely fixed by the church at Carthage where the Synod was held in 397.

5. We may be assured that this decision of the church is correct, because that assurance which we have is based upon the testimony of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit witnesseth in our hearts in connection with our study of the Scriptures that they are the full and complete and true Word of God. The Spirit which we possess today is the same Spirit which guided the church when the Canon was formed.

Article VI - The difference between the canonical and apocryphal books.

The word "apocryphal" means "hidden, dark, or difficult to understand". These books which are called by this name appeared in the last part of the history of the Old Testament Church and in the early part of the history of the new. They often made the claim that they were inspired even as the other books, but were evidently an attempt on the part of the devil to confuse the mind of the church with respect to the Scriptures. These books are mentioned in this article and are accepted as Scripture by the Romish Church. But these books have always been rejected by the church because

1. It is immediately evident upon reading them that the lofty language of the Scriptures is not present.
2. Those written before the time of Jesus had never been accepted by the church of the old dispensation, nor were later writings accepted by the church of the new. The apostles and Christ himself never refers to them.
3. They stand in conflict with themselves and with the rest of Scripture, and contain statements which are definitely untrue, the result of fanciful imaginations.
4. The church may therefore read them for instruction inasmuch as they agree with the rest of Scripture.
5. But we may never ascribe to them such "power and efficacy, as that we may from their testimony confirm any point of faith, or of the christian religion; much less detract from the authority of the other sacred books."

Article VII - The sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, to be the only rule of faith.

In this article is taught the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. You notice that in articles III-VII all the attributes of the Holy Scriptures are mentioned or implied: Authority, necessity, perspecuity and sufficiency.

- A. In the Scriptures is taught all that is necessary to our salvation.
 1. Therefore no man may teach anything but was in contained therein.
 2. No man may add thereto, nor subtract from it.
 3. Therefore we consider neither "of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or sucession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God." And the reason is "that the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself.
- B. It follows from this that
 1. We may never approach the Scriptures with an open mind to determine for ourselves what is inspired and what is not,
 2. We are obligated to bow unconditionally before the Scriptures, to believe them without question, to search them as the Light that shines in our darkness, to make use of them daily as our spiritual meat and drink unto eternal life. When man speaks we may criticize; when God speaks we must be silent and listen. Only in that way will be experience the power of the Word in our lives.
 3. We must also join that church where that Word is preached.

That God is one in Essence, yet nevertheless distinguished in three Persons.

- A. The doctrine of the trinity stands as the foundation to the entire structure of the Christian truth. It was probably for this reason also that this one doctrine was the first to be attacked by the devil in the early church. Among several heresies that developed we may notice the following:
1. Polytheism--Although this was not a heresy in the early church, it was characteristic of all heathen religions at that time. One need only be reminded of the apostle Paul's visit to Athens.
 2. Gnosticism--This heresy, to which Augustine was addicted for a time, spoke of an unknowable God Who stood over against the material world which was also eternal, but inherently evil. God finally succeeds in saving the world from itself by emanating a series of "aeons", the highest of which is Jesus Christ.
 3. Monarchianism--The proponents of this heresy maintained that God is one in essence, but also one in person. This one God suffered and died on the cross. Hence, they became known as "Patropassions".
 4. Sabellianism--This was but a further development of Monarchianism. It was during this time also that the idea was developed that there are not three persons in God, but three modes of revelation--the one person revealing Himself both as Father, Son and Spirit.
 5. In close connection with these controversies in the early church, the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ was attacked. But to these we shall call attention in connection with Article X.
 6. The church at this time definitely established the doctrine of the trinity. And it is worthy of note that the church has never been seriously troubled by these heresies again, even though they constantly reappear. Further, there has been no definite development beyond what the early church has said concerning the doctrine of the trinity.
- B. The article teaches that God is one in essence. There is only one true and eternal God. This fact is also emphasized over and over again in Scripture. God is One; there is only one God. And even though there are three persons, they nevertheless subsist in unity of divine essence.
- C. But in that one divine essence there are three distinct and separate persons.
1. According to the article, these persons are distinct according to their incommunicable properties.
 - a. Note here the rather strange description of these incommunicable properties: "The Father is the cause, origin and beginning of all things visible and invisible; the Son is the word, wisdom, and image of the Father; the Holy Ghost is the eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and Son."
 - b. We are accustomed to saying that the personal properties of each person are expressed in their person names. Therefore the personal property of the Father is that He generates the Son; of the Son, that He is generated of the Father; of the Spirit, that He proceeds from the Father and the Son.
 2. We may add to this:
 - a. These three persons are each the subject of all the divine works, the object of all the divine honors and glories. Yet each in His own way according to His own personal properties. Creation is, for example, the work of the triune God, of the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit.
 - b. There are three in God that say "I", but always in perfect harmony and in perfect unity of the divine essence.
 - c. They are all therefore co-eternal and co-equal. "There is neither first nor last: for they are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy."
 - d. This perfect triune covenant life is also the basis for the whole doctrine of the covenant established and realized in Jesus Christ and His elect.

ARTICLE IX

The proof of the foregoing article of the Trinity of persons in one God.

- A. The proof of the trinity is found primarily in Scripture.
 1. We may notice here that there is no one definite text in Scripture which teaches the doctrine of the trinity. This doctrine is not literally defined in any one text, for Scripture is not a Dogmatics. But it is rather basic to all of the Bible, and presupposed in every text. Scripture cannot be understood at all except on the basis of this doctrine. Nevertheless, there are many texts which prove this fundamental doctrine.
 2. In the Old Testament.
 - a. The two texts referred to are Genesis 1:26, 27 and Genesis 3:22.
 - b. These texts are conclusive proof for God speaks of Himself as "us". "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," and "Behold the man is become as one of us". These texts prove that there is more than one person in the Godhead, but that they nevertheless constitute a unity.
 - c. But, as this article observes, "It is true he doth not say how many persons there are, but that, which appears to us somewhat obscure in the Old Testament is very plain in the New." This is also to be expected.
 3. In the New Testament.
 - a. Matthew 3:16, 17. This passage speaks of the baptism of Jesus and mentions Jesus as the Son of God, the Spirit descending in the form of a dove, and the voice from heaven identifying itself as a person.
 - b. Matthew 28:19. The baptism form speaks definitely of all three persons.
 - c. Luke 1:35. The angel speaks to Mary of the Holy Ghost that shall come upon her, of the power of the Most High that shall overshadow her, and of the child that shall consequently be born which shall be the Son of God.
 - d. II Corinthians 13:14. In this closing benediction of the Apostle Paul, all three persons are definitely mentioned.
 - e. I John 5:7. In this passage the three persons are mentioned as distinct persons and their essential unity is emphasized.
- B. The Confession also cites as proof of the trinity that it can be known "from their operations, and chiefly by those we feel in ourselves."
 1. This evidently refers to the fact that there is proof of the trinity in the works of God outside Himself. This is further explained later in the article: "Moreover, we must observe the particular offices and operations of these three persons towards us. The Father is called our Creator, by his power; the Son is our Savior and Redeemer, by his blood; the Holy Ghost is our Sanctifier, by his dwelling in our hearts."
 2. We must remember, however, that these works of God which are referred to in this article are not the works of individual persons, but of the triune God. Creation is not the work of the Father, but of the triune God--of the Father, through the Son and in the Spirit. So it is also with the works of redemption and sanctification.
- C. The Conclusion.
 1. "This doctrine of the Holy Trinity, hath always been defended and maintained by the true Church, since the time of the apostles, to this very day,...."
 2. It has been defended against
 - a. Marcion--who rejected the whole O.T. and its God and denied the real incarnation,
 - b. Manes-- who founded Manichaeism which taught that God was one Person, but co-eternal with matter which was inherently evil.
 - c. Praxeas and Sabellius also lived in the early church and were the founders of Sabbellianism, for which heresy confer notes on last article.
 - d. Both Jews and Mohammedans are Unitarians.
 3. This doctrine of the trinity, as the article observes can never be fully comprehended in this life, but we must expect that it surpasses all human understanding. "Nevertheless, we now believe it....but expect hereafter to enjoy the perfect knowledge and benefit thereof in Heaven."

Article XI - That the Holy Ghost is true and eternal God

- A. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was developed by the early church in conjunction with the doctrines of the trinity and Christ.
1. The strict Arians denied the divinity of the Spirit altogether. He was a person, but a creature of a lower order than the Son.
 2. The symbol of Nicea said nothing definite on the whole matter. It only declared "We believe in the Holy Spirit."
 3. The Symbol of Constantinople offered a little more. It declared, "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the lord and giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, Who has spoken through the prophets." This symbol also expressed nothing definite as to the place of the Spirit in the trinity, and His relation to the Father and Son.
 4. The controversy really centered about the question of the word "filioque", i.e., whether or not the Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son". This matter was finally decided at the Synod of Toledo in 589, but caused much unrest in the church even after. It was one reason for the split between the East and the West, the Latin and the Greek Church in 1054.
- B. With respect to the article, we notice the following:
1. This article teaches that
 - a. The Holy Ghost, from eternity proceeds from both the Father and the Son. For that reason it is not made, created, nor begotten.
 - b. In order, He is therefore the third person. But this does not mean that He is subordinate to the Father and the Son. For,
 - c. He is of one and the same essence, majesty and glory with the other two persons. Therefore He is true and eternal God.
 2. We may add to this:
 - a. Scripture makes a distinction between the Holy Spirit as the third person of the trinity and the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. (Cf. John 7:39 e.g.) As the third person of the trinity, He proceeds from the Father and the Son; but as the Spirit of Christ, He is given to Christ by the triune God.
 - b. He is given to Christ when Christ ascends up into heaven. And it is the Spirit of Christ which is poured out upon the church on the day of Pentacost. He is also called the Spirit of Truth and Comforter.
 - c. This Spirit is now in the church revealing to it the full counsel of God and the fulness of the riches of Christ.

- B. This article speaks also of the creation of the angels world and the fall of the evil angels.
1. All the angels were created good, to be God's messengers and to serve His elect.
 - a. Scripture does not speak of the creation of the angel world itself.
 - b. However we may deduce from Scripture several truths concerning the angels:
 - 1) They were created in ranks of ascending importance. There is mention of cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, powers, etc; and also mention is made of some individual angels such as Michael and Gabriel.
 - 2) It is quite possible that Satan before the fall stood at the head of the angel world. After his fall, there is a vacancy in heaven until Christ also unites the whole angel world in one to the glory of God.
 - 3) The angels are created to serve the elect. That is why also they are vitally interested in all the affairs of this creation of the church. They are always present when important things take place in the earth's history. The relation between angels and the elect is compared to the relation between a nursemaid and a child. The nursemaid rules over the child while the child is a baby; but when the child grows up the nursemaid becomes the servant of the mature man.
 2. Satan and part of the angel world fell. The article teaches in this connection:
 - a. They are fallen into everlasting perdition. That is, while election and reprobation is not finished on earth till the end of the world, it is finished in heaven immediately. Notice that the article says here that the elect angels remained standing by the grace of God.
 - b. These wicked angels are so depraved that "they are enemies of God and every good things, to the utmost of their power, as murderers, watching to ruin the Church and every member thereof, and by their wicked stratagems to destroy all;"
 - c. Because of this, they are "by their own wickedness, adjudged to eternal damnation, daily expecting their horrible torments."
 3. The errors rejected by this article are:
 - a. The error of the Saducees which the fathers reject and abhor. The Saducees denied the existence of the whole world of spirits. They denied also, and for the same reason, the resurrection from the dead.
 - b. The error of Manicheism. The error of the Manichees is that evil is in matter, or is matter itself. The only escape from evil is therefore an escape from this creation. If man wishes to escape evil, he must separate himself from the whole creation and even from his flesh. He does this by the power of his mind. For this reason, they taught that the devils could not have fallen or been corrupted, but originated by themselves and were wicked by virtue of their nature.
 - c. Both these errors are rightly condemned, for they are emphatically in conflict with Scripture.

- C. This article also spends considerable time in warning against inquiring curiously into the things of God which we cannot understand.
1. This warning is especially directed against inquiring into the mystery of man's responsibility in relation to God's sovereignty.
 - a. It is first of all emphasized that God is neither the author of nor can He be charged with the sins of man.
 - b. We are admonished "with the greatest humility and reverence (to) adore the righteous judgments of God, which are hid from us, contenting ourselves that we are disciples of Christ, to learn only those things which he has revealed to us in his Word, without transgressing these limits.
 - c. This is undoubtedly a timely warning. We ought to understand that God is so great that it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend His greatness. All the works of God are wonders. The fact that the walls of Jericho fell is in itself no greater a wonder than the lofty oak which comes forth from a small acorn. And the birth of a child is as difficult for us to understand as the healing of a leper, and the raising of a dead man.
 2. But nevertheless, we ought to bear in mind that this does not give reason to fall back upon the handy idea of "apparent contradiction". Many use this today to excuse their willful departure from the truth. They claim that their gross inconsistencies are contradictions which the human mind cannot fathom, but which will be resolved in eternity. There are no contradictions in God or in His revelation. And just because we cannot comprehend something, does not yet imply that it is contradictory.
 3. In this connection also we may mention that providence teaches us to consider all the works of God as wonders or miracles. A miracle is not something out of the ordinary, nor is it something contrary to natural law, but it is instead always that act of God whereby He breaks through this creation to reveal His grace. The central miracle of all ages is therefore the wonder of Jesus Christ. All miracles speak of this. And that wonder embraces the salvation of the elect, the restoration of all things in the new creation, and therefore all things in this creation as they are guided by God to serve that lofty purpose.
- D. The article speaks of the fact that this doctrine affords the elect unspeakable comfort. And this is truly the case. We are taught that "Nothing can befall us by chance, but by the direction of our most gracious and heavenly Father; who watches us with a paternal care...." He sends us prosperity and health, but also poverty, adversity and sickness in wisdom and tender regard. He gives us all that we need as long as we are called to live on this earth. He gives us life, but also death in order that we may be with Him. And we may be confidently assured that all things work together for good; we are led to Christ's loving arms in eternal bliss through all the things of this present time.
- E. Finally we may note that this article was quoted by the Christian Reformed Synod of 1924 to support the doctrine of the restraint of sin by the Holy Spirit in the unregenerate. But we may note that the entire article speaks of providence from the point of view of the consolation of the elect to whom it is of comfort. Besides, there is no mention whatsoever of the Holy Spirit, which is evident from the fact that God's power includes especially the work of the devils.

