

Preface

The creeds and confession to which we subscribe have a rich history in the Christian church. The Apostles' Creed has been in use perhaps for as long as 1,800 years, the Nicene Creed for over 1,600 years, and the London Baptist Confession for over 300 years. And although the London Baptist Confession has been in existence only since 1689, the essence of the theology it espouses can be traced back to the French Reformer, John Calvin (1509-1564), and back even farther to Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430). When it comes to our understanding of the Christian faith, we find ourselves in good company.

Having said this, it is critical that we do not give a false impression. These giants of the Christianity, who worked diligently to preserve for us statements of faith, did not agree on every point. Within the tradition of what has come to be known as Reformed Theology, differences with respect to the details have been present ever since the time of the Reformation. For our part, our own exceptions to the creeds and confession contained in the following pages are set forth in the footnotes. Two things should be kept in mind as you read them. First, with every exception, appeal is made to other confessions of the Reformed tradition. This we do in order to show that even though we may not agree in every part, we have not thereby stepped outside the orb of Reformed orthodoxy. Some of the other confessions provide theological explanations that are sufficiently general to allow for charitable latitude in matters of doctrinal specificity. Second, our appeal to other Reformed confessions is also meant to inform the reader of the agreement in fundamentals of the faith within Reformed theology. Perfect agreement is a present-age impossibility, but sufficient and essential agreement is possible.

In addition, we believe that although tradition is important, it is not the Reformed tradition that ultimately determines our faith and practice. *Sola Scriptura*, the Scriptures alone, was the clarion call of the entire Protestant Reformation. As a result, we ought always to bring our creeds and confessions under the close scrutiny of the word of God that we might be more certain that we are being faithful to retain the standard of sound words that we have received from the Lord (2 Tim 1:13). No man or group of men can claim perfectly and absolutely comprehensive knowledge of any subject, let alone the area of divinity. Nevertheless, it is our firm belief that though we cannot know the truth with the perfect, all-sidedness of the omniscient One, we can know it accurately and really. Thus throughout our confessional and creedal materials, you will find Scripture references which form their foundation. In some cases, the texts cited represent not those passages of Scripture that speak explicitly to the subject(s) in view, but that provide scriptural examples of the truths the creeds and confession assert.

With this in mind, it is our prayer that as you study our confessional materials that you would not only be more informed as to the theological perspective of Redeemer Bible Church, but also that you would be edified and nourished by the richness of the biblical doctrine contained herein.

Soli Deo gloria.

The elders of Redeemer Bible Church

The Apostles' Creed¹

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried; he descended into hell;² the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic church;³ the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

¹ This creed gradually took shape throughout the church from about AD 200 to 750. The reason it is called the *Apostles' Creed* is that it was believed to have been created by the apostles themselves as a baptismal confession. While it is true that the creed is both a good summary of apostolic teaching and was used by the early church as a baptismal confession, the notion that its origin is apostolic is spurious.

² This phrase is the most controversial in the creed. It was unknown in earlier versions of the Apostle's Creed and did not appear in the Latin creeds until it appeared in one of two of Rufinus' versions in AD 390. Even though he included the phrase, he did not believe that it referred to hell, but understood it to mean "buried." In harmony with the Greek form of the creed, he took it to mean that Christ descended into the grave; for *hadēs* can simply mean "grave." It was not until AD 650 that the phrase was again included.

Throughout the history of the church there have been three dominant interpretations of the phrase: (1) it is to be identified as the place of the dead, both of the righteous and the wicked (Hebrew, *sheōl*; Greek, *hadēs*). Thus it means simply that Jesus continued in the real state of death until the resurrection; (2) it signifies the intensity of Christ's sufferings on the cross, where he tasted the pain of hell for sinners; and (3) it refers to an actual self-manifestation of Christ to the dead between the time of his death and resurrection. RBC believes that the statement ought to be understood in the first sense; for this creed was developed over and against Gnostic teaching that suggested that the eternal son of God did not truly become a man. This statement makes clear the point that Jesus died a real, human death as any ordinary human being.

³ When the creed makes reference to "the holy catholic church," it has in view not the Roman Catholic Church, but the universal (Latin, *catholicam*) church.

The Nicene Creed⁴

We believe in one God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick [= living] and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father,⁵ who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And we believe one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.⁶ And we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

⁴ The Nicene Creed is the fruit of the labors of the first and second ecumenical Councils (AD 325 & 381). The first ecumenical Council was convened in Nicea for the purpose of settling the Arian heresy, which denied the full deity of the Son, teaching that he had a beginning from the Father, was a demi-urge, the highest of the angels, and not eternal. This is the commonly used final version from AD 381.

⁵ The Latin version includes the phrase “and the Son” (*filioque*), which along with Papal authority was the source for the Great Schism between the eastern and western churches in the 11th century. The *filioque* clause was added by the west without consulting the east.

⁶ The language of “baptism for the remission of sins” reflects the biblical usage at Acts 2:38: “Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” It is not teaching that baptism works regeneration.

The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689⁷

Chapter One: The Holy Scriptures

1. The Holy Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.⁸ Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God so much that man is left without any excuse, they are not sufficient to provide that knowledge of God and his will which is necessary for salvation.⁹ Therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers [= diverse] manners to reveal himself, and to declare his will to his church;¹⁰ and afterward, for the better preserving and propagating [= transmission] of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church, protecting it against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and the world, it pleased the Lord to commit his revealed truth wholly to writing.¹¹ Therefore the Holy Scriptures are most necessary, those former ways by which God revealed his will unto his people having now ceased.¹²

2. Under the title of Holy Scripture (or the written word of God) are now contained all the following books of the Old and New Testaments:

Of the Old Testament		Of the New Testament
Genesis	Ecclesiastes	Matthew
Exodus	The Song of Songs	Mark
Leviticus	Isaiah	Luke
Numbers	Jeremiah	John
Deuteronomy	Lamentations	Acts
Joshua	Ezekiel	Romans
Judges	Daniel	1 & 2 Corinthians
Ruth	Hosea	Galatians
I Samuel	Joel	Ephesians
II Samuel	Amos	Philippians

⁷ The Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists of the 1630s and 40s alike suffered persecution under the yoke of the Church of England. Presbyterians and Congregationalists suffered less under such persecution, uniting doctrinally under the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646. The Calvinistic Baptists therefore met to publish a document of their own affirming their substantial unity with the Presbyterians and Congregationalists. The result was a confession essentially modeled after the Westminster Confession.

⁸ Isa 30:8; 55:11; Matt 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Cor 2:7-14; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:20-21.

⁹ Ps 19:1-3; Rom 1:19-21; 2:14.

¹⁰ Eph 3:8-10; Heb 1:1.

¹¹ 2 Thess 3:6; 1 Tim 1:3, 10, 15; 3:1; 4:9; 6:3, 20; 2 Tim 1:14; 2:11.

¹² Eph 2:19-20.

I Kings	Obadiah	Colossians
II Kings	Jonah	1 & 2 Thessalonians
I Chronicles	Micah	1 & 2 Timothy
II Chronicles	Nahum	Titus
Ezra	Habakkuk	Philemon
Nehemiah	Zephaniah	Hebrews
Esther	Haggai	James
Job	Zechariah	1 & 2 Peter
Psalms	Malachi	1, 2, & 3 John
Proverbs		Jude
		Revelation

All these books are given by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.¹³

3. The books commonly called “The Apocrypha” not being of divine inspiration, are not part of the canon or rule of Scripture and are therefore of no authority to the church of God, nor are they to be approved of or made use of any differently from other human writings.¹⁴
4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, depends not on the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God its author (who is truth itself). Therefore it is to be received because it is the word of God.¹⁵
5. We may be moved and induced [= persuaded] by the testimony of the people of God to gain a high and reverent estimation of the Holy Scriptures. We may be similarly affected by the nature of the Scriptures—the heavenliness of the contents, the efficacy [= power] of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, which is to give all glory to God, the full disclosure it makes of the only way of man’s salvation, together with many other incomparable excellencies and entire perfections. By all the evidence, the Scripture more than proves itself to be the word of God. Yet, notwithstanding this, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth of Scripture and its divine authority, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.¹⁶
6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down or necessarily contained in the Holy Scripture, to which nothing is to be added at any time, either by new revelation of the

¹³ 2 Tim 3:16.

¹⁴ Luke 24:27, 44.

¹⁵ 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:19-21.

¹⁶ John 8:31; 1 Cor 2:10-16.

Spirit, or by the traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word.¹⁷ There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and church government which are common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word which are always to be observed.¹⁸

7. All things in Scripture are not equally plain in themselves, nor equally clear to everyone, yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded [= set forth] and revealed in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the educated but also the uneducated may attain a sufficient understanding of them by the due use of ordinary means.
8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of its writing was most generally known to the nations) were immediately inspired by God, and were kept pure through subsequent ages by his singular care and providence. They are therefore authentic, so that in all controversies of religion, the church must appeal to them as final. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God who have a right to, and an interest in the Scriptures, and who are commanded to read and search them in the fear of God, the Scriptures are therefore to be translated into the ordinary language of every nation into which they come, so that, with the word of God living richly in all, people may worship God in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope.¹⁹
9. The infallible rule for the interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself, and therefore whenever there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other passages which speak more clearly.²⁰
10. The supreme judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and by which must be examined all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, and doctrines of men and private spirits can be no other than the Holy Scripture, delivered by the Spirit. And in the sentence [= judgment] of Scripture we are to rest, for it is in Scripture, delivered by the Spirit, that our faith is finally resolved.²¹

¹⁷ 1 Cor 2:10-16.

¹⁸ 1 Cor 14:26, 40.

¹⁹ Rom 15:4; 1 Cor 14:6, 9, 11-12, 24, 28; Col 3:16.

²⁰ 2 Tim 3:16; Titus 1:2.

²¹ Matt 22:29; 2 Pet 1:20-21.