Article XIV - Of the Creation and Fall of man, and his Incapacity
to perform what is truly good.

- A. The first subject that is treated in this article is man's creation. There are several points which the article mentions although it is quite brief.
1. Man was created by God out of the dust of the earth.
 - a. By virtue of this aspect of man's creation, he is and remains of the earth. From the earth he was taken; to the earth he must return. He was emphatically of this earthly creation, and not as the angels.
 - 1) This means that man must live in this creation, cannot escape from it, and is dependent upon it for his earthly existence. He must fulfill the purpose of God here below.
 - 2) Nevertheless, even this earthly aspect of man contains something which makes him a creature higher than any other in the universe. For he was created even from an earthly point of view as a king. This is evident from his regal bearing, from his ability to look upwards, from his face which reveals intelligence and understanding.
 - b. But there was another aspect to man's existence; and that was due to the fact that God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. It is true that man is a creature of this earth, but he possesses the ability to transcend this creation. It is true that he is related to the world about him; but he can nonetheless stand in contact with heavenly and spiritual realities. Bound by the creation, he is yet free from it; dependent upon it, he can soar above and beyond it. Created from the dust, and yet with the breath of the Almighty in his nostrils he was a living soul!
 2. The article further mentions that man was created in God's image.
 - a. We may notice in this connection first of all that man was created with a nature capable of bearing the image of God. It is only man that can be an image bearer, never any other creature.
 - 1) This means that man's nature was rational and moral. He was created with a nature that could perceive, think, comprehend, understand, apprehend, and so come to a knowledge of the creation about him. But he was also created with a moral nature, capable of knowing and understanding his relation ethically and spiritually to his Creator. He knew and could know the difference between good and evil, the obligation to serve his God in love.
 - 2) This is what the Confession later refers to as "excellent gifts". Cf. also Canons III and IV, 4.
 - b. But he also was created in the image of God. He was created in true knowledge of God, righteousness and holiness. He could come to a saving knowledge of friendship and fellowship with God, walk before Him in truth and uprightness, loving Him and serving Him with his whole being.
 - c. Thus Adam was God's friend-servant; king of the creation, but servant of God. And the lines of the whole creation ran through the heart of Adam to God, Creator of all. Thus he could will agreeably to the will of God.
- B. But the article also treats of the fall and its results:
1. Concerning the fall it says:
 - a. Man's disobedience was willful transgression. Willfully he chose the way of error and transgression. "Being in honor, he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but willfully subjected himself to sin...." "For the commandment of life which he had received, he transgressed...."
 - 1) This does not deny the sovereign control of God over sin; for God always deals with man as a rational and willing creature, even though He retains His own sovereignty.
 - 2) Adam was created so that he could either choose the good or the evil. In glory it will be no longer possible for the saints to choose the evil.
 - b. Men fell by bending his ear to the temptation of the devil. Sin originated in heaven where Satan and a host of angels transgressed and were banished. It was Satan through the agency of the serpent that approached Eve and through

- 1) In connection with this, the article says, "being in honor, he understood it not, neither knew his excellency...."
- 2) This means that he choose the lie of the devil as more to be desired than the high estate in which he stood by virtue to his creation.
- c. In passing we may make reference to what is sometimes called the covenant of works. This is usually explained as consisting of 1) a condition: perfect obedience of love; 2) a promise: eternal life; 3) a threat: death. But many and serious objections can be raised against this view; and it is not mentioned in any of our confessions.
2. The consequences of the fall.
 - a. He corrupted his whole nature.
 - 1) He lost the image of God.
 - a) This the article defines in the following phrases: "he hath lost all his excellent gifts, which he had received from God,..." "for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness...." (Proof is quoted from John 1:5. "For there is no will nor understanding, conformable to the divine will and understanding".
 - b) This all means that man lost all the gifts of God's image. Only, he did not merely lose the image of God, but it was changed into its very opposite. His knowledge was changed to darkness so that he could only lie; his righteousness was changed into unrighteousness; his holiness into corruption. He cannot know the truth with any saving knowledge, for he changes it into the lie, holding the truth under in unrighteousness. He cannot will the good and will not will to do what God demands. All his excellent gifts were lost. He is "wicked, perverse and corrupt in all his ways."
 - 2) He retained only a few remnants thereof.
 - a) This phrase is used to prove the whole philosophy of common grace. It is often said that man, with these few remnants, can still know God, can still walk in righteousness and do that which is holy. Thus he is capable of doing many things in God's creation of value also for eternity. He can develop culture and learning, and subject the creation to God's purpose.
 - b) But this is not the teaching of this article. This simply means that man retained some remnants of his rationality and morality. He can still know the difference between good and evil. He can still come to some knowledge of God through the things that are made. But notice in the first place, that even these are only remnants, very small elements of what Adam possessed. And notice in the second place, that they are only in order that man may be without excuse. For knowing the difference between right and wrong, knowing that there is a God, he nevertheless always changes the truth into the lie, changes the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like unto corruptible man, is an enemy of God in all his way, deliberately hates the good and chooses the evil. He is wicked, corrupt and perverse in all his way.
 - b. The punishment for sin.
 - 1) Because of his terrible sin he is grievously punished. He becomes "subject to sin". Sin is his master, and he is its slave. He can only serve sin in all that he does.
 - 2) Consequently he is subject to death and the curse.
 - a) He separated himself from God who is the fountain of his life. He lives in that curse and under it all the days of his life; and thus in misery, suffering and despair.
 - b) Thus he is subject to death both corporal and spiritual. He comes into this world a spiritual corpse, with the seeds of death in his body which finally bring him to the grave and to hell.
- c. This all the article teaches against Pelagian free-willism, and thus prepares the way for salvation by grace alone.

- A. This article inquires into the reason for the universal phenomena of sin. That it is indeed universal and all embracive can be denied only by those who refuse either to recognize reality or take a dim view of the demands of God upon His creatures. For all of life is a stark and grim testimony of the fact of sin.
1. We may notice in the first place that this article speaks of this truth only from the point of view of the organic and spiritual ethical character of sin. It does not speak of original guilt as the juridical ground for original corruption.
 2. But since this truth is quite important, we do well to notice it briefly in this connection.
 - a. The entire human race was created as a legal corporation, a juridical whole in Adam. And he stood as the representative head of all mankind. He represented all men before the face of God in a juridical and legal way. He stood in this capacity only in the state of righteousness, so that his first act of sin alone could be imputed to all men.
 - b. Adam's sin of eating of the forbidden tree was therefore a representative sin. All men sinned in Adam, and all are responsible for his transgression.
 - c. The result is that the guilt of this one sin was imputed to all men. All men became guilty for this one transgression which Adam committed.
 - d. This legal bond between Adam and all men is the basis for Adam's organic union to all men. Because he was representative head of the human race, the guilt of sin is imputed to all; and this universal guilt is the juridical ground for original corruption. (Cf. Rom. 5:12-14).
 3. Thus Adam was also the organic head of all mankind. The whole human race was not only juridically in him, but also organically. Every human nature was principally found in Adam. He was the root out of which the tree of the human race sprang. He was the seed from whence proceeded all men. There is a living and organic connection between Adam and all men that are born, for they are all in his generations.
- B. This is the explanation for the universal phenomena of sin.
1. When Adam fell, as we already noted in the last article, his whole nature became corrupt and depraved. Sin held sway as a master over his entire nature subjecting it to sin's servitude. Adam died spiritually and became a spiritual and moral corpse. And the physical seeds of death were also consequently sown in his body so that presently he returned to the dust from whence he was taken.
 2. The article describes original corruption as "a corruption of the whole nature, and an hereditary disease, wherewith infants themselves are infected even in their mother's womb, and which produceth in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof." We may notice in this connection:
 - a. That because Adam's corruption involved his entire nature, so also does that nature bring forth other natures equally corrupt.
 - b. Infants themselves even in their mother's wombs, are conceived and born in this total corruption and pollution. Cf. Ps. 51:5, Rom 3:10-18.
 - c. It can be compared with a hereditary disease which affects all who are born; or with a root which in each individual produces the full tree of his sin.
 - d. Yet Adam's sin was a root sin in another way. It is the sin out of which grows every sin evidenced in the whole history of mankind. Each sin of each man is only a further development and other manifestation of Adam's sin. So sin develops in the line of generations in harmony with man's place in creation and use of it until it unfolds more and more culminating in the man of sin when the cup of iniquity is full. This is known as the development of sin: "Sin always issues forth from this woeful source, as water from a fountain."

C. The errors condemned by this article.

1. The error of Roman Catholicism.

- a. This error is referred to in the words, "Nor is it by any means abolished or done away by baptism."
- b. The Romish Church teaches that although there is indeed such a thing as original corruption, this is taken away by the water of baptism. The effect of baptism on a child is that he is freed from all original sin. The result of this doctrine is that the door is opened to Pelagianism, and a man is only accountable before God for the sins which he commits during life. This power to cleanse from original sin is found in the water of baptism itself.
- b. But the article refutes this position with the words, "since sin always issues forth from this woeful source, as water from a fountain." The real explanation of sin is, according to this article, that all our actual sins proceed from the corrupt fountain of a corrupt nature.

2. The error of Pelagianism.

- a. This error is referred to in the words, "Wherefore we reject the error of the Pelagians, who assert that sin proceeds only from imitation."
 - b. Pelagianism teaches that there is no such thing as original corruption. Every child comes into this world with a whole and clean nature. He is as a blank sheet of paper upon which is found no trace of evil deeds and corrupt actions. Sin is to be explained from the fact that people fall into evil deeds by imitating the example of others and coming under their influence. If one could be kept from birth on in a sinless environment, he would never sin at all.
 - c. This doctrine is as pernicious as it is false. It denies the reality of original guilt and pollution and leaves the way open for a denial of salvation apart from the grace of God. The Arminians of the 16th and 17th Centuries adopted this Pelagian view, although in a modified form.
3. The error of Anabaptism.
- a. This is mentioned in the article in passing. The article states that original sin is not imputed to the children of God unto condemnation, but by God's grace and mercy is forgiven them.
 - b. It goes on to say that this ought not to occasion a carnal security on the part of believers. The article takes note of the possibility on the part of some that, thinking that their sins are forgiven them, they would go on living in sin and enjoy it.
 - c. According to Scripture and the Heidelberg Catechism, this is absolutely impossible. One who truly knows salvation by grace will hate sin and flee from it, crying daily for forgiveness. Cf. Rom 6 and Lord's Day XXIV, 64.
 - d. Nevertheless, believers ought to flee daily from sin and a profound sense of their corruption "should make believers often to sigh, desiring to be delivered from this body of death."

A. Introduction.

1. This is a very brief treatment of the doctrine of election; in fact, it is really only mentioned in passing.
 - a. We could perhaps wish for more development of this important truth. Also in the Heidelberg Catechism, election is mentioned only in connection with the church in Lord's Day XXI.
 - b. But historically there is a reason for this. When the Catechism and this confession were written, there was no controversy over this doctrine. It was not until the times of the Arminian Controversy that this doctrine was attacked. So it is not until the Canons that we have a detailed development of election and reprobation.
2. By way of introduction, we ought also to notice that this article and the following article introduce the doctrine of Christ which is definitely treated in Arts. 18-21.

B. Concerning the article itself, we may observe:

1. It deals with election and reprobation from the point of view of history, i.e., from the point of view of infralapsarianism.
 - a. The posterity of Adam had fallen into perdition and ruin, by the sin of our first parents.
 - b. God revealed His mercy in saving from perdition those whom He had chosen in Christ.
 - c. God revealed His justice in leaving others in the fall and perdition in which they involved themselves.
2. About election and reprobation the article says the following:
 - a. God's mercy is a revelation of His counsel of election.
 - 1) Election is in Jesus Christ, without any respect to works.
 - 2) It is part of God's eternal and unchangeable counsel.
 - 3) It embraces those whom God delivers and preserves.
 - b. Reprobation is defined as that act of God whereby according to justice God leaves some in the fall and perdition.

C. If we consider election and reprobation more in detail, then we may make mention of the following.

1. The question of supra- and infra-lapsarianism is important in this connection. The words are derived from the Latin words "lapsus" which means fall, "supra" which means "above", and "infra" which means "below". Thus the question is, Does election in God's counsel stand above or below the fall of Adam? That is, did God choose His people out of a human race that was destined to fall in Adam, or did He choose His people out of a fallen human race? Or to state the question in another way, "Which was first and which was last in the counsel of God?"
 - a. On the basis of Scripture (Eph. 1:3-10, Col. 1:13-19) we must follow the supra order. That is, the order of decrees is thus: 1) God willed the glory of His name in the glorified and exalted Christ. 2) God willed the glory and exaltation of Christ in connection with the salvation of His elect people. 3) God willed that the elect would be saved from a fallen human race. 4) God willed to create a perfect creation which would fall in Adam.
 - b. Infra lists the order of decrees in the same way that they are realized in history: Creation, the fall, election, Christ, the new creation.
2. If we adopt the supra position, several conclusions follow:
 - a. It is better to conceive of supralapsarianism as being a logical relation of decrees with each decree serving the next. I.e., God wills His glory in Christ. Therefore He wills Christ's exaltation through the way of His humiliation. Therefore He wills election as accomplished in the cross. Therefore He wills reprobation to serve election, and the fall and original Paradise to serve it all.

- b. This emphasizes the eternal and unchangeable and sovereign nature of God's decrees. It entirely excludes all Arminianism and Pelagianism of every sort. It makes salvation a sovereign work of God alone which He performs for His own name's sake. It is well to notice however, that our Confessions are infra, and are yet reformed, so that infra lapsarianism does not necessarily imply Arminianism. Yet Arminianism does imply an infra conception of the order of decrees. There is no room for it in any supra position.
- c. Reprobation becomes not a mere leaving some in sin, but rather a sovereign decree of God to damn some to everlasting perdition in the way of their sin. This is also the plain teaching of Scripture. Cf. Rom. 9.
- d. In this way all things must serve the salvation of the elect in Jesus Christ, even reprobation itself.
- e. Election is not only a revelation of mercy, and reprobation of justice; but election is a revelation of both mercy and justice, for mercy and justice meet on the cross of Jesus Christ. And the same thing is true of reprobation. Reprobation is a revelation of justice, but also of mercy; not as if the reprobate are the objects of mercy, but rather, reprobation also must serve the salvation of the elect, and therefore the mercy of God.

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Article XVII - Of the Recovery of Fallen Man

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A. Introduction.

1. This article is very brief, and contains no definite statement of doctrine. For this reason, it is undoubtedly intended to serve as an introduction to all the articles concerning the doctrine of Christ.
2. This article also follows the infralapsarian emphasis and approach, and speaks of the work of God after the fall.
3. It discusses the promise which God made to our first parents and which is contained in Genesis 3:15. This is, however a very beautiful approach to the doctrine of Christ.

B. The article may be outlined as follows:

1. God saw that man had thrown himself into temporal and eternal death, and made himself wholly miserable.
2. God was pleased to comfort him, when he trembling fled from His presence.
 - a. This comfort is a revelation of the grace, admirable wisdom and goodness of God,
 - 1) It is grace in that God had no obligation to come to man outside of His own purpose.
 - 2) It is wisdom because it was in this way that God had intended and actually reveal Christ.
 - 3) It was goodness because the salvation of Adam and the seed of the woman was the evidence of God's eternal goodness which He bestows upon His people.
 - b. This comfort consisted in a promise of a Son.
 - 1) This Son would be born of the woman.
 - 2) He would bruise the head of the serpent.
 - 3) He would make Adam and all the elect happy.

C. It is well that we look at this promise a little more closely.

1. If we study the passage referred to, Gen. 3:8-15, then we learn that it is true as the creed expresses it that "God...was pleased to seek and comfort him, when he trembling fled from his presence."
 - a. The Lord calls Adam forth from his hiding place.
 - b. He insists that Adam himself explain what happened to cause them to flee away.
 - c. He temporarily allows Adam to lead Him to the woman, who in turn leads Him to the serpent. This already showed how deeply they had fallen, for they attempt to cast the blame on God for what they had done.
 - d. The serpent is immediately cursed as the instrument of the devil. This serves as an introduction to the promise.
2. Of the promise in general we may notice,
 - a. It is spoken directly to the serpent, although in the audience of our parents who undoubtedly also understood its implications.
 - b. It is a promise which contains all the truth of the Word of God in germinal form. All subsequent revelation till Christ and including Christ is only a further development of this Word of God.
3. The specific elements of this promise are:
 - a. A sharp enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.
 - 1) The seed of the woman is Christ primarily, and in Him all the elect born naturally from the woman but by faith from Christ. The seed of the serpent is the whole devil's brood of reprobate who manifest themselves in all time, but especially in the man of sin--the Antichrist.
 - 2) This enmity reaches its culmination on the cross of Christ, but is evident in the agelong struggle between the elect and reprobate through all of time. Enmity against God reveals itself in constant hatred of the church, and repeated attempts to destroy the church from off the earth. The church, on the other hand, fights its battle with the weapons of faith to maintain its

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- calling and place in the world as representatives of Christ and His kingdom.
- 3) The rebrodate are called the brood of the serpent because their father is the devil spiritually; his image they bear; his deeds they do; his bidding they obey.
- b. This constant strife results in the bruising of the heel of the seed of the woman, but the bruising of the head of the seed of the serpent.
- 1) The heel of the seed of the woman is bruised when Christ is maltreated at the hands of the representatives of the devil and finally crucified on the cross of Calvary. And this bruising goes on when the elect in Christ suffer in this world all manner of persecution and hatred until finally they are killed for the sake of their confession.
 - 2) The head of the serpent is bruised also on the cross when Christ gains the victory over sin, death and all the powers of hell and accomplishes salvation for His people by His perfect sacrifice. The seed of the woman receives a little and insignificant bruise in the heel; but the power of the serpent and his brood is completely crushed, for his head is bruised so that his power is gone.
 - 3) The paradox of this struggle, but at the same time its transcendent glory is that although the heel of the woman is bruised, this bruising itself always constitutes its victory. So it was on the cross. At the moment when the devil thought that he had succeeded, and when his cohorts were ready to shout in glee, it became evident that Christ, by His death had finished all His work and had gained the victory over them all. And so when the world is ready to compliment itself on a job well done, for they kill the elect and destroy the church, then they are defeated; for the faithful of God go through death to their reward and Christ returns to make all things new and cast His enemies into hell.
 - 4) Thus while the struggle rages relentlessly in this life, we need never fear; the victory is ours. Christ has gained the victory; we are in Him by faith; and faith is the victory that overcomes the world!

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Article XVIII - Of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ

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- A. Introduction: Article XVII spoke of the promise which God made to fallen man to "give His Son, who should be made of a woman, to bruise the head of the serpent, and would make him happy". Thus there follows quite naturally from this an article concerning the birth of Jesus Christ, the incarnation of the Son of God.
- B. The article describes in detail the characteristics of the human nature which the Son of God assumed.
1. It was a real human nature. Jesus Christ was truly man.
 - a. There were some in the early church who taught that the human nature of Christ was only an appearance. But this is not the case. He was born as any other child. He also had flesh and blood and was like us in all things except sin.
 - b. This means also that Christ was a definite individual with an individual human nature. He was not red or black or yellow; He was white. He was born a Jew with all Jewish characteristics, measured a certain height, had a certain color eyes and hair, a definite complexion, His own characteristics.
 - c. It was taught by Dr. A. Kuyper that Christ did not possess a human nature, but Human Nature in general. Whatever this may mean, Kuyper taught that Christ did not possess a definite and concrete human nature, but a general human nature. This is however a denial of the human nature of Christ, for a general human nature is an abstraction, and an abstraction has no reality concretely.
 - d. This article also emphasizes that Christ assumed a central human nature. He was not born on the outskirts of mankind, but took hold of our human nature in its center. He was not born a Hottentot, but a Jew in the line of the covenant.
 - 1) This is denied by the Anabaptists who are referred to in this article. They taught that Christ did not assume the flesh and blood of His mother, but that God created a special human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary, but apart from her.
 - 2) But it is nevertheless the teaching of Scripture that Christ was born in definite generations. His geneology can be traced back to Adam. The generations of Christ form a large pyramid wide at the base in Adam, but narrowing down through Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, and finally reaching its peak in Mary who was the last remnant of the royal house.
 - 3) Christ's human nature was principally and organically in the loins of the promised line from the very beginning of time until He was born.
 - e. In this connection also it must definitely be maintained that Joseph was not the father of Christ.
 - 1) There are some who maintain that the human nature of Christ was formed through definite a physical intercourse between Joseph and Mary, and that that human nature the Son of God assumed.
 - 2) But it is plain from Scripture that this is not the case.
 - a) When Joseph learned that his wife was with child, he thought that she had committed adultery, and was about to put her away until an angel explained the matter to him. Matthew 1:18-25. Thus also Isaiah 7:14.
 - b) Mary's question of the angel, "How shall these things be, seeing I know not a man", is certainly asked by her because she knows that Joseph cannot be the father of the child.
 - 3) We must conclude therefore, that the Holy Ghost so worked upon the womb of the Virgin Mary that He took the place of a father.
 - f. This is all important, for:
 - 1) Only if Christ was like us in all things could He also take upon Himself our sin. The nature that sinned must also bear the penalty of sin.
 - 2) It is only thus that Christ is the true seed of the woman, the Head of all His elect people.

2. The human nature that Christ assumed was a complete human nature.
 - a. Christ was not only born with a human body, but also with a human soul.
 - 1) This is emphasized by the article: "and did not only assume human nature as to the body, but also a true human soul, that he might be a real man. For since the soul was lost as well as the body, it was necessary that he should take both upon him, to save both."
 - 2) The soul is the seat of our thinking and willing. Besides, therefore, the fact that Christ possessed a divine mind and will according to His divine nature, He also possessed a human mind and will with respect to His human nature.
 - b. This is necessary as the article states in order that He may also save our depraved souls.
3. Christ's human nature was also a weakened human nature.
 - a. Christ did not assume a strong human nature as Adam possessed in Paradise, but one that was weakened by the curse active during four thousand years. Although we never read of Christ being sick, the possibility was certainly there. He became tired in body and mind. He was often hungry and thirsty. He bore for thirty three years all our infirmities. And finally He also died.
 - b. This was necessary, because He had to become like us in all things in order to bring the sacrifice for sin as our Mediator. Heb. 4:1.
4. But Christ's human nature was also sinless.
 - a. Only in this respect was Christ different from us. He possessed no personal guilt, although He became guilty for us.
 - 1) He was preserved from original guilt because guilt is imputed to the person, and He was personally the Second Person of the trinity. Besides, it seems as if guilt is transmitted only through the father.
 - 2) He was preserved from original pollution because He was divinely conceived. Mary herself was not free from original pollution, but the Holy Spirit operated in such a way that the pollution of Mary's nature, which Christ assumed was not passed on to Christ.
 - b. This also was important, for:
 - 1) Only because Christ was free from guilt, could He take our guilt upon Himself.
 - 2) Only because Christ was the holy child of God could He walk the way of perfect obedience and willingness to perform the Father's good pleasure.
- C. Conclusion.
 1. The article mentions:
 - a. This was all the fulfillment of God's promise made to the fathers by the prophets.
 - b. Christ came in the fulness of time, the time definitely appointed from all eternity by the Father.
 - c. It is for this reason that Christ is Immanuel, that is to say, God with us.
 2. We may well add:
 - a. The incarnation is a transcendent miracle which we cannot possibly understand. It is the wonder of God unto our salvation. God brought forth the Eternal out of the creature of time; the holy One out of the unholy, the perfect Mediator out of a fallen human race. Countless times during the Old Dispensation, this was shown to be impossible; but every time God brought forth the promised seed. And finally, A Virgin conceived and brought forth a Son. What is impossible always for man is possible with God.
 - b. In Christ is the closest possible union between the divine and the human. And therefore Christ is indeed Immanuel, God with us, the basis for our everlasting covenant fellowship with God.

Article XIX - Of the union and distinction of the two Natures
in the person of Christ.