Chapter Two: God and the Holy Trinity

1. The Lord our God is the one and only living and true God;²² whose subsistence [= existence] is in and of himself;²³ who is infinite in being and perfection, whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself;²⁴ who is a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions;²⁵ who only has immortality; who dwells in the light which no man can approach;²⁶ who is immutable,²⁷ immense [= boundless],²⁸ eternal,²⁹ incomprehensible,³⁰ almighty,³¹ in every way infinite, most holy,³² most wise,³³ most free, most absolute; who works all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory;³⁴ who is most loving, gracious, merciful, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin;³⁵ who is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him;³⁶ and who, at the same time, is most just and terrible [= awesome] in his judgments,³⁷ hating all sin,³⁸ and who will by no means clear the guilty.³⁹

²² Deut 6:4; Isa 45:5-7; 1 Cor 8:4.

²³ Ps 50:12; Acts 17:25.

²⁴ Exod 3:14; Isa 48:12.

²⁵ I.e., bodily passions, like hunger or the desire for sexual fulfillment. On God's spirituality see John 4:24.

²⁶ 1 Tim 1:17; 6:16.

²⁷ Num 23:19; Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17.

²⁸ 1 Kgs 8:27; Job 11:7.

²⁹ Ps 90:2; Rev 1:8.

³⁰ 1 Cor 2:11.

³¹ Gen 17:1; Rev 1:8.

³² Isa 6:3.

³³ Isa 46:9-10; Rom 16:27.

³⁴ Eph 1:10b-12.

³⁵ Exod 34:6-7a.

³⁶ Heb 11:6.

³⁷ Rev 14:19; 19:15.

³⁸ Pss 5:5-6; 11:5; Hab 1:13.

³⁹ Exod 34:7b; Nah 1:2-3.

2. God, having all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and from himself⁴⁰ is unique in being all-sufficient, both in himself and to himself, not standing in need of any creature which he has made, nor deriving any glory from such.⁴¹ On the contrary, it is God who manifests his own glory in them, through them, to them and upon them. He is the only fountain of all being; from whom, through whom, and to whom all things exist and move.⁴² He has completely sovereign dominion over all creatures, to do through them, for them, or to them whatever he pleases.⁴³ In his sight all things are open and manifest;⁴⁴ his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and not dependant on the creature. Therefore, nothing is for him contingent or uncertain.⁴⁵ He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands.⁴⁶ To him is due from angels and men whatever worship, service, or obedience, they owe as creatures to the creator, and whatever else he is pleased to require from them.⁴⁷

3. In this divine and infinite being there are three persons, the Father, the Word or Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁴⁸ All are one in substance, power, and eternity; each having the whole divine essence, yet this essence being undivided.⁴⁹ The Father was not derived from any other being; he was neither brought into being by, nor did he issue from any other being. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.⁵⁰ All three are infinite, without beginning, and are therefore only one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative

⁴⁰ Pss 119:68; 148:13; John 5:26.

⁴¹ Job 22:2-3; Acts 17:25.

⁴² Acts 17:28; Rom 11:34-36.

⁴³ 1 Chr 29:11; Pss 103:19; 115:3; Dan 4:25, 34-35.

⁴⁴ Heb 4:13.

⁴⁵ Isa 40:13-14, 27-28; 46:10; 1 John 3:20.

⁴⁶ Ps 145:17.

⁴⁷ Rev 19:10; 22:9.

⁴⁸ Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14.

⁴⁹ John 1:1; 10:30; 14:9; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-27 w/ Isa 6:8-10; 1 Cor 12:4-6; Heb 10:15-17 w/ Jer 31:31-34.

⁵⁰ Here the Confession shows its indebtedness to the western version of the Nicene Creed. Our position, like Calvin's, is that the Scripture is silent on the matter and therefore dogmatism is unwarranted (see *Institutes* 1.13 and the excellent discussion in Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998], 331-41). We have chosen the eastern version of the Creed because of its historical precedence and because the western church erred by its failure to consult the east before amending the Creed.

properties, and also their personal relations. This doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of our communion with God, and our comfortable dependence on Him.⁵¹

Chapter Three: God's Decree

1. God has decreed in himself from all eternity by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will freely and unchangeably all things which shall ever come to pass.⁵² Yet in such a way that God is neither the author of sin nor has fellowship with any in the committing of sins, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.⁵³ In all this God's wisdom is displayed, disposing all things, and also his power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree.
2. Although God knows everything which may or can come to pass under all imaginable conditions, yet he has not decreed anything because he foresaw it in the future, or because it would come to pass under certain conditions.⁵⁴
3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels⁵⁵ are predestinated or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace.⁵⁶ Others are left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice.⁵⁷
4. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and the number of them is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.⁵⁸
5. Those of mankind who are predestinated to life, God chose before the foundation of the world was laid, in accordance with his eternal and immutable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will. God chose them in Christ for everlasting glory,

⁵¹ For an excellent treatment on this subject see John Owen, "Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" in *The Works of John Owen*, Vol II, William H Goold (ed) (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997).

⁵² Isa 46:10; Eph 1:11.

⁵³ John 8:38-47; Acts 4:27-28; Jas 1:13; 1 Pet 1:17; 1 John 1:5.

⁵⁴ Matt 11:21-24; Rom 9:11, 13, 16, 18.

⁵⁵ 1 Tim 5:21.

⁵⁶ Matt 25:34; John 1:12-13; Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:4-11; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 2:10; Titus 1:1-2; 1 Pet 1:1-2.

⁵⁷ John 17:12; Rom 9:22-23; Jude 4.

⁵⁸ John 6:37-40, 44; 13:18; Acts 13:48; 20:28; 2 Tim 2:19; Rev 13:8; 17:8.

solely out of his free grace and love, without anything in the creature as a condition or cause moving him to choose.⁵⁹

6. As God has appointed the elect unto glory, so, by the eternal and completely free intention of his will, he has foreordained all the means.⁶⁰ Accordingly, those who are elected, being fallen in Adam are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called to faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and are kept by his power through faith unto salvation;⁶¹ neither are any but the elect redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved.⁶²
7. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, in order that men who are heeding the will of God revealed in his word, and who are yielding obedience to it, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation [= calling] be assured of their eternal election.⁶³ So shall this doctrine provide cause for praise,⁶⁴ reverence, admiration of God, and also provide cause for humility,⁶⁵ diligence, and abundant consolation to all who sincerely obey the gospel.⁶⁶

Chapter Four: Creation

1. In the beginning it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,⁶⁷ for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness,⁶⁸ to create or make the world and all things in it both visible and invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.⁶⁹

⁵⁹ Rom 9:13, 16; Eph 1:4, 9, 11; 2 Tim 1:9.

⁶⁰ 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2.

⁶¹ Rom 8:30; Phil 1:6; 1 Pet 1:5.

⁶² John 10:26; 17:9.

⁶³ 1 Thess 1:4-5; 2 Pet 1:10.

⁶⁴ Rom 11:33; Eph 1:6.

⁶⁵ Rom 11:5-6, 20.

⁶⁶ Luke 10:20.

⁶⁷ Gen 1:1-2; John 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2.

⁶⁸ Pss 8:1; 19:1; Rom 1:20; 11:36; Rev 4:11.

⁶⁹ Gen 1:31.

2. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female,⁷⁰ with reasoning and immortal souls,⁷¹ rendering them fit to live that life for him for which they were created; being made in the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness;⁷² having the law of God written in their hearts, and having the power to fulfill it; and yet living under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will which was subject to change.⁷³
3. Besides the law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁷⁴ While they kept this command they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over all other creatures.⁷⁵

Chapter Five: Divine Providence

1. God the good creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom, upholds, directs, disposes and governs all creatures and things,⁷⁶ from the greatest to the least,⁷⁷ by his most wise and holy providence, to the end for which they were created. God governs according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and unchanging counsel of his own will; for the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, boundless goodness, and mercy.⁷⁸
2. Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, who is the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly;⁷⁹ so that nothing happens to anyone by chance, or outside his providence,⁸⁰ yet by his providence he orders events to occur according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.⁸¹

⁷⁰ Gen 1:27.

⁷¹ Gen 2:7.

⁷² Gen 1:26; Ecc 7:29.

⁷³ Gen 3:6; Rom 2:14-15; Heb 9:14.

⁷⁴ Gen 2:16-17.

⁷⁵ Gen 1:26-28; Ps 8:4-8.

⁷⁶ Job 38:11; Ps 145:8-9; Prov 8:22-31; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 3:9; Heb 1:3.

⁷⁷ Pss 104:14; 147:7-9; Matt 10:29-30.

⁷⁸ Eph 1:11.

⁷⁹ Acts 2:23; 4:27-28.

⁸⁰ Prov 16:33; 21:1.

⁸¹ Necessarily, as an apple falls when dropped from a tree; freely, as a man may choose to drop the apple; and contingently, as the apple's falling depends on the choosing of the man holding it. See Gen 20:1-6; 50:20; Exod 4:21 w/ 8:15.

3. God, in his ordinary providence makes use of means,⁸² yet he is free to work without,⁸³ above,⁸⁴ and against them at his pleasure.⁸⁵
4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in his providence that his determinate counsel extends even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions of both angels and men.⁸⁶ This is not merely by a bare permission, but by a form of permission in which he included the most wise and powerful limitations and other means of restricting and controlling sin. These various limitations have been designed by God to bring about his most holy purposes. Yet, in all these affairs, the sinfulness of both angels and men comes only from them and not from God, who is altogether holy and righteous, and can never be the author or approver of sin.⁸⁷
5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God often leaves, for a time, his own children to various temptations, and to the corruptions of their own hearts, in order to chastise them for the sins which they have committed, or to show them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness still in their hearts, so that they may be humbled and aroused to a more close and constant dependence upon him for their support, and that they may be made more watchful against future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends.⁸⁸ Therefore whatever happens to any of his elect is by his appointment, for his glory, and for their good.⁸⁹
6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God as a righteous judge, blinds and hardens for former sin,⁹⁰ from them he not only withholds his grace by which they might have been enlightened in their understanding and affected in their hearts,⁹¹ but sometimes he also withdraws the gifts which they had and exposes them to certain objects that their corrupt state will make the occasion of sin.⁹² God gives them over to their own lusts, the

⁸² Isa 55:10-11; Acts 27:31, 34; Rom 9:16 w/ 10:14.

⁸³ Hos 1:7.

⁸⁴ Rom 4:19-21.