- A. History. The great Christological controversies were fought in the early church.
1. There were first of all the Docetists who appeared in the church and denied the human nature of Christ. They said that Christ possessed no real human nature, but only appeared in a human nature for a time.
 2. The Arians under the leadership of Arius were the forerunners of modernism. They denied the divine nature of Christ insisting that Christ was the best man that ever lived, but He was nevertheless a man. This error was condemned by the council of Nicea in 325.
 3. In close connection with the error of Arius arose a group known as semi-Arians. They taught that Christ did not have the same nature as God, but a nature that was like God's in every respect. This error was condemned at Constantinople along with a reaffirmation of the church's position against Arianism in 381.
 4. About this same time a man by the name of Appolinaris, bishop of the church of Laodicea taught that Christ did not have a complete human nature, but that the divine "Logos" took the place of the human soul. This error was also condemned at Constantinople in 381 A.D.
 5. There was also the error of Nestorius. This man denied the unity of the two natures and almost fell into the error of teaching that Christ possessed two persons.
 6. There were finally the Eutychians who denied the distinction between the two natures of Christ and spoke of them as fused together. Condemned at Ephesus 431.
 7. All these errors were referred to when the church finally adopted at the great Council of Chalcedon in 451 that the two natures of Christ were united in one divine person, without confusion, without change, without division and without separation.
- B. The article refers in the words "by this conception" to the last phrase of the foregoing article "...so that in truth he is our Immanuel, that is to say, God with us." Thus the article contains a most beautiful confession concerning this truth.
1. It emphasizes first of all that Christ is personally the Son of God Who is "inseparably united and connected with the human nature; so that there are not two Sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person."
 - a. A person may be defined in general as an individual subsistence in a rational, moral nature which is the subject of all of the actions of the nature. The person is that which says "I" and which is subject of all the activity of the nature in which it subsists. As often and as much as the nature may change through birth, life and death, the nature remains always the same.
 - b. The person of Christ was the Second Person of the trinity, the Son of God Who assumed a human nature, grew up in it, lived in it suffered and died in it, finally took it out of the grave and with Him into the glory of heaven.
 2. The article emphasizes mostly the relation between the two natures within the one divine person. Concerning the distinction between the two natures, it says that they always retained their own individual properties.
 - a. The divine nature always "remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life, filling heaven and earth:" And although the divine nature was always present, "it did not so clearly manifest itself for a while" while Christ was on earth.
 - b. "So also the human nature hath not lost its properties, but remained a creature, having beginning of days, being a finite nature, and retaining all the properties of a real body." Besides, although through the resurrection from the dead, the human nature became immortal, "nevertheless, he hath not changed the reality of his human nature; forasmuch as our salvation and resurrection also depend upon the reality of his body".

- c. Thus the two natures of Christ always remain distinct and separate with respect to their properties. This is denied by Luthernism which teaches in connection with the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, the ubiquity of the human nature.
3. The article also refers to the relation between the two natures as far as they are inseparably united.
 - a. The two natures were so inseparably united that they were not even separated by His death.
 - 1) Therefore Christ commended into the hands of his Father, when dying, a real human spirit.
 - 2) Therefore also the divine nature of Christ was present with His human nature even when it lay in the grave. "And His Godhead did not cease to be in him, any more than it did when he was an infant."
 - b. Nevertheless, we must not forget that this is a great mystery. For part of the human nature was already in heaven, while part of it rested in the grave for three days.
 - c. Besides, while on earth, the human nature of Christ only partially revealed the divine nature, this is not the case in heaven. In glory, the human nature of Christ is the perfect instrument of the revelation of the divine nature. We cannot, of course, see the divine of nature either of God or of Christ. Yet when Christ is in heaven in all His exalted glory, the divine nature is fully and completely revealed to us, for Christ is "the brightness of his (God's) glory, and the express image of his person", and he is the "image of the invisible God...for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" Heb. 1:2, Col. 1:15, 19. It can truly be said that when we see Christ, we see God.
- C. This perfect union between the two natures of Christ in the divine person is necessary according to the article:
 1. It is necessary for Christ to be very God in order that he might conquer death. Only God Himself could come in perfect obedience and suffer the full penalty against sin in order that the elect of God could be delivered from it.
 2. It is necessary for Christ to be very man in order that he might die for us according to the infirmity of His flesh.
- D. The practical significance of all this.
 1. The perfect union between the divine nature and the human nature in the eternal person of the Son of God is the only possibility of our salvation. When we understand this truth, then we can also understand that our salvation is fully and perfectly accomplished by our God on our behalf; and that we need not doubt but that all that is necessary for our final salvation and glory is merited for us by Jesus Christ.
 2. This doctrine is basic for the whole doctrine of the covenant. In Jesus Christ is the closest possible union between God and man. And it is because Jesus Christ is both God and man, that when the elect are engrafted into Christ by faith and become members of His body, that they can also dwell in perfect and most intimate fellowship and communion with God in the everlasting covenant of grace. It is in Christ that God tabernacles with His people. It is in Christ in the highest possible sense of the word that God dwells with His people in fellowship and friendship; that He becomes their God, and they His people, and that they enjoy the blessings of His presence and communion forever and ever. Christ is the body, the temple of the living God in Whom dwells both God and the elect by a living and indestructible faith.

Article XX - That God hath manifested his justice and mercy in Christ.

- A. This article, especially in distinction from Article XXI speaks of the atonement of Christ from the point of view of God and His justice and mercy. The following article speaks of this atonement from the viewpoint of Christ and the satisfaction He made.
1. There is first of all the general statement, "God...sent his Son to assume that nature, in which the disobedience was committed, to make satisfaction in the same, and to bear the punishment of sin by his most bitter passion and death."
 - a. This truth that God sent His Son into our nature is discussed in detail in the foregoing article.
 - b. It is mentioned here because this is the basis for the cross as the revelation of God's justice. Only because Christ came into our human flesh, could He also suffer for us. The Heidelberg Catechism makes quite a point of this and says, "the same human nature which hath sinned, should likewise make satisfaction for sin."
 2. Thus the cross is both a revelation of God's justice and mercy.
 - a. This is the revelation of justice, that God laid our iniquities upon Christ.
 - 1) Before salvation could be accomplished, sin had to be removed. God could not simply excuse sin and ignore it; it had to be punished.
 - 2) Since eternal suffering in hell by the sinner makes salvation impossible, God laid all our sins upon Jesus Christ Who suffered for us.
 - b. This is the revelation of God's mercy, that God gave His Son for us who were worthy of hell and damnation.
 - 1) God does not reveal His mercy in spite of His justice, but the cross is the highest revelation of both mercy and justice at the same time. There was displayed a merciful justice and a just mercy.
 - 2) This, as the article says, was of mere and perfect love that God's Son died for us, was raised for our justification, that through Him we might obtain immortality and life eternal.
- B. This still leaves the question, How can a sinless One assume the guilt of a sinful man? How can our guilt be reckoned justly to Christ?
1. The only possible answer is that Christ was eternally appointed to be our Head, our representative in Whom we are all chosen.
 2. This can best be understood from a "supra" position. God created a saved and redeemed human race eternally in Christ. We are chosen from all eternity in Him. Thus, in order to realize that purpose, we fell in another representative head, Adam. For as in Adam all died, even so in Christ are all made alive. Christ could therefore come in our place because we were chosen eternally in Him.
 3. In this way could God's justice and mercy be revealed in the highest sense of the word.

- A. The main thought of this article is that Christ made satisfaction for the sins of His people as their High Priest.
1. Christ was a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. Cf. Heb. 7.
 - a. Melchizedek's office was unique even in distinction from the office of Aaron. Christ was not a High Priest in Aaron's line, but in the line of the king of Salem.
 - b. The high priesthood of Melchizedek was different for he was "without father or mother, without beginning or end of days."
 - c. But he was also king of Salem so that in him the two offices of priest and king were joined.
 - d. As such, he was a type of Christ who possesses a royal priesthood that is eternal.
 2. But the main point remains that Christ was the only One Who could make the real sacrifice fore sin. The blood of bulls and goats was useless; the blood of Christ was only efficacious.
- B. As far as the satisfaction itself is concerned, we may note the following:
1. There are various theories with respect to Christ's satisfaction.
 - a. The moral theory--Christ died in order to leave to all mankind a worthy example of a man ready and willing to die for His principles. He did it to have a moral and improving influence on humanity. Many hymns follow this line of thought.
 - b. The governmental theory--God show us in the cross what He might have done to all of us if he had followed His own justice. He hung Christ upon the cross as a spectacle of this justice. If we believe that a like punishment is our due, we will be saved. This is the Arminian theory of the atonement.
 2. Concerning Christ's atonement however we must state the following:
 - a. All these theories deny the vicarious atonement of Christ. Christ died indeed for us and on our behalf. This is abundantly attested to in Scripture. Cf. Is. 53:4,5; Rom. 4:25; Jn. 11:51, 52; II Cor. 5:14, 15.
 - b. This means that Christ died in our place by taking our sins as His own. Thus, He paid the price for our sins and took them all away so that they are no more.
 - c. Thus the atonement is particular. God choose His people from all eternity in Christ. These were given to Christ before the world's were. For them He died and for them alone, for they were in Him juridically and organically. Only their sins are forgiven.
 - d. Christ died willingly. He was not only the High Priest that made sacrifice for sin, but He brought His own blood into the Most Holy Place, for He was also the Lamb that was slain. Mere suffering can never atone for sin, for in hell there is no atonement. But Christ willingly gave Himself and laid down His life in perfect obedience to the Father. He came to do God's will. This is a very crucial point with respect to the atonement.
 - e. He bore all the wrath of God against sin--the sins of all the people of God. He did this because he entered into the suffering of hell and took all their suffering upon Himself. He was able to do this, and that in such a short time because He suffered as the Son of God in our flesh.
 - f. The cross and Christ upon it is therefore the revelation of the sovereign love and grace of God in accomplishing all our salvation for us. Christ not only died for us, but He also merited for us all the blessings of salvation. This is important to maintain overagainst the Arminians who insist that Christ only made salvation possible. It remains for man to receive it or not. On the contrary however, Christ also merited all blessings for us and also the right to apply these blessings to the hearts of His people by His Holy Spirit. All of salvation is of God in Christ.

- C. The article also speaks in some detail of the practical implications of the cross of Christ.
1. "Therefore: he restored that which he took not away, and suffered, the just for the unjust, as well in his body as in his soul, feeling the terrible punishment which our sins had merited;"
 2. "We justly say with the apostle Paul: that we know nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; we count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, in whose wounds we find all manner of consolation."
 3. "Neither is it necessary to seek or invent any other means of being reconciled to God, than this only sacrifice, once offered, by which believers are made perfect forever."
 4. Concerning these quotations we may notice that the main thought of all of them is that Christ died for us as sinners so that we have nothing in ourselves in which to boast. Furthermore, the salvation which Christ accomplished for us is a salvation that encompasses all our life from the moment of regeneration to endless glory and perfection in heaven. And the deepest reason for this is that God may receive all the glory forever and ever for He is God alone and the God of our salvation!

A. Introduction:

1. With this article, the Confession begins to speak of what is usually called "Soteriology", or "The doctrine of the application of the blessings of salvation". This subject is treated in Arts. XXII-XXVI.
 2. The usual order which we follow is not followed in this Confession.
 - a. Our order is usually Regeneration, Calling, Faith, Justification, Sanctification, Preservation and Glorification.
 - b. While the order of this Confession is Faith, Justification, Sanctification and Good Works.
 - c. Concerning any order of the blessings of salvation however, we must remember:
 - 1) That the order is logical and not temporal.
 - 2) That we must distinguish between what Christ objectively merits for us, and the order in which we consciously receive these blessings.
 - 3) That any order is somewhat arbitrary in the light of the fact that various blessings such as regeneration, conversion and faith can be spoken of in more than one way.
 - c. The order which the Confession follows is due to the fact that:
 - 1) It makes no distinction between faith as a power and faith as a conscious activity.
 - 2) That therefore, it considers faith as the sole instrument whereby salvation is given and appropriated; and therefore it treats faith first.
 3. This article sums up all the blessings of salvation under the one term "righteousness".
 - a. This is perfectly correct because Christ, as the fulness of all the blessings of salvation is called in Scripture and in this article, Christ our Righteousness.
 - b. Furthermore, the blessing of righteousness is a fundamental blessing of salvation upon which all the other blessings of salvation are based. Righteousness or justification is logically before all else. Yet this subject is more particularly treated in the following article.
- B. The question of the article is therefore, How do we receive this righteousness and therefore all the blessings of salvation? And the answer is, By faith.**
1. Faith is first of all the bond that unites us to Jesus Christ.
 - a. Although this is not directly expressed in this article, it is nevertheless implied when it states that faith "is an instrument that keeps us in communion with him...."
 - b. This means that faith is the living and organic connection between Jesus Christ the Head and the elect who are His body.
 - c. It is the channel through which flow all the blessings of life and salvation.
 2. Faith is also a power or faculty.
 - a. God implants in the hearts of His people the ability to believe even before they consciously believe and before this faith becomes active. Just as a baby may have the power of seeing and speaking before it ever exercises this power, so also do the elect have the power to believe even before they actually exercise this power.
 - b. This power must necessarily be there if faith is to be exercised. Without it one will never believe, no matter how often the gospel is preached to him.
 3. Thus faith has two elements:
 - a. The element of knowledge--This is not a mere intellectual knowledge of God's Word, a knowledge about God; but it is the knowledge of God, the knowledge of love, the knowledge that is life eternal. John 17:3.
 - b. The element of confidence--This is conscious trust whereby the one who has faith casts himself upon Christ trusting in Him alone as his only comfort. The confidence of the believer is directly proportional to his knowledge.

- C. Thus the article emphasizes that all our salvation is in Christ.
1. Negatively:
 - a. Christ does not possess only half of our salvation. This is the position of Arminians.
 - b. To assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something more is required besides him, would be too gross a blasphemy.
 - c. If Christ were only half a Savior, then faith would not be the sole instrument for our salvation, but then works would also be needed to complete this.
 - d. In this respect, Arminians are very subtle. They say also that it is only by faith that we can be saved, but that we must be willing first of all. We must believe of ourselves. And then faith becomes nothing else but another work.
 - e. If the gospel is an offer of salvation, or if the promise of God is general, then also the Arminian error of faith as a work of man cannot be escaped.
 2. Positively. But this the article emphatically denies.
 - a. All of our salvation is in Christ. To say anything else is the grossest of blasphemy.
 - b. But since Christ is a complete Savior, faith is the only means to be saved.
 - c. But more than this, faith is not and cannot be the work of man, but is only the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1) Thus we are not justified by faith and works, but by faith alone.
 - 2) And yet, to speak more clearly, Faith itself does not justify, but it is the instrument whereby we are placed in abiding communion with Christ; and it is therefore the instrument whereby we receive all that is in Christ for our own salvation.
 - 3) For this reason, it must be emphatically maintained that faith is not our instrument, but God's instrument in us and through us whereby He saves us completely and finally. This is the death knell to all Arminianism!

- A. The relation between this article and the preceding.
1. The heading of the article is somewhat misleading, for the doctrine of justification has already been treated rather extensively in Article XXII.
 2. But in Article XXII, the Confession emphasized that this justification could only be appropriated by faith; while in this article, our Fathers made clear the all important doctrine that justification is without works.
- B. The teaching of this article.
1. In this article, as well as in the preceding, the doctrine of justification is treated only as a subjective blessing of salvation which the church consciously receives.
 2. Justification is therefore treated as synonymous with the forgiveness of sins. "We believe that our salvation consists in the remission of our sins for Jesus Christ's sake, and therein our righteousness before God is implied:"
 - a. This is indeed true that justification is synonymous with the forgiveness of sins, and is therefore the basic blessing of salvation. If our sins are forgiven, then all the rest of salvation follows without fail.
 - b. This forgiveness of sins implies necessarily justification without works, for it is only one who has no need of the forgiveness of sins who also has no need of justification. It is foolish to speak of justification by works, for one who can perform good works stands in no need of justification before God.
 3. The article goes to considerable length to prove this all important point.
 - a. It appeals without quoting directly to Ps. 32:1, 2 as well as the apostles teaching in Romans 3 and 4. In 3:28 the apostle says, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law". And later in Rom. 11:6 he says, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, than it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work."
 - b. This is fundamental, for if justification as the basis for all of salvation is by grace alone, then all of salvation is without our works and based in no sense upon them. It is from grace from its inception to its final end.
 4. The fruit.
 - a. Negatively.
 - 1) The result of this doctrine is that we have nothing to glory in ourselves. "...humbling ourselves before him, and acknowledging ourselves to be such as we are, without presuming to trust in any thing in ourselves, or in any merit of ours,..."
 - 2) This doctrine is instrumental in "freeing the conscience of fear, terror and dread, without following the example of our first father, Adam, who, trembling, attempted to cover himself with fig-leaves."
 - 3) "And verily if we should appear before God, relying on ourselves, or on any other creature, though ever so little, we should, alas! be consumed."
 - b. Positively.
 - 1) If we hold fast to this foundation, we will be certain to give glory to God alone.
 - 2) Then and then only are we found "relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone, which becomes ours, when we believe in him."
 - 3) Then also when we approach unto God, we will have confidence knowing that He will certainly hear us.
- C. However, it is not superfluous to make a few more observations concerning this all important doctrine of justification.
1. In the first place we may notice that Scripture undeniably teaches justification from eternity.
 - a. This means that eternally in the counsel of God we stood before God with all the elect as perfectly justified and therefore eternally righteous.
 - b. This can be shown from Scripture: Num. 23:21, Rom. 8:1.
 2. Therefore justification may be more specifically defined than it is in this article.

- a. It presupposes a legal relationship in which all men stand before God. When man sins, he incurs a debt with every sin which he commits. According to the justice of God, this debt can only be removed by satisfaction. The debt must be paid. While and if it is not paid, man stands in a state of guilt. This is his relationship to God and God's law.
- b. This state is to be distinguished from his condition, the latter having to do with the actual condition of his life and nature.
- c. Justification is that act of God eternally performed and accomplished whereby the state of His elect people is changed from one of guilt to one of innocence.
3. Justification, while an eternal reality, is applied to the elect as a conscious blessing of salvation by faith.
4. Justification is finished at that time when all the elect are publicly justified before the whole world in the day of the final judgment.
5. Justification is accomplished through Christ Who suffered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification. Christ paid our debt on the cross by bearing the full wrath of God against sin. When God raised Him from the dead God publicly placed His seal of approval on the finished work of Christ, and the resurrection became the ground for our justification.
6. Thus the blessings of justification are
 - a. Forgiveness of sins.
 - b. Spiritual adoption unto children.
 - c. The right to everlasting life.
7. This justification can indeed be in no sense of the word based upon our own works. As this article says, we ought to pray with David: "O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." or as Isaiah puts it in another place, Is. 64:6, all our righteousness is but as filthy rags.

- A. Introduction:
1. The relation between this article and the preceding two articles is to be found in the fact that in the days when this Confession was written, there were questions raised as to the relation between justification and good works. The age old charge that justification by faith resulted in profane Christians was raised. Against this charge the fathers wrote this article.
 2. They therefore speak at length about good works as the result of sanctification. And, in order to make the point clear, they discuss the relationship between sanctification and justification.
 3. This sanctification is however, made synonymous with regeneration. That is why the very strange sentence appears in this article, "We believe that this true faith, doth regenerate (man) and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life, and freeing him from the bondage of sin." This sounds exactly like mediate regeneration. However, the article, making no distinction between regeneration and sanctification, can easily do this.
 4. This is not an error, but proceeds from the principle that regeneration can and is actually in Scripture spoken of in the broad sense of the word as sanctification. However, this does not mean that there is not another sense in which regeneration can also be spoken of.
- B. Regeneration.
1. In the narrower sense, regeneration is the implanting of the principle of new life in the sinner, who is dead in trespasses and sin. It can be compared to the planting of a kernel of seed in the earth, or to the conception of a child. Regeneration in the wider sense of the word includes our conversion and even our sanctification. It can be compared with the sprouting forth of the seed from the earth, or the birth of a child whereby he comes to a conscious life. Scripture passages which can be consulted in this connection are: John 3:3, 8; I Peter 1:23; I John 3:9; James 1:18, I Peter 1:3.
 2. Concerning regeneration in the narrower sense of the word we may notice the following elements:
 - a. It is a work of the Holy Spirit of Christ.
 - b. It is a work which takes place in a moment of time.
 - c. It is a work which is performed in the very depths of man's being--in his heart the center of all his spiritual and ethical life.
 - d. It takes place while the sinner although elect, is still dead in trespasses and sins.
 - e. It takes place beneath the level of the consciousness of man so that he is not at the moment aware of the work being performed. For "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit".
 - f. It is the implanting of the new and resurrection life of Jesus Christ, whereby the elect sinner is given a new heart, is raised from his spiritual grave, and is placed in abiding communion with the body of Christ.
 - g. It is a work which can never be lost, a principle of life which abides in the heart through all of life, through death itself, and on into eternity.
 - h. In the line of the covenant of God, the elect children are probably regenerated as early as conception within the womb.
 3. It is also possible to say a few words about the manner in which this regeneration takes place.
 - a. We must distinguish between the seed of regeneration and the quickening of that seed. The seed of regeneration is the principle of the new life of Jesus Christ. This seed of regeneration, implanted in the heart, is quickened by the efficacious Word of God and the operation of the Holy Spirit. However, this efficacious Word of God is not the preaching of the gospel, but is the creative Word of God addressed to the heart immediately whereby the seed is quickened into life.
 - b. The fact that this can take place already at the moment of conception is because:

- 1) It is only the heart that is regenerated; the nature of the elect sinner is not regenerated except through the grave and the resurrection of the body.
 - 2) Already at conception there is principally in the seed the whole man including the heart, the soul, and the person; and there is perhaps even a certain consciousness, although not self consciousness.
 - 3) The sovereign, efficacious, almighty work of God in regeneration is not limited to time or place, or the full development of the elect people of God.
 - 4) The regenerated elect child is immediately susceptible to the Word of God as that Word is directed to him almost from the moment of birth on. There would be no point in a lapse of time after birth between the birth of a child and the work of regeneration, so that part of his life he would not even be susceptible to the preaching.
- C. Regeneration in the broader sense of the Word.
1. This work of God implies not only the implanting of the new life of Christ, but also the whole work of salvation as it is consciously applied to the believer. It therefore includes conversion and sanctification.
 2. This work is accomplished by the preaching of the Word whereby the gospel is addressed by the Spirit to the principle of regeneration, calling that new principle forth into consciousness.
 3. Thus the principle of regeneration renews and influences the mind and the will in such a way that the elect child of God is capable of hearing the gospel and desiring it, believing it and clinging to it. Yet this is not complete till death.
 4. This goes on all his life long as the gospel comes to him, and as he stands under its influence.
 5. In this way sanctification and conversion are effected. However, it must be observed in this connection, that while sanctification and conversion as well as faith are a process increasing in force as time goes on, nevertheless, all these things are principally accomplished in regeneration in the narrow sense. Then we are converted; then we are made holy; then indeed faith is implanted in our hearts.
- D. The article goes on to discuss the relation between justification and sanctification.
1. There is a difference between the two. Justification has to do with our state and thus frees us from the guilt of sin as a judicial act of God. It is a formal declaration of God whereby we are declared righteous. Sanctification, on the other hand, has to do with our condition and frees us from the pollution of sin. We are washed and cleansed from iniquity; the old man of sin is actually destroyed; the new man in Christ is quickened; we become holy.
 2. Yet the two are related.
 - a. Justification necessarily implies sanctification, for one's state and condition must always correspond. If one is justified, he will also be sanctified.
 - b. Justification is the ground for sanctification. Sanctification is not the basis for justification, for this would lead to the error that we are justified on the basis of our works.
 2. The importance of understanding this relationship is evident.
 - a. A profane Christian is impossible. If one is justified, he will also be sanctified. And the faith by which he is justified is a lively faith which can not possibly produce a profane justified person, but will produce good works.
 - b. Yet at the same time, our good works can therefore never be the basis for justification. And if they cannot contribute to our justification, they cannot contribute in any way to our salvation.
 - 1) Without justification, we cannot and "would never do anything out of love to God, but only out of self-love or fear of damnation"
 - 2) Our good works, even though approved by God, are of no account for our justification, for we are justified before we do good works, and God's approval upon our good works is simply the crown he places upon His own work in us.
 - 3) This is even, the article says, as a tree that cannot produce good fruit un-

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- less the tree itself is first good. And the fact that we are first good before we can produce good works, is due to the fact that whom God justifies he must also sanctify.
- 4) Besides this, our works can never justify because even when we do good works, we remain unprofitable servants who have earned nothing, but only done our duty. And, we are not perfect, but continue to sin, while only one sin would be sufficient to send us to hell forever.
 - c. Yet our works are indeed rewarded both in this life and in the life to come. But when God rewards us, it is but the reward of grace, for "It is through his grace that he crowns his gifts."
 - E. Finally, there is a concluding remark concerning the assurance of our salvation.
 1. This assurance can never rest upon the basis of our good works, "For we do no work but what is polluted by our flesh, and also punishable; and although we could perform such works, still the remembrance of one sin is sufficient to make God reject them." If however, we do try to base our assurance on our good works, then "we would always be in doubt, tossed to and fro without any certainty, and our poor consciences continually vexed."
 2. Assurance only comes by relying completely upon the merits of the suffering and death of our Savior.

A. Introduction.

1. The title of this article is not quite correct. It speaks of the fact that the ceremonial law has been abolished; while the article speaks not only of the ceremonial law, but of the entire law. And, the article does not teach that it has been abolished, but rather that the use is abolished, while the substance and truth remains.
2. This article was written against:
 - a. Roman Catholicism. We need only think of the emphasis which the church of Rome places upon her eucharist, her images, her pope and priesthood, her hal-
lowing of buildings and vessels.
 - b. Chiliasm. Although perhaps our fathers did not have those in mind who enter-
tain fond chiliastic dreams, nevertheless they stand condemned by this article. The basic error of Chiliasm or Pre-millennialism is that it separates the Old and the New Dispensations finding no relation between them at all. The article rather emphasizes that the law and the prophets have all been fulfilled in Christ, and thus their use for Christians has been abolished while their substance remains in the Church of all ages.

B. The purpose of the law in the Old Dispensation.

1. The article does not specifically mention, but clearly implies that the entire law is meant. This law is usually divided into:
 - a. The moral law briefly summarized in the ten commandments.
 - b. The ceremonial law which directed Israel's life as a church and which included all the laws concerning sacrifices, feast days, cleansings, etc.
 - c. The civil law governing Israel's life as a nation and including laws concern-
ing crimes, family rights, property rights, etc.
2. The purpose of the law.
 - a. They were given to form Israel into a separate nation and the people of God. Christ had not yet come and the blood of atonement had not yet been shed. The Lord had not yet been exalted, and His Spirit poured out upon His church. Yet God would have a people also in the Old Testament who would walk before Him as His own chosen people in the midst of the world. Laws were given to distinguish them sharply from the whole world about them and indelibly mark them as God's church.
 - b. Yet Israel could never keep the law.
 - 1) After all, the law demanded perfect obedience in every respect. And simply outward conformity to the external principles of the law was never suffic-
ient. God Himself repeatedly warns the people that He is weary of their sac-
rifices when they are externally offered and not accompanied by a broken
spirit and a contrite heart.
 - 2) Therefore the law not only said, "Do this and thou shalt live", but also,
"Accursed is every one that does not abide in all that is written in the
book of the law to do it." For this reason, the law led to slavery, and the
true people of God groaned beneath the burden of the law.
 - 3) Thus the law was also intended to be a schoolmaster to lead the people to
Christ. Israel in the Old Dispensation was as a child that had not yet come
to years of maturity and had to be led by the hand of the law till the time
when they were old enough to receive their inheritance through the out-pour-
ing of the Spirit.