⁸⁵ Dan 3:27.

⁸⁶ 2 Sam 24:1; Isa 45:7; Lam 3:37-38.

⁸⁷ Ps 50:21; Hab 1:13; John 8:38-47; Jas 1:13; 1 John 2:16.

⁸⁸ Gen 22:12; 2 Chr 32:31; Job 1:8-12; 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Cor 12:7-9.

⁸⁹ Rom 8:28.

⁹⁰ Rom 1:24-26, 28; 9:18; 11:7-8.

⁹¹ Deut 29:4; Mark 4:11-12.

⁹² Deut 2:30; 1 Sam 10:6 w/ 18:10.

temptations of the world, and the power of Satan,⁹³ so that eventually they harden themselves under the same influences that God uses for the softening of others.⁹⁴

7. As the providence of God in general reaches to all creatures, so, in a more special manner, it takes care of his church, and governs all things to the good of his church.⁹⁵

Chapter Six: The Fall of Man, Sin and Punishment

1. Although God created man upright and perfect,⁹⁶ and gave him a righteous law, which secured life for him while he kept it, and although God warned him that he would die if he broke it, yet man did not live long in this honor. Satan, using the subtlety of the serpent to subdue Eve, seduced Adam by her, and he, without any compulsion, willfully transgressed the law of their creation and the command given to them by eating the forbidden fruit.⁹⁷ And God, according to his wise and holy counsel, was pleased to permit this act, having purposed to order it to his own glory.
2. Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them.⁹⁸ For from this, death came upon all: all becoming dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.⁹⁹
3. They being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and their corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.¹⁰⁰ Their descendants are therefore conceived in sin,¹⁰¹ and are by nature the children of wrath,¹⁰² the servants of

⁹³ Ps 81:11-12; Rom 1:28; 2 Thess 2:10-12.

⁹⁴ 1 Pet 2:7-8.

⁹⁵ 1 Tim 4:10.

⁹⁶ Gen 1:27, 31.

⁹⁷ Gen 2:16-17; 3:1-13; 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14.

⁹⁸ Rom 3:23; 5:12.

⁹⁹ Gen 6:5; Jer 17:9; Rom 3:10-19; Eph 2:1-3; Col 1:21; Titus 1:15.

¹⁰⁰ Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22.

¹⁰¹ Pss 51:5; 58:3.

¹⁰² Eph 2:3.

sin,¹⁰³ and the subjects of death¹⁰⁴ and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal,¹⁰⁵ unless the Lord Jesus sets them free.¹⁰⁶

4. All actual transgressions proceed from this original corruption, by which we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil.¹⁰⁷
5. During this life the corruption of nature remains in those who are regenerated,¹⁰⁸ and although it is pardoned and mortified through Christ,¹⁰⁹ yet this corrupt nature and all its motions are truly and properly sinful.¹¹⁰

Chapter Seven: God's Covenant¹¹¹

1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life except by some voluntary condescension on God's part, and this he has been pleased to express in the form of a covenant.
2. Moreover, as man had brought himself under the curse of the law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace. In this covenant he freely offers to sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring from them faith in him that they may be saved, and promising to give to all who are appointed to eternal life his Holy Spirit to make them willing and able to believe.
3. This covenant is revealed through the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by further steps until the full revelation of it became complete in the New Testament. The covenant of salvation rests upon an eternal covenant transaction between the Father and the Son about the

¹⁰³ Rom 6:17, 20.

¹⁰⁴ Rom 6:23.

¹⁰⁵ Matt 13:41-42; Rev 20:10, 14-15.

¹⁰⁶ 1 Thess 1:10; Heb 2:14-15.

¹⁰⁷ Matt 15:19; Rom 8:7; Jas 1:14-15.

¹⁰⁸ Rom 7:18, 23; 1 John 1:8.

¹⁰⁹ Rom 6:1-7; Eph 1:7.

¹¹⁰ Rom 7:23-25; Gal 5:17.

¹¹¹ RBC does not subscribe to the teaching of Chapter VII; rather, we choose to stand in the tradition of those Reformed creeds which make no mention of a "covenant of works," including the Genevan Confession of 1536, the French Confession of 1559, the Belgic Confession of 1561, the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Baptist Confession of 1644. The development of Covenant Theology may be traced to Robert Rollock in whose writings of 1596 and 1597 we see the first discussion of a "covenant of works" and a "covenant of grace."

redemption of the elect. It is solely by the grace of this covenant that all the descendants of fallen Adam who have ever been saved have obtained life and blessed immortality, because man is now utterly incapable of gaining acceptance with God on the terms by which Adam stood in his state of innocence.

Chapter Eight: Christ the Mediator

1. It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus,¹¹² his only begotten son,¹¹³ in accordance with the covenant made between them both,¹¹⁴ to be the mediator between God and men;¹¹⁵ to be prophet,¹¹⁶ priest,¹¹⁷ and king,¹¹⁸ the head and savior of his church,¹¹⁹ the heir of all things,¹²⁰ and the judge of all the world.¹²¹ To the Lord Jesus he gave, from all eternity, a people to be his seed.¹²² These, in time, would be redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified by the Lord Jesus.¹²³
2. The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being true and eternal God,¹²⁴ the brightness of the Father's glory,¹²⁵ of the same substance and equal with him; who made the world, and who upholds and governs all things which he has made,¹²⁶ did, when the fullness of time had come, take upon himself man's nature,¹²⁷ with all its essential

¹¹² 1 Pet 1:20.

¹¹³ John 1:14, 18; 3:16.

¹¹⁴ Titus 1:2.

¹¹⁵ John 14:6; 1 Tim 2:5.

¹¹⁶ John 6:14; Acts 3:22.

¹¹⁷ Heb 5:9-10; 7:26.

¹¹⁸ Luke 1:33; Rev 17:14; 19:16.

¹¹⁹ Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18.

¹²⁰ Heb 1:2.

¹²¹ Matt 25:31-46; John 5:22-23, 26-29; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 20:11-15.

¹²² Isa 53:10; John 6:37; 17:2, 6; Gal 3:8.

¹²³ 1 Cor 1:30; Rom 8:30; Heb 9:15.

¹²⁴ John 1:1, 14, 18; 8:57-58; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28; Rom 9:5; Phil 2:11; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:1-3, 8, 10-12; 2 Pet 1:1.

¹²⁵ Heb 1:3.

¹²⁶ John 1:3; Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:2.

¹²⁷ Gal 4:4-5.

properties and common infirmities,¹²⁸ with the exception of sin.¹²⁹ He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her and the power of the Most High overshadowing her, so that he was born to a woman from the tribe of Judah, a descendant of Abraham and David, in accordance with the Scriptures.¹³⁰ Thus two whole, perfect and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; so that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man, yet he is one Christ, the only mediator between God and men.¹³¹

3. The Lord Jesus, his human nature thus once united to the divine in the person of the Son, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure,¹³² having in himself all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.¹³³ It pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell in him so that, being holy, harmless [= innocent, free from guilt], undefiled, and full of grace and truth,¹³⁴ he might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a mediator and surety,¹³⁵ a position and duty which he did not take upon himself, but was called to perform by his Father.¹³⁶ And the Father also put all power and judgment in his hand, and gave him commandment to exercise the same.¹³⁷
4. This office and duty of mediator and surety the Lord Jesus undertook most willingly.¹³⁸ To discharge it, he was made under the law, and perfectly fulfilled it,¹³⁹ and he underwent the punishment due to us, which we should have borne and suffered.¹⁴⁰ He was made sin and was made a curse for us;¹⁴¹ enduring the most grievous sorrows in his soul with the

¹²⁸ Matt 4:2; 9:8; 13:53-58; Luke 2:7, 40, 52; John 4:6; Rom 8:3; Phil 2:5-8; Col 2:9; Heb 2:14-17.

¹²⁹ 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:21-22.

¹³⁰ Isa 7:14; Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35; Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8.

¹³¹ 1 Tim 2:5.

¹³² John 3:34; Acts 10:38.

¹³³ Col 2:3.

¹³⁴ John 1:14; Col 1:19; 2:9; Heb 7:26.

¹³⁵ A surety is a person who undertakes responsibility for another's performance of an undertaking, as the payment of a debt, appearance in court, etc. See Heb 7:22.

¹³⁶ John 5:30; 6:38-39.

¹³⁷ Matt 28:18; John 5:22-23, 27; Acts 2:36.

¹³⁸ John 4:34; 10:18; Heb 10:5-10.

¹³⁹ Matt 3:15; 5:17-19.

¹⁴⁰ Isa 53:6; 1 Pet 3:18.

¹⁴¹ 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13.

most painful sufferings in his duty.¹⁴² He was crucified, and died, and remained in the state of the dead, but His body did not undergo any decay.¹⁴³ On the third day he rose from the dead with the same body in which he had suffered,¹⁴⁴ with which he also ascended into heaven,¹⁴⁵ and there sits at the right hand of his father making intercession,¹⁴⁶ and shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world.¹⁴⁷

5. The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself which he, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up to God, has fully satisfied the justice of God,¹⁴⁸ has procured reconciliation, and has purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father has given to him.¹⁴⁹
6. Although the price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ until after his incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit arising from his payment were communicated to the elect in all ages from the beginning of the world through those promises, types, and sacrifices in which he was revealed and signified as the seed which should bruise the serpent's head,¹⁵⁰ and also the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,¹⁵¹ for he is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.¹⁵²
7. Christ, in his work of mediation, acts according to both natures, each nature doing that which is proper to itself. Yet, because of the unity of his person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature.¹⁵³

¹⁴² Matt 26:37-38; 27:46; Luke 22:44; Heb 5:7.

¹⁴³ Acts 2:24-32; 1 Cor 15:3-4.

¹⁴⁴ Luke 24:3-6; John 20:1-9, 25, 27.

¹⁴⁵ John 20:17; Acts 1:9-11; Eph 4:8.

¹⁴⁶ Rom 8:34; Heb 1:3; 7:25; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 John 2:1.

¹⁴⁷ Matt 25:41; John 5:22; Acts 10:42; Rom 14:9-10; 1 Cor 6:3; 2 Thess 1:7-10.