C. The abolishing of the ceremonies and figures; the retaining of the substance.

1. With the coming of Christ, the entire law was fulfilled.
 - a. Christ came as the only One Who could keep the law of God not only with re-
spect to its outward form, but especially with respect to its inward reality.
"I come to do Thy will O Lord".
 - b. Thus Christ was at times bent on keeping the letter of the law; while at other
times he scorned the mere outward observance and damned the Pharisees for their
hypocrisy.

2. Thus when Christ came, the shadows of the law fled away.
 - a. The law all pointed ahead to Christ. He was the reality. When He came as the eternal High Priest and as the perfect Lamb of God to offer the perfect sacrifice for sin, the shadows of the law had no more place nor purpose.
 - b. Christ, even in the Old Dispensation cast upon the nation the shadows of Himself. But when the day broke, and the Sun of Righteousness appeared with healing in His wings, the shadows fled away. The veil of the temple was rent at the moment that Christ died; and that marked the end of all that pertained to the economy of the Old Dispensation.
3. But the substance of the law remained.
 - a. Christ is the real substance of all the law.
 - b. Hence, the substance of them could never perish. Israel still is, but is no more the Jewish nation, but the true Israel of God; Jerusalem still is, but no more the earthly city,--it is the spiritual city of God; Canaan still is, but not in the land of Palestine, but it is the inheritance of the people of God in that city which hath foundations; God's temple and tabernacle still are, but they are the covenant fellowship of God with His people in Christ. Christ is our Prophet and Priest and King, and we are a royal priesthood in Him. He is the fulfillment of all the sacrifices. Washings and cleansings still exist, but in the sanctified heart of the elect child of God. Tithes and firstfruits still have their place, but are now the true sacrifices of our thanksgiving. Fasting is changed in Christ to the real sorrow of a contrite heart. All the inward substance of the entire law of God is written upon the hearts of the people of God by an act of sovereign grace through the perfect sacrifice of Christ.
- D. The purpose of the law for us.
 1. This does not mean that we have nothing to do with the law or with the Old Dispensation any more.
 2. On the contrary, it still has a purpose for us who live in the end of the ages.
 - a. They are for our instruction. In as far as they show that the Lord fulfills His promises, they confirm our faith and help us to understand the reality.
 - b. In the substance of the law there were also eternal principles of truth and righteousness which regulate our life and walk in the world. The law reveals sin, points us to Calvary, and is the rule of a life of gratitude to the praise and glory of our God.

- A. Introduction.
 1. This is a rather lengthy article written here as a conclusion of the work of Jesus Christ in salvation.
 2. It is primarily directed against the evil practice of Roman Catholicism in praying to saints.
 3. It really contains two subjects:
 - a. Christ's work of intercession as our Mediator.
 - b. Our prayers which we offer to God through Jesus Christ.
- B. The Roman Catholic doctrine and its refutation in this article.
 1. The Roman Catholic church taught:
 - a. That there are men who have lived here upon earth who have arrived at perfection because of their good works. They have an honored place in heaven above the people of God for their self-mortification and accumulation of goodness.
 - b. These saints are honored and ought to be honored by us especially by our prayers to them. This is especially true of the Virgin Mary who is the Queen of Heaven and Co-Mediator with Christ. But it is also true of the other saints.
 - c. This is necessary because the believer knows that he is unworthy to appear either before God or before Christ; therefore he goes to the saints first that he may seek their cooperation and influence in petitioning God.
 2. This is severely condemned by this article.
 - a. Although the article does not specifically condemn the whole Romish idea of sainthood and the doctrine of good works implied in it, nevertheless it makes the pertinent remark, "And if we seek for one who hath power and majesty, who is there that hath so much of both as he who sits at the right hand of the Father, and who hath all power in heaven and on earth?"
 - b. With respect to the position of Rome that prayers honor the saints, the article answers that it rather dishonors them for it is a practice of "doing that which they never have done nor required, but have, on the contrary, steadfastly rejected, according to their bounden duty, as appears by their writings."
 - c. And although it is true that the believer who prays is deeply conscious of his own unworthiness, this is not a reason to go to the saints first of all, for,
 - 1) This is a false humility showing rather that we distrust Christ. For, "this Mediator, whom the Father hath appointed between him and us, ought in nowise to affright us by his majesty, or cause us to seek another according to our fancy."
 - 2) Our unworthiness need not sacre us from Christ's presence, for, "there is no creature, either in heaven or on earth, who loveth us more than Jesus Christ;.... If then, we should seek for another mediator, who would be well affected towards us, whom could we find who loved us more than he who laid down his life for us, even when we were his enemies?"
 - 3) Our unworthiness does not enter into the picture and we must not plead here our unworthiness; "for the meaning is not that we should offer our prayers to God on account of our own worthiness, but only on account of the excellence and worthiness of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is become ours by faith."
 - d. And finally this article at least implies that praying to saints has degenerated into idolatry which indeed in actual fact it has.
 - C.. Thus Christ is our only Advocate, before the face of the Father.
 1. He is our only Advocate because He united in one person the divine and human nature. Only because He is divine and human both can He intercede for us before the throne of God.
 2. He became our Advocate because of His highpriestly work.

- a. He was eternally appointed by God as our Mediator.
 - b. To accomplish this work He came into our flesh as our High Priest and gave Himself as the perfect Lamb of God in the perfect sacrifice for sin on the cross of Calvary.
 - c. But even as the high priest of the Old Dispensation, He carried the blood of atonement into the Most Holy Place of God's presence. Only He did so by arising from the dead and taking, not the blood of a bull, but His own precious blood, to lay it before the face of His Father.
 - d. On the basis of this perfect sacrifice, He continually pleads before the Father, asking the Father to bless His people with all spiritual blessings which God has prepared for them.
 - e. God answers His prayer by bestowing upon Him all these blessings, which He in turn pours out upon His church through His Spirit.
3. He is our perfect Mediator because,
- a. He loved us so much that He was willing to go the dark way of the cross for us.
 - b. He was made like unto us in all things except our sins, and therefore knows all our infirmities, in all points tempted as we are, and therefore, able to succor those who are tempted.
 - c. He is exalted in the highest heavens clothed with power and glory and therefore able to give us all that is necessary to our full and complete salvation.
 - d. He is surely heard of the Father because He is the Son and finished all that the Father sent Him into the world to accomplish.
- D. Thus we may confidently pray in Hisname.
1. To pray in Jesus' name means that we base our prayer on His merit.
 - a. We are deeply aware of our own sin and unworthiness. We know that God can never receive us as we are in ourselves.
 - b. But we base all our petitions on the fact that Christ died for us to remove all our sin and guilt, and to merit for us the blessings of salvation.
 2. Thus He prepared the way for us into the Father's presence. Formerly, in the dispensation of types, the way to God was closed by a veil. But when Jesus died, the veil of the temple was rent. And this did not simply mean that the old order of things had passed away, but also that through the rending of the veil which is his flesh, he prepared a new and living way for us into the presence of the Father.
 3. Although even our prayers are imperfect, they are nevertheless heard. For Jesus our Lord makes constant intercession for us. He purifies our prayers. If we ask for something we should not, He tells the Father not to give us what we ask, for we do not know what we are talking about. If we do not ask for that which we need, He presents our needs before the face of our Father so that we receive all things necessary to bring us to our eternal reward.
 4. Finally, we must pray in faith. We cannot and may not impose our carnal wishes upon God, but we must pray in the consciousness that we belong to Christ and for Christ's sake are sons in our Father's house. And when we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, we know that the Spirit within us prays for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

- A. Introduction.
1. This article begins a lengthy discussion of that part of dogmatics which is commonly known as Ecclesiology. It extends through Article 36.
 2. It is important to note that the doctrine of the church is also an article of faith. This article also emphasizes the fact that we do not discuss the church from the point of view of her life in the world--this would lead to all kinds of erroneous conclusions; but we discuss the church as she is described in Scripture, and as therefore an object of faith. We cannot see the church; we believe one catholic or universal church.
- B. In harmony with this, the article discusses the church from its ideal viewpoint first of all, i.e., as it appears in the counsel of God, and as it will finally be perfected in glory.
1. As such the church has certain attributes which are mentioned in the article.
 - a. The church is one. Although she appears in the world as separated by space, time, the barriers of nationality and language, and as divided by differences of creed and confession, yet she is actually one in Christ. "She is joined and united with heart and will, by the power of faith, in one and the same Spirit." This unity has its deepest principle in Jesus Christ her Head who is the principle of her life, who is the mind and the will of the church.
 2. Her catholicity or universality. The Roman Catholic church claims to be alone catholic in the true sense of the word, but this is not true. The true body of Christ is alone truly catholic. Although for a time, the church was limited almost exclusively to the nation of the Jews. on Pentacost it burst through these national boundaries and became universal in the true sense of the word.
 - a. This catholicity is accomplished through the universal preaching of the gospel.
 - b. The purpose of the catholicity of the church is twofold:
 - 1) On the one hand it is the means of accomplishing the pluriformity of the church.
 - 2) On the other hand, it is the means of saving the human race. This is not to say that all men are saved, but the church is the true human race, and this church is therefore saved from every tribe and tongue.
 3. Her holiness.
 - a. As the church appears on earth it is far from holy. This is due to the fact that there are yet in the church wicked men, a carnal element that will never be completely taken out in this life; and because the saints themselves are not yet perfect. Much sin cleaves to them, and their holiness is only a small principle.
 - b. Nevertheless, as the church is an object of faith, she is holy. She expects all her salvation in Jesus Christ, "Being washed by his blood, sanctified and sealed by the Holy Ghost."
- C. Various distinctions have been adopted in describing this church of Jesus Christ.
1. The church is spoken of as being an organism and an institute.
 - a. When the church is spoken of as an organism, it is emphasized that this church is the living body of Christ, receiving its life out of Christ and composing the body of which He is the Head.
 - b. The institute of the church is the church from the viewpoint of the ministry of the Word in her midst and the administration of the sacraments, with the special offices of elder and deacon. It is this institute of the church which comes to manifestation in time in local congregations.
 2. The church is often divided between
 - a. The church militant--the church here on earth which has not yet attained to its victory, but is called to fight the battle of faith in the midst of the world marching in the armies of Jesus Christ and under the flying banners of the cross. Yet even the church militant has already the victory, for faith is the victory that overcomes the world.
 - b. Triumphant--the church which is now in glory. For this church the battle is

- over, the noise and fury of the battle has ceased; these saints have exchanged their weapons for a wreath of victory and a palm of peace; they rest from their works and toil, for they rest in the bosom of their God. Yet even for them the final battle has not yet been won. For their victory is not complete until the church is completely saved and until their bodies also are raised from death, and until their blood has been avenged on all their enemies.
- c. Latent--the church which is not yet born. As history progresses, the church latent becomes smaller and smaller, while the church triumphant grows steadily with the departing of each saint.
 3. Sometimes the distinction is made between the church visible and invisible.
 - a. The church invisible is the church from the point of view of its inward spiritual life of grace and the blessings of Jesus Christ.
 - b. The church visible is the church considered from the point of view of the visible walk of her members in the world as they manifest in all their lives the kingdom of heaven to which they belong and as they live their lives in the shadow of the cross.
 - D. The article also makes mention of the fact that this church has been from the very beginning of time.
 1. This is overagainst the error of chiliasm and dispensationalism. The church was born in Paradise, not on the day of Pentacost. God gathers his church in the line of continued generations from the beginning to the end of time. It is true that in the Old Dispensation the church was limited almost exclusively to the Jews. But even then there were exceptions, and all the prophets spoke of another time coming when the church would be universal.
 2. This is proved by the fact, the article states, that Christ is an eternal King, which, without subjects, cannot be. Evidently the argument of the article is that Christ as an eternal King is the only King of all His people. Another King there is not. And therefore all the people of God are one church under the sovereign rule of Jesus Christ. Especially as that rule becomes manifest in time, there was never a moment in the world's history when Christ was without his subjects.
 - E. And finally the article speaks of the fact that is church is preserved by God.
 1. She may appear very small at times as during the perilous reign of Ahab when seemingly the church had perished. But even then the Lord preserved an elect remnant, a holy 7000, who had not bowed the knee to Baal. The church is always a remnant, a hut in a cucumber patch, a force not to be considered in comparison with the thousands of the world.
 2. The church always has a hard battle. The devil, the world, and her own flesh are always attacking her. She need not dream of world conquest, for she is ever a besieged city, and always will be.
 3. For the believer it means that he must separate himself from this present evil world, live as a stranger and pilgrim here below, fight and unceasing battle against all the foes that beset him, seek only that city which is above, which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

Article XXVIII - That every one is bound to join himself to the true Church

- A. The main idea of this article is that it is the duty of every one to join himself to the true church.
1. It ought to be noticed first of all that the article speaks of the church as institute.
 - a. This is denied by some who hold that the reference is to the church as organism. This is meant also to explain the difficult phrase "and that out of it there is no salvation".
 - b. But that the reference is to the church as institute is plain from the fact that no man can of himself either separate himself from or join himself to the organism of the church which is the body of Christ, while it is entirely possible to sever relations with and join the church as institute.
 2. The article evidently conceives of the fact that there is in the world at any given time only one true church institute.
 - a. This institute is the assembly of those that are saved.
 - b. Outside of this institute there is no salvation.
 3. It is the duty of every man to join himself to this institute of the church wherever it is established.
 - a. That this is the duty of every man follows from the fact that the institute of the church is the God-ordained means of salvation, for through the institute of the church the means of grace are dispensed.
 - b. This obligation which rests upon all men also follows from the truth that all men are under the obligation to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ.
 - c. And the article itself mentions that the institute of the church may in other denominations be corrupted, and it falls upon believers to sever their relationship with such a corrupt institute and join that institute which is pure and holy.
 - d. If men do not do this they act contrary to the ordinance of God. And, it may be added, that they will reap the harvest of their error in themselves and their generations.
 4. One becomes a member of the church institute either by baptism or by confession of faith.
- B. The article also speaks of the demands which rest upon the members of the church.
1. Believers must maintain the unity of the church. They may not commit the sin of schism nor may they neglect to strive for this unity of the church in the world.
 2. Believers must submit themselves to the doctrine and discipline of the church but only by bowing under the yoke of Christ. Christ is the Chief and Only Officebearer of His church. Yet He has appointed elders and deacons to function in their offices and to represent His office. By submitting to Christ the believers submit to the officebearers in the church.
 3. Believers must "as mutual members of the same body, (serve) to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them." No man in the church has received gifts for his own selfish interests, but is given these gifts graciously of God in order that with them he may serve the welfare of the church of Jesus Christ and the cause of the Kingdom of Heaven.
 4. All this is necessary, along with the obligation to join the true church regardless of the consequences; "even though the magistrates and edicts of princes were against it, yea, though they should suffer death or any other corporal punishment." This was emphatically true at the time the confession was written, and will be true again in the not too distant future.