¹⁴⁸ Rom 3:25-26; Heb 9:14; 10:14.

¹⁴⁹ John 17:2; Heb 9:15; 1 Pet 1:3-5.

¹⁵⁰ Gen 3:15; Rom 3:25; Heb 9:1-14; 1 Pet 1:10-11.

¹⁵¹ Rev 13:8.

¹⁵² Heb 13:8.

¹⁵³ John 3:13; Acts 20:28.

8. To all those for whom Christ has obtained eternal redemption, he certainly and effectually applies and communicates this redemption,¹⁵⁴ making intercession for them,¹⁵⁵ uniting them to himself by his Spirit,¹⁵⁶ revealing to them in the word and by the word the mystery of salvation.¹⁵⁷ He persuades them to believe and obey, governing their hearts by his word and Spirit,¹⁵⁸ and overcomes all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom.¹⁵⁹ This is achieved in such a manner and by such ways as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation,¹⁶⁰ and it is all by free and absolute grace, without any condition foreseen in them to procure it.¹⁶¹
9. This office of mediator between God and man is proper only to Christ, who is the prophet, priest, and king of the church, and this office may not be transferred from him to any other, either in whole or in part.¹⁶²
10. This number and order of offices is essential. Because of our ignorance we need his prophetic office.¹⁶³ Because of our alienation from God and the imperfection of the best of our service,¹⁶⁴ we need his priestly office to reconcile us and present us to God as acceptable.¹⁶⁵ Because of our aversion to, and utter inability to return to God, and for our rescue and keeping from spiritual enemies, we need his kingly office to convince, subdue, draw, uphold, deliver, and preserve us until we reach his heavenly kingdom.¹⁶⁶

Chapter Nine: Free Will

¹⁵⁴ Eph 1:7.

¹⁵⁵ Heb 7:25.

¹⁵⁶ Rom 8:1-2; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 1:13.

¹⁵⁷ Matt 11:25-27; John 17:6; Eph 1:9; 1 John 5:20.

¹⁵⁸ John 10:26; Acts 16:14; Rom 8:9, 14; Eph 2:8-9; 2 Tim 2:24-26.

¹⁵⁹ 1 Cor 15:25-26; 1 John 4:4.

¹⁶⁰ The term “dispensation” does not have any reference to the late 19th and early 20th century system of theology called “Dispensationalism”; rather, according to 17th century English usage, the term simply refers to an arrangement made by providence.

¹⁶¹ John 1:12-13; 3:8; Eph 1:5-6.

¹⁶² See footnotes 121-125.

¹⁶³ Luke 1:76-77; Eph 4:18.

¹⁶⁴ Isa 64:6; Gal 5:17; Col 1:21.

¹⁶⁵ Eph 5:2.

¹⁶⁶ Luke 1:68-75.

1. God has endued the will of man, by nature, with liberty and the power to choose and to act upon his choice. This free will is neither forced, nor destined by any necessity of nature to do good or evil.¹⁶⁷
2. Man, in his state of innocence, had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good and well-pleasing to God, but he was mutable [= changeable, variable, fickle], so that he might fall from this condition.¹⁶⁸
3. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, has completely lost all ability of will to perform any of the spiritual good which accompanies salvation.¹⁶⁹ As a natural man, he is altogether averse to spiritual good, and dead in sin.¹⁷⁰ He is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself for conversion.¹⁷¹
4. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into a state of grace, he frees him from his natural bondage to sin, and by grace alone he enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good.¹⁷² But because of his remaining corruptions he does not only (or perfectly) will that which is good, but also wills that which is evil.¹⁷³
5. This will of man will only be made perfectly and immutably free to will good alone in the state of glory.¹⁷⁴

Chapter Ten: Effectual Calling

1. Those whom God has predestinated to life, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time to effectually call by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death which they are in by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁵ He enlightens their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God.¹⁷⁶ He takes away their heart of

¹⁶⁷ Deut 30:19; Josh 24:15; Matt 17:12; John 5:40; Jas 1:14.

¹⁶⁸ Gen 3:6; Ecc 7:29.

¹⁶⁹ Rom 3:10-11; 8:7-8.

¹⁷⁰ 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 2:1, 5.

¹⁷¹ John 6:44; Titus 3:3-5.

¹⁷² John 8:34, 36; Rom 6:17-18; Phil 2:13; Col 1:13.

¹⁷³ Rom 7:15, 18-19, 21, 23; 1 John 1:8.

¹⁷⁴ Eph 4:13; Rev 22:3, 14-15.

¹⁷⁵ Rom 8:30; 16:7; 1 Cor 1:2; Eph 1:10-11; 2:1-6; Col 1:13; 2 Thess 2:13-14.

¹⁷⁶ Acts 16:14; 1 Cor 2:13-14.

stone and gives to them a heart of flesh.¹⁷⁷ He renews their wills, and by his almighty power, causes them to desire and pursue that which is good.¹⁷⁸ He effectually draws them to Jesus Christ,¹⁷⁹ yet in such a way that they come absolutely freely, being made willing by his grace.¹⁸⁰

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not on account of anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature working together with God's special grace,¹⁸¹ the creature being wholly passive therein, being dead in trespasses and sins until quickened [= made alive] and renewed by the Holy Spirit.¹⁸² By this he is enabled to answer the call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed by it. This enabling power is no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.¹⁸³
3. Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when, where, and how he pleases. So also are all elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁷ Ezek 36:26.

¹⁷⁸ Rom 8:5-14.

¹⁷⁹ Deut 30:6; Jer 31:33-34; Ezek 36:27.

¹⁸⁰ Isa 55:1; Rev 21:6; 22:17.

¹⁸¹ Eph 1:4-11; 2 Tim 1:9.

¹⁸² John 5:25; Eph 2:5; Titus 3:4-7.

¹⁸³ John 11:25-26, 43-44; Rom 8:11.

¹⁸⁴ RBC does not subscribe to the teaching of Chapter X, paragraph 3. We teach that the Scripture is unclear as to the fate of infants and, for instance, the mentally handicapped, an example of "persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word." Thus we prefer not to be dogmatic in this area. Instead, we would agree with the following statements from other Reformed creeds:

French Confession of 1559, XI: We believe that this evil is truly sin, that God regards it as such, and that it is sufficient to condemn the whole human race, including infants newborn from their mothers' wombs. Guilt for sin endures after baptism, even though condemnation for sin is abolished for the children of God by God's goodness, freely bestowed. Furthermore, we affirm that perversity continues to produce fruits of malice and rebellion throughout life, so that even the holiest people who resist sin with all their strength are not immune to the stain of weaknesses.

Baptist Confession of 1644, IV: In the beginning God made all things very good, created man after his own image and likeness, filling him with all perfection of all natural excellency and uprightness, free from all sin. But long he abode not in this honor, but by the subtlety of the Serpent, which Satan used as his instrument, himself with his angels having sinned before, and not kept their first estate, but left their own habitation; first Eve, then Adam being seduced did wittingly and willingly fall into disobedience and transgression of the commandment of their great creator, for the which death came upon all, and reigned over all, so that all since the fall are conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, and so by nature children of wrath, and servants of sin, subjects of death, and all other calamities due to sin in this world and forever, being considered in the state of nature, without relation to Christ.

The Second Helvetic Confession (1561) also makes no such claims with reference to "elect infants."

4. Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may experience some common operations of the Spirit,¹⁸⁵ yet because they are not effectually drawn by the Father, they will not and cannot truly come to Christ and therefore cannot be saved.¹⁸⁶ Much less can men who do not embrace the Christian religion be saved no matter how diligent they may be to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the requirements of the religion they profess.¹⁸⁷

Chapter Eleven: Justification

1. Those whom God effectually calls he also freely justifies,¹⁸⁸ not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins,¹⁸⁹ and by accounting and accepting them as righteous,¹⁹⁰ not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone;¹⁹¹ not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other act of evangelical obedience. They are justified wholly and solely because God imputes to them Christ's righteousness.¹⁹² He imputes to them Christ's active obedience to the whole law and his passive obedience in death.¹⁹³ They receive Christ's righteousness by faith, and rest on him.¹⁹⁴ They do not possess or produce this faith themselves; it is the gift of God.¹⁹⁵
2. Faith which receives Christ's righteousness and depends on him is the sole instrument of justification,¹⁹⁶ yet this faith is not alone in the person justified, but is always accompanied by all the other saving graces.¹⁹⁷ And it is not a dead faith, but works by love.¹⁹⁸

¹⁸⁵ Matt 13:20-21; 22:14.

¹⁸⁶ John 6:44-45, 65.

¹⁸⁷ John 4:22; 17:3; Acts 4:12; Rom 1:20.

¹⁸⁸ Rom 3:24; 8:30.

¹⁸⁹ Eph 1:7.

¹⁹⁰ Rom 4:5-8.

¹⁹¹ 1 Cor 1:30-31; Titus 3:5-6.

¹⁹² Rom 5:17; 8:33.

¹⁹³ Rom 5:19; Phil 2:8; Heb 4:15; 9:14.

¹⁹⁴ Rom 3:21-22; 5:1; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 2:16; Phil 3:9; 2 Pet 1:1.

¹⁹⁵ Matt 11:27; John 6:40-44, 64-65; 10:26; 12:39-40; Acts 13:48; Eph 2:8-9.

¹⁹⁶ Rom 3:21-26, 28; 4:4-5, 16; Gal 3:5-9.

¹⁹⁷ Jas 2:24.

¹⁹⁸ Gal 5:6; Jas 2:14-20, 26.

3. Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified,¹⁹⁹ and by the sacrifice of himself through the blood of his cross, underwent instead of them the penalty due to them, so making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on their behalf.²⁰⁰ Yet because he was given by the Father for them, and because his obedience and satisfaction were accepted instead of theirs²⁰¹ (and both freely,²⁰² not because of anything in them²⁰³), therefore they are justified entirely and solely by free grace, so that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.²⁰⁴
4. From all eternity God decreed to justify all the elect,²⁰⁵ and Christ did, in the fullness of time,²⁰⁶ die for their sins, and rise again for their justification.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, they are not personally justified until the Holy Spirit, in due time, actually applies Christ to them.²⁰⁸
5. God continues to forgive the sins of those who are justified,²⁰⁹ and although they can never fall from the state of justification,²¹⁰ yet they may because of their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure.²¹¹ In that condition they will not usually have the light of God's countenance restored to them until they humble themselves, confess their sins, ask for pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.²¹²

¹⁹⁹ Rom 3:25; Col 2:14; Heb 2:17.

²⁰⁰ Isa 53:5-6; Heb 10:14; 1 Pet 1:18-19.

²⁰¹ Eph 5:2.

²⁰² John 3:16; 10:15, 18; Rom 8:32; 1 John 4:9.

²⁰³ Titus 3:5; 1 John 4:19.

²⁰⁴ Rom 3:26; Eph 1:6-7; 2:7.

²⁰⁵ Rom 8:29-30; 1 Pet 1:1-2.

²⁰⁶ Gal 4:4-5; 1 Tim 2:6.

²⁰⁷ Rom 4:25.

²⁰⁸ Rom 16:7; Titus 3:5-7.

²⁰⁹ Matt 6:12; 1 John 1:7, 9.

²¹⁰ John 10:28.

²¹¹ Eph 4:30; Heb 12:4-13.

²¹² Ps 51; 1 John 1:9.

6. The justification of believers during the Old Testament period was in all these respects exactly the same as the justification of New Testament believers.²¹³

Chapter Twelve: Adoption

1. God has granted, that in Christ, his only son, and for his sake, all those who are justified shall be made partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number of the children of God and enjoy their liberties and privileges.²¹⁴ They have his name put upon them,²¹⁵ and receive the spirit of adoption.²¹⁶ They have access to the throne of grace with boldness,²¹⁷ and are enabled to cry, “Abba, Father!”²¹⁸ They are pitied,²¹⁹ protected,²²⁰ provided for,²²¹ and chastened by him as by a father,²²² yet they are never cast off, but are sealed to the day of redemption,²²³ when they inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.²²⁴

Chapter Thirteen: Sanctification

1. Those who are united to Christ, effectually called, and regenerated, having had a new heart and a new spirit created in them through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection,²²⁵ are then further sanctified in a very real and personal way.²²⁶ Because of the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection and by his word and spirit dwelling in them, the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed.²²⁷ The different lusts of the body of

²¹³ Rom 3:25; 4:22-24; Gal 3:8-9.

²¹⁴ John 1:12; Rom 8:17; Eph 1:5; Gal 4:5.

²¹⁵ Rev 3:12.

²¹⁶ Rom 8:15.

²¹⁷ Heb 4:16.

²¹⁸ Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6.

²¹⁹ Ps 103:13.

²²⁰ Prov 14:26.

²²¹ 1 Pet 5:7.

²²² Heb 12:6-8.

²²³ Eph 4:30.

²²⁴ Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26; 1 John 3:1.

²²⁵ Ezek 36:25-27; John 3:5; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11.

²²⁶ John 17:17, 19; Acts 20:32; Rom 6:22; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 2:13; Heb 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Pet 1:2.

²²⁷ Rom 6:5-6, 14.

sin are increasingly weakened and mortified,²²⁸ and Christ's people are increasingly quickened [= enlivened] and strengthened in all saving graces,²²⁹ to practice all true holiness,²³⁰ without which no man shall see the Lord.²³¹

2. This sanctification extends throughout the whole person, yet it remains imperfect in this life.²³² Some remnants of corruption live on in every part, and from this arises a continuous war between irreconcilable parties—the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.²³³
3. In this war, although the remaining corruption for a time may greatly prevail,²³⁴ yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part overcomes.²³⁵ And so the saints grow in grace perfecting holiness in the fear of God; pressing after a heavenly life in evangelical obedience to all the commands which Christ as head and king, in his word, has prescribed to them.²³⁶

Chapter Fourteen: Saving Faith

1. The grace of faith by which the elect are enabled to believe, so that their souls are saved, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts,²³⁷ and is ordinarily brought into being by the ministry of the word.²³⁸ It is also increased and strengthened by the work of the Spirit

²²⁸ Gal 5:24.

²²⁹ Rom 6:1-22; 2 Cor 3:18; Col 1:11.

²³⁰ 2 Cor 7:1; 1 Thess 4:3-4.

²³¹ Heb 12:14.

²³² Phil 3:12; 1 John 1:8.

²³³ Rom 7:14-25; Gal 5:17; 1 Pet 2:11.

²³⁴ Rom 7:23.

²³⁵ Rom 6:14, 17; Gal 5:16-25; Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10; 1 Pet 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9.

²³⁶ Matt 28:20; Eph 4:13-16; Phil 3:12-15.

²³⁷ Acts 16:14.

²³⁸ Rom 10:14-17.

through the ministry of the word, and also by the administration of baptism²³⁹ and the Lord's Supper,²⁴⁰ prayer,²⁴¹ and other means appointed by God.

2. By this faith a Christian believes to be true whatever is revealed in the word for the authority of God himself,²⁴² and also apprehends an excellency in the word which is higher than in all other writings and everything else in the world as it bears forth the glory of God in his attributes, the excellency of Christ in his nature and offices, and the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit in his workings and operations: and so is enabled to cast his soul upon the truth thus believed;²⁴³ and to see and respond to the different kinds of teaching which different passages of Scripture contain. Saving faith equips him to obey the commands,²⁴⁴ hear the threatenings with fear and respect,²⁴⁵ and to embrace the promises of God for this life and the life to come.²⁴⁶ But the first and most important acts of saving faith are those directly to do with Christ, when the soul accepts, receives, and rests upon him alone for justification, sanctification and eternal life,²⁴⁷ by virtue of the covenant of grace.²⁴⁸

3. Although this faith may be different in degrees, and may be weak or strong,²⁴⁹ nevertheless is even at its very weakest in an entirely different class and has a different nature (like other aspects of saving grace) from the kind of faith and common grace which is possessed by temporary believers.²⁵⁰ Therefore, though it may be frequently

²³⁹ Rom 6:1-11.

²⁴⁰ 1 Cor 10:16.

²⁴¹ Eph 3:16-19.

²⁴² John 8:31.

²⁴³ 2 Tim 1:12.

²⁴⁴ John 15:14.

²⁴⁵ Isa 66:2.

²⁴⁶ Heb 11:13.

²⁴⁷ John 1:12; Acts 15:11; 16:31; Gal 2:20.

²⁴⁸ For our objection to Covenantalism see fn. 111.

²⁴⁹ Matt 6:30; Mark 9:24; Rom 4:19-20; Heb 5:13-14.

²⁵⁰ Mark 4:5, 16-17; Heb 6:4-6; 1 John 2:19, 22-23.

assailed and weakened, it gets the victory,²⁵¹ growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ,²⁵² who is both the author and finisher of our faith.²⁵³

Chapter Fifteen: Repentance unto Life and Salvation

1. Those of the elect who are converted in riper years, having lived some time [i.e., a considerable time] in the state of nature, and in this state served various lusts and pleasures, God gives repentance which leads to life, through an effectual call.²⁵⁴
2. Whereas there is not one person who does good and commits no sin,²⁵⁵ and because the best of men may fall into great sins and provocations [= temptations] through the power and deceitfulness of their own indwelling corruption and the prevalence of temptation,²⁵⁶ God has mercifully provided in the covenant of grace that when believers sin and fall they shall be renewed through repentance to salvation.²⁵⁷
3. Saving repentance is an evangelical grace²⁵⁸ by which a person who is made to feel, by the Holy Spirit, the manifold evils of his sin, and being given faith in Christ, humbles himself over his sin with godly sorrow, detestation of his sin and self-abhorrence.²⁵⁹ In such repentance the person also prays for pardon and strength of grace, and has a purpose and endeavor, by supplies of the Spirit's power, to walk before God and totally to please him in all things.²⁶⁰

²⁵¹ Eph 6:16; 1 John 5:4-5.

²⁵² Col 2:2; Heb 6:11-12.

²⁵³ Heb 12:2.

²⁵⁴ 2 Tim 2:24-26; Titus 3:3-5; Heb 6:1.

²⁵⁵ 1 Kgs 8:46; Rom 3:10-12.

²⁵⁶ 1 Sam 13:14 w/ 2 Sam 11:1-27; Gal 2:11-14; Heb 3:13.

²⁵⁷ Luke 22:31-32; 2 Cor 7:9-12.

²⁵⁸ Zech 12:10; Acts 5:31; 11:18.

²⁵⁹ Ezek 36:27, 31.

²⁶⁰ 2 Cor 5:9.

4. As repentance is to be continued through the whole course of our lives, on account of the body of death, and the motions of it, it is therefore every man's duty to repent of his particular known sins particularly.²⁶¹
5. Such is the provision which God has made through Christ in the covenant of grace²⁶² for the preservation of believers in the way of salvation that although even the smallest sin deserves damnation,²⁶³ yet there is no sin great enough to bring damnation on those who repent.²⁶⁴ This makes the constant preaching of repentance necessary.

Chapter Sixteen: Good Works

1. Good works are only those works which God has commanded in his holy word.²⁶⁵ Works that do not have the warrant of Scripture, and are devised by men out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intentions are not good works.²⁶⁶
2. Good works, performed in obedience to God's commandments, are these: the fruits and evidences of a true and living faith.²⁶⁷ By these believers express and show their thankfulness,²⁶⁸ strengthen their assurance,²⁶⁹ edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel,²⁷⁰ stop the mouths of the adversaries,²⁷¹ and glorify God,²⁷² whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus to perform good works,²⁷³ and to have fruits of holiness which lead to eternal life.²⁷⁴

²⁶¹ Prov 28:13; Rev 2:5, 16; 3:3, 19-20.

²⁶² For our objection to Covenantalism see fn. 111.

²⁶³ Rom 6:23.

²⁶⁴ Isa 1:16-18; 55:7.

²⁶⁵ Heb 13:21.

²⁶⁶ Matt 15:3-9; Col 2:8, 20-23; 1 Tim 4:1-3.

²⁶⁷ Jas 2:18, 22.

²⁶⁸ Ps 116:12-13; Rom 12:1.

²⁶⁹ 2 Pet 1:5-8; 1 John 2:3-5.