Article XXIX - Of the marks of the true Church,
And wherein she differs from the false Church.

A. Introduction.

1. This article follows quite naturally from Article XXVIII. If it is the duty of all men to join themselves to the true church, they must be able to distinguish clearly the true church from the false church. This article tells how this may be done.
2. Presupposed in this article is the fact that the true church is always to be found upon this earth, and that therefore, it remains one's duty diligently to search for it until he finds it.
3. This search for the true church must however, be put in its proper light.
 - a. Usually the church is gathered in the generations of believers. Children indeed belong to the church that their parents belonged to; and because their parents belonged to this church. This is not bad as is sometimes averred.
 - b. However, one must be constantly on the alert that the church to which he belongs does not begin the long journey to the false church, for although the journey is long, it is irrevocable. If the church to which he belongs goes this way, and cannot be brought back, he stands before the obligation to leave and re-establish the institute.
 - c. If however, he finds himself in a church, which after diligent study of God's Word does not possess the marks of the true church, then also he must leave and seek that church where it may be found.

B. The marks of the true church.

1. In general.
 - a. They are marks defined in the Word of God, for the Word of God is the objective standard of all truth.
 - b. They are marks which distinguish the true church from all sects, which sects usually assume the name of church.
 - c. Although three marks are given, it is well to note that all three marks are really essentially one mark--the preaching of the Word.
 - d. The true church must not, however, be distinguished from hypocrites "who are mixed in the Church with the good, yet are not of the Church, though externally in it;".
2. In particular.
 - a. The pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein.
 - b. The pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ is maintained.
 - c. Church discipline is exercised in punishing sin.
 - d. Or in short, "All things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the church".

C. The marks of the false church.

1. In general.
 - a. Although there are false religions which spring up in heathendom, the article is not concerned here with these, but rather with those churches who have, through the ages become false,
 - b. Thus, the drift from the true to the false church is not a drift which occurs over night, but is a slow process continuing over many years. History has however shown that this drift from the firm moorings of the truth of the Word of God is usually irrevocable once it has begun.
2. In particular.
 - a. She trusts in the power and authority of men rather than in the Word of God and will not submit to the yoke of Christ.
 - b. She adds to and subtracts from the sacraments appointed by Christ.
 - c. She persecutes the Godly instead of excommunicating the ungodly.

D. The marks of the members of the true Church.

1. The article evidently speaks of these marks because not only is it one's calling to seek the true church, but also the communion of the saints. And, indeed, where one finds the true church he will also find the people of God.

2. These marks are:
 - a. A walk of Godly sanctification in separation from the world.
 - b. A seeking for refuge in the blood, death, passion and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - c. The article warns however, that believers are not perfect in this world, but that there remain in them many infirmities against which they must fight all their life long, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- E. In conclusion, the article once again reminds us that it is our calling to join ourselves to this true church and to the company and fellowship of the believers.

Article XXX - Concerning the Government of, and Offices in the Church.

- A. Introduction.
1. Articles XXX through XXXII speak of the government of the church before the general subject of the sacraments is treated.
 2. Consequently, these articles speak of the institute of the church in distinction from the church as organism, following the emphasis of Articles XXVIII and XXIX.
- B. The church must be governed by the spiritual policy of Christ taught in the Word of God.
1. The word "policy" evidently means in this connection "system of rules" or "principles of government".
 2. Negatively, this means:
 - a. The church is the spiritual body of Christ, and therefore has a "constitution" which differs radically from any other system of government.
 - b. It is not a democratic organization where the majority rules, or where the power to rule is invested in the membership.
 - c. Its power is not the power of the sword, either to wage war or to enforce its laws.
 3. Positively, this means,
 - a. Its power is spiritual and is limited to the exercise of the keys of the kingdom--if, indeed, this can be called a limitation.
 - b. Its principles are found only in the Word of God, the principles upon which its government is based.
- C. The offices in the church.
1. In general we may notice:
 - a. That Christ is the chief and only Officebearer in His church. He is Prophet-Priest-King. He suffered and died for His Church, and she belongs to Him. He is given the right and authority to save His Church and rule over her in such a way that she is finally brought to glory with Him.
 - b. Nevertheless, Christ is now in heaven where we cannot see Him, and we are upon earth. It therefore pleases our Lord to exercise His authority over His church through office bearers whom He appoints and calls and qualifies in order to rule in His name, that He may rule through them.
 - c. The rule of Jesus Christ Himself over His people while they are in this life is therefore through the offices instituted in the church. Whether there will be a certain manifestation of the offices of minister, elder and deacon in heaven is difficult to say, but is not inconceivable.
 2. These offices are:
 - a. The office of minister through which Christ preaches His Word to His people and administers the sacraments, and which reveals Christ as Prophet.
 - b. The office of elder through which Christ rules over His people and which is the manifestation of Christ as King.
 - c. The office of deacon by means of which Christ relieves and comforts the needy and distressed and by means of which Christ is revealed as our merciful His Priest.
 3. The purpose of the institution of these offices is described as being:
 - a. Notice first of all that the article teaches that the ministers, the elders and the deacons constitute the "council of the Church". This is in distinction from the Church Order. Cf. Arts. 23-26, 37, 40.
 - b. That the true religion may be preserved.
 - c. That the true doctrine may be everywhere propagated.
 - d. That transgressors may be punished and restrained.
 - e. That the poor and distressed may be relieved and comforted.

- A. The election of officebearers.
1. Whether of ministers or elders or deacons, this election must take place by the Consistory with the approval of the congregation.
 - a. This is based upon the fact, in the first place, that the Consistory is the ruling body in the church.
 - b. Christ appoints a man to his office by calling, qualification and ordination. Christ does this through those whom He has ordained as rulers in His Church.
 - c. The approval of the congregation must be sought because the congregation functions in the office of believers. This is not a ruling office, but is nevertheless to be considered in the affairs of the Church.
 2. There are three prescribed methods.
 - a. The Consistory chooses the officebearers and presents them to the congregation for approbation. Cf. Article 22 of the Church Order.
 - b. The Consistory makes a nomination, presents it to the Congregation for their approval, and, upon approval, presents the nomination to the congregation so that from the nomination officebearers may be chosen. Cf. Article 22 of the Church Order.
 - c. Where Consistories are constituted for the first time or anew, the election takes place by a free vote of the male membership. Cf. decision pertaining to Article 38 of the Church Order.
- B. The Calling of officebearers.
1. There is first of all the inward call.
 - a. This inward call is especially necessary for ministers of the Word who must themselves pursue this calling. But it is no less true with respect to elders and deacons.
 - b. It consists of:
 - (1) The desire to serve God in some office.
 - (2) The gifts to serve in an office.
 - (3) An open way--i.e., no obstacles in the circumstances of one's life which prevent one from serving.
 2. There is secondly the outward call.
 - a. This outward call is the call of the church which seals and confirms the inward call.
 - b. This outward call is the call of Christ Himself Who calls through His church. "...that ye are lawfully called of God's Church, and consequently of God himself...."
 - c. No man may appoint himself to any office. Christ alone appoints, qualifies and ordains.
 - d. No man may intrude upon an office by indecent means.
- C. The authority of officebearers.
1. Actually there are but two offices--the office of elder and the office of deacon.
 - a. A minister is a teaching elder.
 - b. Yet the three-fold office of Christ (Prophet, Priest and King) is revealed in the Minister, Deacon and Elder respectively.
 2. The office of minister has a general significance for the whole church. Therefore a minister may enter an office only with the approval of the Synod and Classis. Cf. Articles 4, 5 and 10 of the Church Order.
 3. All offices are on an equal level. There is no superiority of the office of minister over an elder and deacon, or of an elder over a deacon. Cf. Article 84 of the Church Order.
 4. Everyone must esteem the officebearers highly for their work's sake. All are servants of Christ and must be considered as such.

- c. Final excommunication.
3. Often times in our day, people leave the church before excommunication can be applied. Yet, by this means they do not escape the censure of Christ. Nevertheless, it is an interesting question whether or not the Consistory should proceed with excommunication regardless of whether an individual asks for his papers.
4. It is, in conclusion, essential to the well-being of the Church that Christian discipline is faithfully maintained both in the preaching of the Word and the exercise of the keys of the Kingdom.

- b. The outward sign of the sacrament is applied inwardly to the heart through the operation of the Holy Spirit. He causes us to see, through the signs, the cross of Christ. He applies that cross in such a way that we know it is for us.
- E. The result of the sacraments.
- 1. The sacraments are for the strengthening of the faith of the elect.
 - 2. But, no less, do they have an effect upon unbelievers. The sacraments are means to harden unbelievers in their sins and result in greater condemnation to those who baptized despise the cross and those who partake in unbelief of the table of the Lord.
 - 3. For this reason we are called to examine ourselves and so partake of the sacraments.

A. Introduction:

1. Article XXXIII treated of the sacraments in general; this article discusses the sacrament of baptism.
2. The subject of baptism has always been an important subject in the church. As important as it was at the time when this article was written, it has not decreased in importance today. In fact the same errors which our fathers denounced are still present today.
3. This article was written overagainst:
 - a. The Roman Catholics who taught that the power of baptism was in the water itself.
 - b. The Anabaptists who denied infant baptism and insisted on re-baptism.

B. The article lays the basis for the entire doctrine of baptism by emphasizing that baptism has taken the place of circumcision.

1. The argument runs as follows:
 - a. Christ is the end and fulfillment of the whole law.
 - b. He is thus the end and fulfillment of the shedding of blood, by His own perfect and bloody sacrifice on the cross.
 - c. Thus also circumcision, a bloody sign, was abolished.
 - d. Baptism was instituted in the place of circumcision.
2. The meaning is:
 - a. Circumcision was an Old Testament sign that God gave to Abraham and his generations to seal the promise of His covenant.
 - b. Christ instituted baptism when he commanded His disciples to preach to all the world and baptize in the name of the triune God.
 - c. Circumcision pointed to the necessity of the shedding of blood as an atonement for sin; but since Christ made this atonement the need for a bloody sign passed away. The sign of washing and cleansing took its place.
 - d. Baptism and circumcision both have the same meaning, i.e., the putting away of sin and the renewal of the heart by grace. Cf. Gen. 17:7, Mt. 28:19, Deut. 30:6, Rom. 4:11, Acts 2:39, Rom. 6:4, Col. 2:11, 12.

C. The meaning of baptism.

1. The sacrament of baptism is first of all an emblem which marks our separation from the world.
 - a. It signifies that we have been received into the Church of Christ by being separated from all other people and strange religions.
 - b. It is an ensign and banner of Christ that we carry all our life long.
2. The meaning of the sacrament as a sign and a seal is also explained.
 - a. We are baptized in the name of the trinity.
 - b. We are by nature members of the fallen race in Adam, dead in trespasses and sins.
 - c. Baptism signifies that we are incorporated into Christ--buried with Him into the fellowship of His death, burial and resurrection. By means of this incorporation into Christ we are delivered from the world, from death and guilt, from our own flesh, and brought into the fellowship of God's covenant--into heaven, life everlasting and righteousness, into the new creation of God. It is as if, carried on the flood of Christ's blood, we are lifted from the world of the curse to be brought to the harbor of eternity.
 - d. Thus baptism signifies that as water cleanses from the filth of the body, so does the blood of Christ cleanse from sin and regenerate us from being children of wrath into being sons of God.
 - e. The Old Testament types of this were the flood and the passage through the Red Sea.
3. This is not effected by the external water, but by the Holy Spirit.