²⁷⁰ Titus 2:2-10.

²⁷¹ 1 Tim 6:1; 1 Pet 2:15.

²⁷² Matt 5:16; Phil 1:11.

²⁷³ Eph 2:10.

²⁷⁴ Rom 6:22.

3. Their ability to do these good works does not in any way come from themselves, but comes wholly from the Spirit of Christ.²⁷⁵ To enable them to do good works, alongside the graces which they have already received, it is necessary for there to be a further real influence of the same Holy Spirit to cause them to will and to do of his good pleasure.²⁷⁶ But believers are not, on these grounds, to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty unless given a special motion by the Spirit, but they must be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.²⁷⁷
4. Those who attain the greatest height which is possible in this life in their obedience to God, are still so far from being able to supererogate,²⁷⁸ and to do more than God requires, that they fall short of much which they are bound to do in their duty to God.²⁷⁹
5. We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin or eternal life from the hand of God because of the great disproportion between our best works and the glory to come, and because of the infinite distance which is between God and us. With our works we cannot profit or satisfy God concerning the debt we owe on account of our sins.²⁸⁰ When we have done all we can, we have only done our duty, and are still unprofitable servants. And in any case, in so far as our works are good, they originate from the work of the Holy Spirit.²⁸¹ Even then, the good works are so defiled by us, and so mixed with weakness and imperfection, that they could not survive the severity of God's judgment.²⁸²
6. Yet, quite apart from the fact that believers are accepted through Christ as individual souls, their good works are also accepted through Christ.²⁸³ It is not as though the believers are (in this life) wholly unblameable and unreprouvable in God's sight, but because he looks upon them in his son, and is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although it is accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁵ John 15:4-5.

²⁷⁶ Phil 2:13.

²⁷⁷ Phil 2:12; Heb 6:11-12; 2 Pet 1:10-12.

²⁷⁸ This language is directed against the Roman Catholic teaching called, "supererogation," by which a person is able to store up merit with God by performing good works over and above that which God commands or requires. The church may then withdraw from this deposit of good works and apply them to others to make up for their deficiencies.

²⁷⁹ Job 9:2-3; Luke 17:10; Rom 7:17-24; Gal 5:17.

²⁸⁰ Matt 5:20, 48; 18:23-34; Rom 3:23; Eph 2:8-9.

²⁸¹ Gal 5:22-23.

²⁸² Ps 143:2; Isa 64:6.

²⁸³ Phil 4:18; 1 Cor 3:12-15; 1 Pet 2:5.

²⁸⁴ Matt 25:21, 23; 1 Cor 4:5; Heb 6:10.

7. Works performed by unregenerate men, although they may in essence be things which God commands, and they may be good and beneficial both to themselves and others,²⁸⁵ yet because they do not proceed from a heart purified by faith,²⁸⁶ and are not done in a right manner according to the word,²⁸⁷ and because it is not their underlying purpose to bring glory to God,²⁸⁸ therefore they are sinful, and cannot please God, nor can they make a man fit to receive grace from God.²⁸⁹ And yet, for unregenerate men to neglect such works is even more sinful and displeasing to God.²⁹⁰

Chapter Seventeen: The Perseverance of the Saints

1. Those whom God has accepted in the beloved, and has effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but they will certainly persevere in that state to the end and be eternally saved. This is because the gifts and calling of God are without repentance [i.e., irrevocable] and therefore he continues to beget and nourish in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit which lead to immortality [i.e., eternal life].²⁹¹ And though many storms and floods arise and beat against the saints, yet these things shall never be able to sweep them off the foundation and rock which they are fastened upon by faith.²⁹² Even though, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, the sight and feeling of the light and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from them, yet God is still the same, and they are sure to be kept by his power until their salvation is complete,²⁹³ when they shall enjoy the purchased possession which is theirs, for they are engraved upon the palm of his hands, and their names have been written in his Book of Life from all eternity.²⁹⁴

²⁸⁵ Rom 13:1-7.

²⁸⁶ Gen 4:5 w/ Heb 11:4, 6.

²⁸⁷ 1 Cor 13:3.

²⁸⁸ Matt 5:16; 6:2, 5.

²⁸⁹ Rom 9:16; Titus 3:5.

²⁹⁰ Matt 25:41-43.

²⁹¹ Matt 18:12-14; John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:28-29; 17:11-12; Rom 8:1; 1 Cor 1:4-8; Phil 1:6; 2 Tim 2:19; Heb 7:25; 1 Pet 1:5; 1 John 2:19.

²⁹² Matt 7:24-25.

²⁹³ Jude 1.

²⁹⁴ Rev 13:8; 17:8.

2. This perseverance of the saints does not depend on them—that is, on their own free will.²⁹⁵ It rests upon the immutability of the decree of election,²⁹⁶ which flows from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father.²⁹⁷ It also rests upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, and upon the union which true saints have with him.²⁹⁸ It rests upon the oath of God,²⁹⁹ and upon the abiding of the Spirit.³⁰⁰ It depends upon the seed of God being within them³⁰¹ and upon the very nature of the covenant of grace.³⁰² All these factors give rise to the certainty and infallibility of the security and perseverance of the saints.

3. The saints may, through the temptation of Satan and the world,³⁰³ and because their remaining sinful tendencies prevail over them, and through their neglect of the means which God has provided to keep them, fall into grievous sins. They may continue in this state for some time, so that they incur God's displeasure, grieve his Holy Spirit,³⁰⁴ suffer the impairment of their graces and comforts,³⁰⁵ have their hearts hardened and their conscience wounded,³⁰⁶ and hurt and scandalize others [= cause others to sin]. By this they will bring temporal judgments upon themselves.³⁰⁷ Yet they shall renew their repentance and be preserved, through faith in Christ Jesus, to the end.³⁰⁸

Chapter Eighteen: Assurance of Salvation

²⁹⁵ This is not to say that man is passive in sanctification, as is clear from Chapter XVI, paragraph 3. Here the confession is stressing the truth that *ultimately* the believer's perseverance does not depend upon the believer himself or herself.

²⁹⁶ Rom 8:29-30.

²⁹⁷ Rom 5:8-10; 8:35-39; Eph 1:4b-5.

²⁹⁸ John 14:19; Rom 5:9-10; 8:34.

²⁹⁹ Titus 1:1-2; Heb 6:17-18.

³⁰⁰ 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13-14.

³⁰¹ 1 John 3:9.

³⁰² For our objection to Covenantalism see fn. 111.

³⁰³ Luke 22:31; Rom 12:2; Jas 1:27.

³⁰⁴ Eph 4:30.

³⁰⁵ Ps 51:10, 12.

³⁰⁶ Ps 32:3-4.

³⁰⁷ 2 Sam 12:14; 1 Cor 11:30.

³⁰⁸ Luke 22:32, 61-62.

1. Although temporary believers and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions that they are in the favor of God and in a state of salvation, such a hope on their part will perish.³⁰⁹ Yet those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love him in sincerity and who endeavor to walk in all good conscience before him may be certainly assured in this life that they are in the state of grace and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.³¹⁰ And such a hope shall never make them ashamed.³¹¹
2. This assurance is not merely a conjectural persuasion nor even a probable persuasion based upon a fallible hope. It is an infallible assurance of faith founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the gospel.³¹² It is also founded upon the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit in connection with definite promises made in the Scriptures,³¹³ and also on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption who witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God,³¹⁴ and who uses the experience of assurance to keep our hearts both humble and holy.³¹⁵
3. This infallible assurance is not so joined to the essence of faith that it is an automatic and inevitable experience. A true believer may wait long and fight with many difficulties before he becomes a partaker of it.³¹⁶ Yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given to him by God, he may, without any extraordinary revelation attain this assurance by using the means of grace in the right way.³¹⁷ Therefore it is the duty of everyone to give the utmost diligence to make his calling and election sure,³¹⁸ so that his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness for carrying out the duties of obedience. These duties are the natural fruits of assurance,³¹⁹ for it is far from inclining men to looseness [i.e., to be unrestrained in their behavior].³²⁰

³⁰⁹ Job 8:13-14; Matt 7:22-23; Titus 1:16.

³¹⁰ Rom 8:38; 2 Tim 1:12; 1 John 2:3; 3:14, 18-19, 21, 24; 5:13.

³¹¹ Rom 5:2, 5.

³¹² Heb 6:11, 17-19.

³¹³ 2 Pet 1:8-11.

³¹⁴ Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:6.

³¹⁵ 1 John 3:1-3.

³¹⁶ Ps 51:8.

³¹⁷ Heb 6:11-12; 1 John 4:13.

³¹⁸ 2 Cor 13:5; 2 Pet 1:4-10.

³¹⁹ Rom 5:1-5.

³²⁰ Rom 6:1-2; Eph 2:10; Titus 2:11-14.

4. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation in various ways shaken, diminished, or intermitted. This may be because of their negligence in preserving it, or by their falling into some special [= specific] sin which wounds the conscience and grieves the Spirit, or by some sudden or forceful temptation, or by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, and permitting even those who fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light.³²¹ Yet, believers are never left without the seed of God and life of faith,³²² that love of Christ and the brethren,³²³ that sincerity of heart, and that conscience about their spiritual duty.³²⁴ Out of these things, by the operation of the Spirit, their assurance can in due time be revived,³²⁵ and in the meantime the presence of these graces preserves them from utter despair.³²⁶

*Chapter Nineteen: The Law of God*³²⁷

³²¹ Pss 31:22; 51:12; Eph 4:30.

³²² Luke 22:32; 1 John 3:9.

³²³ 1 John 2:9.

³²⁴ John 14:15; 1 Pet 1:8; 1 John 5:3.

³²⁵ Ps 42:5, 11.

³²⁶ Lam 3:26-31.

³²⁷ RBC does not subscribe to the teaching of Chapter XIX, paragraphs 2-7, as they reflect the direct influence of Covenant Theology upon the confession. See our comment in fn. 112. Better statements regarding the place of the Law in the believers life are found in the Belgic Confession (1561), Article 25: We believe, that the ceremonies and figures of the law ceased at the coming of Christ, and that all the shadows are accomplished; so that the use of them must be abolished amongst Christian; yet the truth and substance of them remain with us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have their completion. In the meantime, we still use the testimonies taken out of the law and the prophets, to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel, and to regulate our life in all honesty, to the glory of God, according to his will.

The French Confession (1559), XXIII: "We believe that the ceremonies of the law ended at the coming of Jesus Christ, but although the rites are no longer in use, the substance and truth of the law endure in the one who has fulfilled the law. Moreover, we need the law and the prophets for the ordering of our lives as well as for our confirmation in the gospel's promises."

And the Second Helvetic Confession (1561): The law of God is therefore abrogated to the extent that it no longer condemns us, nor works wrath in us. For we are under grace and not under the law. Moreover, Christ has fulfilled all the figures of the law. Hence, with the coming of the body, the shadows ceased, so that in Christ we now have the truth and all fullness. But yet we do not on that account contemptuously reject the law. For we remember the words of the Lord when he said: "I have not come to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17). We know that in the law is delivered to us the patterns of virtues and vices. We know that the written law when explained by the Gospel is useful to the Church, and that therefore its reading is not to be banished from the Church. For although Moses' face was covered with a veil, yet the apostle says that the veil has been taken away and abolished by Christ.

1. God gave to Adam a law of universal obedience which was written in his heart, and he gave him very specific instruction about not eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. By this Adam and all his descendants were bound to personal, total, exact, and perpetual obedience, being promised life upon the fulfilling of the law, and threatened with death upon the breach of it. At the same time Adam was endued with power and ability to keep it.
2. The same law that was first written in the heart of man continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall, and was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai in the Ten Commandments, and written in two tables, the first four containing our duty towards God, and the other six, our duty to man.
3. Besides this law, commonly called the moral law,³²⁸ God was pleased to give the people of Israel ceremonial laws containing several typical ordinances. These ordinances were partly about their worship, and in them Christ was prefigured along with his attributes and qualities, his actions, his sufferings and his benefits. These ordinances also gave instructions about different moral duties. All of these ceremonial laws were appointed only until the time of reformation, when Jesus Christ the true messiah and the only lawgiver, who was furnished with power from the Father for this end, cancelled them and took them away.
4. To the people of Israel he also gave sundry judicial laws which expired when they ceased to be a nation. These are not binding on anyone now by virtue of their being part of the laws of that nation, but their general equity continues to be applicable in modern times.
5. The moral law ever binds to obedience everyone, justified people as well as others, and not only out of regard for the matter contained in it, but also out of respect for the authority of God the Creator, who gave the law. Nor does Christ in the gospel dissolve this law in any way, but he considerably strengthens our obligation to obey it.
6. Although true believers are not under the law as a covenant of works, to be justified or condemned by it, yet it is of great use to them as well as to others, because as a rule of life it informs them of the will of God and their duty and directs and binds them to walk accordingly. It also reveals and exposes the sinful pollutions of their natures, hearts and lives, and using it for self-examination they may come to greater conviction of sin, greater humility and greater hatred of their sin. They will also gain a clearer sight of their

³²⁸ This terminology (“moral law”) reflects a position that divides the Mosaic Law into three components: moral/natural, civil/judicial, and ceremonial. The tripartite division of the Law of Moses does not appear in church history earlier than Aquinas (13th century CE). Our difficulty with this division is twofold: (1) The NT writers never divide the Mosaic Law in such a way even when such teaching would be helpful for an author’s argument (e.g. Galatians, Hebrews). (2) The term “moral” is in itself inappropriate; for whatever God approves is moral and whatever he condemns is immoral. Thus a Jew living under the old covenant would have been just as immoral (disobedient) in his behavior if he were to commit adultery as he would be for failing to build a fence around his roof, or refusing to participate in the obligatory Temple sacrifices.

need of Christ and the perfection of his own obedience. It is of further use to regenerate people to restrain their corruptions, because of the way in which it forbids sin. The threatenings of the law serve to show what their sins actually deserve, and what troubles may be expected in this life because of these sins even by regenerate people who are freed from the curse and undiminished rigors of the law. The promises connected with the law also show believers God's approval of obedience, and what blessings they may expect when the law is kept and obeyed, though blessing will not come to them because they have satisfied the law as a covenant of works. If a man does good and refrains from evil simply because the law encourages to the good and deters him from the evil is no evidence that he is under the law rather than under grace.

7. The aforementioned uses of the law are not contrary to the grace of the gospel, but they sweetly comply with it, as the Spirit of Christ subdues and enables the will of man to do freely and cheerfully those things which the will of God, which is revealed in the law, requires to be done.

Chapter Twenty: The Gospel and the Extent of the Grace Thereof

1. The covenant of works³²⁹ being broken by sin, and made unprofitable for life, God was pleased to promise Christ, the seed of the woman, as the means of calling the elect and bringing to life within them faith and repentance. In this promise the substance of the gospel was revealed and shown to be the effectual for the conversion and salvation of sinners.
2. This promise of Christ and the salvation which comes by him is revealed only by the word of God. The works of creation and providence with the light of nature do not reveal Christ or his grace even in a general or obscure way. How much less, therefore, can those who are devoid of the revelation of Christ by the promise (or the gospel) be enabled by the light of nature to arrive at saving faith or repentance.³³⁰
3. The revelation of the gospel unto sinners, made in divers times and by sundry parts, with the addition of promises and precepts for the obedience required therein, as to the nations and persons to whom it is granted, is merely of the sovereign will and good pleasure of God,³³¹ not being annexed by virtue of any promise to the due improvement of men's natural abilities, by virtue of common light received without it, which none ever did make, or can do so;³³² and therefore in all ages, the preaching of the gospel has been

³²⁹ For our objection to the covenant of works see fn. 111.

³³⁰ Rom 1:16-17; 10:14-17.

³³¹ See Chapter X, paragraph 2 and its corresponding footnotes.

³³² Rom 1:18-32.

granted unto persons and nations, as to the extent or straitening of it, in great variety, according to the counsel of the will of God.

4. Although the gospel is the only outward means of revealing Christ and saving grace, and as such is totally sufficient to accomplish this, yet more is necessary if men who are dead in trespasses are to be born again, brought to life or regenerated. It is necessary for there to be an effectual, insuperable work of the Holy Spirit upon the whole soul to produce in them a new spiritual life.³³³ Without this no other means will bring about their conversion to God.³³⁴

Chapter Twenty-one: Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience

1. The liberty which Christ has purchased for believers under the gospel,³³⁵ lies in their freedom from the guilt of sin³³⁶ and the condemning wrath of God,³³⁷ from the rigors and curse of the law,³³⁸ and in their deliverance from this present evil world,³³⁹ from bondage to Satan,³⁴⁰ from dominion of sin,³⁴¹ from the harm of afflictions,³⁴² from the fear and sting of death, from the victory of the grave,³⁴³ and from everlasting damnation.³⁴⁴ This liberty is also seen in their free access to God, and their ability to yield obedience to Him not out of slavish fear, but with childlike love and willing minds.³⁴⁵ All these freedoms were also experienced in substance by true believers under the law, but under the New Testament the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, for they have freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law to which the Jewish church was subjected. They also have

³³³ 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 2:1; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3.

³³⁴ John 3:3, 5; 6:44; 2 Cor 4:4-6.

³³⁵ Gal 2:4; 5:1.

³³⁶ Rom 8:1; Heb 9:14.

³³⁷ Rom 3:25; 5:9; Heb 2:17; 1 John 4:10.

³³⁸ Gal 3:13.

³³⁹ Gal 1:4; Col 1:13.

³⁴⁰ Acts 26:18; 2 Cor 4:4; 1 John 3:10.

³⁴¹ Rom 6:17, 20; 8:3.

³⁴² Rom 8:28.

³⁴³ 1 Cor 15:54-57; Heb 2:14-15.

³⁴⁴ 2 Thess 1:8-10.

³⁴⁵ Luke 1:73-75; Rom 8:15; 1 John 4:18.

greater boldness of access to the throne of grace and fuller communications of the free Spirit of God than believers under the law normally experienced.³⁴⁶

2. God alone is Lord of the conscience,³⁴⁷ and has left it free from all doctrines and commandments of men which are in any respect contrary to his word, or not contained in it.³⁴⁸ Thus to believe such doctrines or to obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience.³⁴⁹ The requiring of an implicit faith, an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also.
3. They who on pretence of Christian liberty practice any sin, or cherish any sinful lust, pervert the main purpose of the grace of the gospel to their own destruction.³⁵⁰ They completely destroy the object of Christian liberty, which is that we, being delivered out of the hands of all our enemies, might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.³⁵¹

*Chapter Twenty-two: Worship and the Sabbath Day*³⁵²

1. The light of nature shows that there is a God who has lordship and sovereignty over all,³⁵³ is just and good, and who does good to all.³⁵⁴ Therefore he is to be feared, loved,

³⁴⁶ The teaching of this section of the paragraph (beginning with the words “All these freedoms...”) is dependent upon the Confession’s commitment to Covenant Theology. For our objection to Covenantalism, see fns. 111 & 328.

³⁴⁷ Rom 14:4; 1 Cor 4:4; Jas 4:12.

³⁴⁸ Matt 15:9; 1 Tim 4:1-3.

³⁴⁹ Col 2:20-23.

³⁵⁰ Rom 6:1-2; Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 2:16.

³⁵¹ Luke 1:74.

³⁵² RBC does not subscribe to Chapter XXII, paragraphs 7 & 8; rather, we choose to stand in the tradition of the Second Helvetic Confession (1561) and questions 166-184 from Calvin’s Geneva Catechism of 1541. The following has been taken from the Second Helvetic Confession and is representative of Calvin’s teaching as well:

“Although religion is not bound to time, yet it cannot be cultivated and exercised without a proper distribution and arrangement of time. Every Church, therefore, chooses for itself a certain time for public prayers, and for the preaching of the Gospel, and for the celebration of the sacraments; and no one is permitted to overthrow this appointment of the Church at his own pleasure. For unless some due time and leisure is given for the outward exercise of religion, without doubt men would be drawn away from it by their own affairs.