- a. The ministers are the called servants of God to administer the sacrament; but only God can give what is signified and sealed, "namely, the gifts and invisible grace; washing, cleansing and purging our souls of all filth and unrighteousness; renewing our hearts, and filling them with all comfort; giving unto us a true assurance of his fatherly goodness; putting on us the new man, and putting of the old man with all his deeds.
 - b. These blessings are wrought, not by the power of the water inselb, but by the operation of the Holy Spirit. This is written against the errors of Rome, for Rome teaches that baptism cleanses from original guilt and puts a man into such a state of grace that he can either accept or reject the gospel. This is wrought by baptism itself to all who are baptized.
 - c. These blessings of baptism are not only our's at the moment of baptism but all our life long.
- D. The baptism of infants.
1. False views.
 - a. The error of Anabaptism.
 - 1) The Anabaptists were a sect which was an offshoot of the Reformation. They denied the need of the baptism of infants and insisted on re-baptizing those who were baptized when infants. Hence their name--Ana-(again) baptists.
 - 2) This error has remained until the present in all those who deny the necessity of the baptism of infants. Usually this view is accompanied by a denial of the sovereign character of grace, the truth of the covenant, and the error of pre-millennialism.
 - b. Others who have taught the baptism of infants have erred in attempting to find a ground for infant baptism.
 - 1) Some have based infant baptism on the doctrine of "presupposed regeneration"; i.e., we must presuppose that all the children of the covenant are regenerated and therefore ought to be baptized. This view is wrong, for we know from Scripture and experience that all baptized children are not regenerated. Besides, it leads to the practical error of failure to discipline sinful people.
 - 2) Other have sought the basis for infant baptism in the objective and yet general and conditional promise of the covenant. They maintained that all infants must be baptized because God's promise comes objectively to all. Only it comes in a conditional form so that its fulfillment and realization is dependent upon faith. The error of this view is simply that it introduces into the covenant the age-old heresy of Arminianism.
 2. The basis for the baptism of infants according to Scripture:
 - a. The church of the Old and New Dispensation is one Church. This is the basic reason. For proof cf. Gal. 3:7-9, 16-19, 4:1-7; Hosea 1:10, 11 and Romans 9:24-26; Jer. 31:33, 34 and Heb. 10:16. If the Church of both dispensations is one, the covenant is also one. If the covenant is one, the sign of the covenant must also be one although its outward form changes. If the sign is one, as children received that sign in the Old Dispensation, so must they also receive it in the New.
 - b. God gathers His Church in the line of continued generations. This does not mean that all the children of believers--all who are baptized are saved. But the children of believers are the organism of the people of God although some fall away. Thus all born within the organism must receive its sign.
 - c. The apostles well understood this truth, for they always baptized houses.
 3. Just as with the preaching of the Word, so also baptism is both a savor of life unto life and death unto death.
 4. It places both believing parents and their seed under a tremendous obligation, an obligation which they fulfill by grace.

Article XXXV - Of the Holy Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ

- A. Introduction:
1. Since with Baptism, the Lord's Supper is the sacrament God has instituted in His Church, it follows that a discussion of the Lord's Supper will come in connection with baptism.
 - a. Baptism is first since it is a sign and seal of our entrance into God's Covenant, into the spiritual family of God; the Lord's Supper follows because it is a sign and seal of our abiding within the fellowship of that covenant, our being fed daily in God's household.
 - b. Thus also Baptism is administered once while the Lord's Supper is repeatedly celebrated.
 - c. Moreover, this is also the reason why Baptism is administered to children in the line of the covenant, while the Lord's Supper is celebrated by confessing believers.
 2. While not directly expressed, this article nevertheless opposes the errors that have risen in the Church with regard to this sacrament.
 - a. Transubstantiation--the error of Roman Catholicism which teaches that the bread and wine of the sacrament are actually changed into the body and blood of Christ. From this it follows that the grace imparted by the sacrament is imparted automatically and to all who partake.
 - b. Consubstantiation--the error of Lutheranism which teaches that while the bread and wine are not actually changed into the body and blood of Christ, nevertheless the body and blood of Christ are under in and with the bread and wine. This is principally no different from Lutheranism.
 - c.. Zwingli went to the opposite extreme and taught that the sacrament is not really a means of grace, but is only a memorial feast similar to Christmas, during which the Church recalls the sufferings of Christ her Lord.
- B. The article speaks of the need of the sacrament by discussing the "two-fold life" of the regenerated elect.
1. They have a natural life.
 - a. This life is common to all men, temporal and corporal, received from first birth
 - b. It is supported by earthly bread and drink.
 2. They also have a spiritual life.
 - a. It is given to them in their second birth.
 - b. It is "effected by the Word of the gospel, in the communion of the body of Christ."
 - c. It is peculiar to God's elect.
 - d. This life is nourished and strengthened by eating Jesus Christ who is the true Bread from heaven.
- C. The working of the sacrament.
1. The elements of the sacrament are signs and seals.
 - a. These elements are: the bread, the wine, the breaking of the bread, the pouring out of the wine, the communion of the saints about the table.
 - b. They are signs because they point to spiritual and invisible realities.
 - 1) The bread points to the body of Christ; the wine to his blood.
 - 2) The breaking of the bread points to the breaking of Christ's body on the cross; the pouring out of the wine to the shedding of His blood. (Note: these taken together point to the meritorious and vicarious suffering and death of Jesus Christ on the cross.)
 - 3) The gathering of the saints about the table point to the fellowship of the saints in the body of Christ.
 - c. They are seals because they are visible pledges and guarantees of God that He will actually give that which is signified.
 2. The eating and drinking of the bread and wine.

- a. We do not literally eat and drink the body and blood of Christ, but eat and drink by faith for faith is "the hand and mouth of our soul".
 - b. This means that by faith we lay hold on Christ and all the blessings of His cross and make them our own.
 - c. This is accomplished by the operation of the Spirit in our hearts and through the Word of the minister, which Word is the Word of Christ Who is the Host at this spiritual banquet.
 - d. This operation of the Spirit "surpasses our understanding, and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations of the Holy Ghost are hidden and incomprehensible."
3. The blessings received.
- a. Our spiritual life and faith and nourished and fed by these visible signs and seals.
 - b. Our Lord Jesus Christ Who is in heaven comes to us and makes us partakers of Himself and all His blessings--"gives us there to enjoy both himself, and the merits of his sufferings and death, nourishing, strengthening and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of his flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of His blood."
- D. The proper partakers of the Lord's Supper.
1. There is a two-fold operation of the sacrament.
 - a. Those who partake in faith are spiritually blessed.
 - b. Those who do not partake at all for any reason, or those who partake in unbelief are condemned--condemned the greater for having partaken. The sacraments also are savors of death unto death.
 2. True self-examination is therefore necessary for believers.
 - a. This self examination must be to discover whether we are "in the faith".
 - b. This includes whether we know our sins and miseries; whether we are truly sorry for them; whether we earnestly desire to walk in the way of God's commandments.

A. Introduction:

1. The article was written overagainst the error of the Anabaptists.
 - a. The Anabaptists refused to recognize the temporal power of the magistrate and attempted to establish the kingdom of Christ in this world establishing their own kingdom within the state and and communion of goods.
 - b. This article, it must not be forgotten, was written during a time of severe persecution. The fathers were charged with being seditious on the order of the Anabaptists. This article was written as a defense of their position and as proof that they were not rebels against the state.
 - c. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that, even though persecuted by the state, the fathers still insist on obedience to the state.
2. This article, especially the phrase "to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained", was quoted by the Christian Reformed Church in support of the second point of 1924. That this was a mistake is evident. Evidently the Christian Reformed Church failed to distinguish between the Holy Spirit and the policeman; and therefore between outward restraint and inward improvement.

B. The origin of the state.

1. The article might be interpreted to mean that the state originated with sin. This however is not the case. Article XXXVI evidently treats of the magistrates only as they function now since sin came into the world.
2. The state originated in Paradise.
 - a. Adam was the head of his wife, the king of the creation, the head and father of the whole human race.
 - b. God ordained from the beginning that His sovereign control over all things and all men in every sphere of life should be represented here upon earth by vice-regents whom He appointed.
 - c. The state developed along with the organic development of the human race. The father of a family was its head, but also the ruler of the clan and the king of the people.
3. The entrance of sin into the world introduced the need of the sword. This is emphatically stated in Genesis 9:5, 6.
4. Thus the magistrate is invested with authority from God. He must give an account to God of the use he makes of the authority conferred upon him.

C. The purpose of the magistrate.

1. Their calling is to punish those who do evil and praise those who do well. Romans 13:1-5, I Peter 2:13-17.
 - a. This is their calling even though many times magistrates are unfaithful. They often praise evil doers and punish those who do well, but this is an awful crime.
 - b. To accomplish this they must seek the welfare of the civil state, restrain the dissoluteness of men, maintain good order and decency.
2. The sphere of the state.
 - a. The article speaks of the calling of the state as including the duty "to protect the sacred ministry; and thus remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship; that the kingdom of anti-christ may be thus destroyed and the kingdom of Christ promoted. They must therefore countenance the preaching of the Word of the gospel everywhere, that God may be honored and worshipped by everyone, as he commands in his Word.
 - b. An objection was brought against this phrasing by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands which was sustained and resulted in the addition of the footnote adopted also by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in 1910. The footnote has to do with the question of a "State Church" and the relation between Church and State.

- a. To put the question in another perspective, the matter resolves itself into a question of whether the calling of the state is to enforce the first table of the Decalogue as well as the second. The first table of the law would include violation of the Sabbath, blasphemy in the use of God's name, false religion.
 - d. This is not such an easy question, with many complex factors entering in. Undoubtedly there is need for further study on the matter and more definite conclusions.
 - e. In general however, it seems to be in harmony with Scripture to take the position that the state does have the calling to enforce the first table of the law as well as the second. Surely nowhere is there a distinction made in Scripture. Nevertheless, this enforcement of the first table of the law by the magistrates must be limited to the sphere of the state and may not be made to infringe upon either the sphere of the Church, the home, or the shop. In the social and civil relationships of men to men the first table of the law must be enforced.
 - f. This precludes the establishment of a state church, denies the right of the Church to assume power in the state as Roman Catholicism teaches, denies the right of the state to enforce the promotion of the true religion at the point of the sword, but nevertheless maintains that the Church and State are not independent of each other. The state must protect the Church from evil men, yet has no authority over the doctrine of the Church. It cannot punish heretics with excommunication and banishment.
- D. Obedience to magistrates.
1. It is the duty of all citizens to obey the magistrates, to show them honor and respect, to pay tribute to them, to pray for them that the Church may lead a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and honesty.
 2. The only limitation upon this general rule is the limitation of obeying God rather than men. When the magistrates demand something contrary to the Word of God, there is only one course of action open to believers--to refuse.
 3. Yet even in refusal the believer is never given the right of rebellion and revolution. He must submit with patience in refusal as well as in obedience and suffer for well doing if that is the fruit of his refusal.

XXVII

- A. Introduction:
1. It is remarkable that the Confession devotes only one article to the doctrine of the last things. Most probably, if the Confession were written in our day, when there is much emphasis on eschatology, more articles would be written on this subject. Yet all the important elements are briefly mentioned.
 2. The article is one of the most beautiful of all the confession, no doubt due in large part to the fact that it was written during a time of severe persecution.
- B. The article speaks first of all of Christ's return.
1. The elements in this return are:
 - a. The time of Christ's return is appointed by God but unknown to His creatures.
 - b. It is only when the number of the elect is complete that the Lord returns.
 - c. He will come visibly and corporally, as He ascended.
 - d. He will come with great glory and majesty.
 - e. He will come as Judge.
 2. This return of the Lord is ever the object of the hope of the faithful. That hope no doubt burns with increasing intensity as the end draws near.
- C. Secondly, the article speaks of the judgment.
1. The return of Christ in judgment is accompanied by
 - a. The destruction of the old creation.
 - b. The resurrection of the bodies of all that died when the souls of men shall be joined and united with their proper bodies.
 - c. The change of those who are still living at the return of Christ, a change from corruption to incorruption which shall not take place through death.
 2. The judgment itself is emphasized.
 - a. All men shall be judged according to their works; "all men shall give an account of every idle word they have spoken, which the world only counts amusement and jest; and then the secrets and hypocrisies of men shall be disclosed and laid open before all.
 - b. Rather startlingly, the books are here called men's consciences. Evidently the idea is that all men shall be judged in their consciences; i.e., all men shall be subjectively convinced of the justice of God's judgment.
 - c. The righteous shall be judged in their relation to Christ. Their cause, as the cause of Christ shall be perfectly vindicated because they were mocked and scorned on earth. They look forward to the judgment therefore with hope.
- D. Finally, the article speaks of rewards and punishments.
1. The wicked, in harmony with their base godlessness, shall be burned in everlasting fire in the sight of the righteous and the angels. Their judgment shall be most terrible.
 2. The reward of the righteous shall be exceedingly glorious. They shall be crowned with glory and honor; Christ will confess their names before His Father; all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes; their cause shall be known as the cause of the Son of God; they shall possess glory such as never entered into the heart of man to conceive. They therefore look forward to this day with a most ardent desire to enjoy the perfect fulfillment of all the promises of their God.
- E. Beautifully, the confession ends with the prayer in the hearts and on the lips of the faithful: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"