“Hence we see that in the ancient churches there were not only certain set hours in the week appointed for meetings, but that also the Lord’s Day itself, ever since the apostles’ time, was set aside for them and for a holy rest, a practice now rightly preserved by our Churches for the sake of worship and love.

“In this connection we do not yield to the Jewish observance and to superstitions. For we do not believe that one day is any holier than another, or think that rest in itself is acceptable to God. Moreover, we celebrate the Lord’s Day and not the Sabbath as a free observance.”

³⁵³ Rom 1:20.

³⁵⁴ Matt 5:45; Acts 14:15-17; Rom 1:20, 32.

praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart and all the soul, and with all the might.³⁵⁵ But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God has been instituted by himself,³⁵⁶ and therefore our method of worship is limited by his own revealed will. He may not be worshipped according to the imagination and devices of men or the suggestions of Satan. He may not be worshipped by way of visible representations, or by any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.³⁵⁷

2. Worship is to be given to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to him alone;³⁵⁸ not to angels, saints, or any other creatures.³⁵⁹ And since the fall, worship is not to be given without a mediator or by any other mediation than that of Christ.³⁶⁰
3. Prayer, with thanksgiving, is one part of natural worship, and this God requires of all men.³⁶¹ But to be accepted it must be made in the name of the Son,³⁶² by the help of the Spirit,³⁶³ and according to his will.³⁶⁴ It must be made with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance; and corporate prayer must be made in a known language.³⁶⁵
4. Prayer is to be made for lawful things, and for all kinds of people who are alive now or who shall live in the future,³⁶⁶ but not for the dead,³⁶⁷ nor for those who are known to have sinned the sin leading to death.³⁶⁸

³⁵⁵ Jer 10:7; Mark 12:33.

³⁵⁶ Deut 12:32.

³⁵⁷ Exod 20:4-6; 1 Cor 10:14.

³⁵⁸ Matt 4:9-10; 28:19.

³⁵⁹ Rom 1:25; Col 2:18; Rev 19:10; 22:9.

³⁶⁰ John 14:6; 1 Tim 2:5.

³⁶¹ Pss 95:1-7a.

³⁶² John 14:13-14.

³⁶³ Rom 8:26.

³⁶⁴ 1 John 5:14.

³⁶⁵ 1 Cor 14:16-17.

³⁶⁶ 2 Sam 7:29; 1 Tim 2:1-2.

³⁶⁷ 2 Sam 12:21-23.

³⁶⁸ This is a reference to the notoriously difficult 1 John 5:16. Owing to the ambiguity of the saying, RBC chooses not to be dogmatic about its precise meaning for confessional purposes. We do, however, subscribe to the essential teaching of this paragraph; namely, that there are certain persons (*viz.* dead persons) for whom prayer should not be made.

5. The reading of the Scriptures, preaching and hearing the word of God,³⁶⁹ the teaching and admonishing of one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord;³⁷⁰ as well as the administration of baptism³⁷¹ and the Lord's Supper,³⁷² are all parts of religious worship of God, to be performed in obedience to him, with understanding, faith, reverence and godly fear; solemn humiliation with fastings and thanksgivings upon special occasions ought to be used in a holy and religious manner as well.³⁷³
6. Neither prayer, nor any other part of religious worship, is now, under the gospel, either tied to, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed: but God is to be worshiped everywhere, in spirit and truth;³⁷⁴ as, in private families³⁷⁵ daily,³⁷⁶ and in secret, each one by himself;³⁷⁷ so, more solemnly in the public assemblies, which are not carelessly or willfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God, by his word or providence, calls thereto.³⁷⁸
7. As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he has particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy to him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.
8. This Sabbath is then kept holy to the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up, the whole time, in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

³⁶⁹ 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 4:2.

³⁷⁰ Eph 5:19; Col 3:16.

³⁷¹ Matt 28:19-20.

³⁷² 1 Cor 11:26.

³⁷³ Esth 4:16; Joel 2:12; Matt 6:16-17; 9:14-15; Acts 13:2-3; 14:23.

³⁷⁴ Mal 1:11; John 4:21-24.

³⁷⁵ Deut 6:1-7; Eph 6:4.

³⁷⁶ Matt 6:11.

³⁷⁷ Matt 6:6.

³⁷⁸ Acts 2:42; Heb 10:25.

Chapter Twenty-three: Lawful Oaths and Vows

1. A lawful oath is an act of religious worship, in which the person swearing in truth, righteousness, and judgment, solemnly calls God to witness what he swears,³⁷⁹ and to judge him according to the truth or falsity of it.³⁸⁰
2. Only by the name of God can a righteous oath be sworn, and only if it is used with the utmost fear of God and reverence. Therefore, to swear vainly or rashly by the glorious and awesome name of God, or to swear by any other name or thing, is sinful, and to be regarded with disgust and detestation.³⁸¹ But in matters of weight and moment, for the confirmation of truth, and for the ending of strife, an oath is sanctioned by the word of God.³⁸² Therefore a lawful oath being imposed by a lawful authority can rightly be taken in such circumstances.
3. Whoever takes an oath sanctioned by the word of God is bound to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and affirm or confess to nothing except that which he knows to be true. For by rash, false, and vain oaths, the Lord is provoked and because of them this land mourns.³⁸³
4. An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words without equivocation or mental reservation.³⁸⁴
5. A vow, which is not to be made to any creature but to God alone, is to be made and performed with all the utmost care and faithfulness.³⁸⁵ But monastic vows (as in the Church of Rome) of a perpetual single life, professed poverty, and regular obedience, so far from being degrees of higher perfection, are superstitious and sinful snares, in which no Christian may entangle himself.³⁸⁶

Chapter Twenty-four: The Civil Magistrate

³⁷⁹ Exod 20:7; Deut 10:20; Jer 4:2.

³⁸⁰ 2 Chr 6:22-23.

³⁸¹ Eccl 5:2; Matt 5:34, 37; Jas 5:12.

³⁸² 2 Cor 1:23; Heb 6:16.

³⁸³ Lev 19:12; Eccl 5:4-7.

³⁸⁴ Ps 24:3-4.

³⁸⁵ Ps 76:11.

³⁸⁶ Col 2:20-23; 1 Tim 4:2-3.

1. God, the supreme Lord and King of the whole world, has ordained civil magistrates to be under him, over the people, for his own glory and the public good. For this purpose he has armed them with the power of the sword for the encouragement of those who do good and for the punishment of evildoers.³⁸⁷
2. It is lawful for Christians to accept and carry out the duties of a magistrate when called upon. In the performance of such office they are particularly responsible for maintaining justice and peace by application of the right and beneficial laws of the nation. Also, to maintain justice and peace,³⁸⁸ they may lawfully (under the New Testament) engage in war if it is just and essential.³⁸⁹
3. Because civil magistrates are established by God for the purposes previously defined, we ought to be subject to all their lawful commands as part of our obedience to God, not only to avoid punishment, but for conscience sake.³⁹⁰ We ought also to make supplications and prayers for rulers and all that are in authority, that under them we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.³⁹¹

Chapter Twenty-five: Marriage

1. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman. It is not lawful for any man to have more than one wife, or for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time.³⁹²
2. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife,³⁹³ for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue [= progeny],³⁹⁴ and for preventing uncleanness.³⁹⁵

³⁸⁷ Rom 13:1-4.

³⁸⁸ 2 Sam 23:3-4; Ps 82:1-4.

³⁸⁹ Luke 3:7-14.

³⁹⁰ Rom 13:5-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet 2:17.

³⁹¹ 1 Tim 2:1-2.

³⁹² Gen 2:24; Matt 19:3-8; Rom 7:2-3.

³⁹³ Gen 2:18.

³⁹⁴ Gen 1:28.

³⁹⁵ 1 Cor 7:2, 9.

3. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry if they are able with judgment to give their consent.³⁹⁶ But it is the duty of Christians to marry in the Lord,³⁹⁷ and therefore those who profess the true religion should not marry with infidels or idolaters. Nor should those who are godly be unequally yoked by marrying with those who are wicked in their life or who maintain heretical teaching condemned to judgment.³⁹⁸
4. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity³⁹⁹ forbidden in the word,⁴⁰⁰ nor can such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful by any law of man or consent of parties so that such persons may live together as man and wife.⁴⁰¹

Chapter Twenty-six: The Church

1. The universal church, which may be called invisible (in respect of the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace) consists of the entire number of the elect, all those who have been, who are, or who shall be gathered into one under Christ, who is the head. This universal church is the wife, the body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.⁴⁰²
2. All people throughout the world who profess the faith of the gospel and obedience to Christ on its terms, and who do not destroy their profession by any errors which contradict or overthrow gospel fundamentals, or by unholy behavior, are visible saints and may be regarded as such. All individual congregations ought to be constituted of such people.⁴⁰³
3. The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error, and some have degenerated so much that they have ceased to be churches of Christ and have become synagogues of Satan.⁴⁰⁴ Nevertheless Christ always has had, and always will (to the end

³⁹⁶ 1 Tim 4:3; Heb 13:4.

³⁹⁷ 1 Cor 7:39.

³⁹⁸ Neh 13:25-27; 2 Cor 6:14-16.

³⁹⁹ “Consanguinity” refers to blood relatives; “affinity” refers to relatives by marriage. What this means is that one should not marry his or her relatives by blood or marriage within a specified degree; generally, not anyone closer than a first cousin. See references below.

⁴⁰⁰ Lev 18.

⁴⁰¹ Mark 6:18; 1 Cor 5:1.

⁴⁰² Eph 1:22-23; 2:11-3:6; 5:23, 27, 32; 2 Cor 11:2; Heb 12:23.

⁴⁰³ Acts 9:13; 1 Cor 14:33; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1.

⁴⁰⁴ 1 Cor 5; Rev 2-3.

of time) have a kingdom in this world, made up of those who believe in him, and make profession of his name.⁴⁰⁵

4. The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the church. In him, by the appointment of the Father, is vested in a supreme and sovereign manner all power for the calling, institution, order, or government of the church.⁴⁰⁶ The Pope of Rome cannot in any sense be head of the church, but he is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, who exalts himself in the church against Christ and all that is called God, who the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.⁴⁰⁷
5. In the exercise of the authority which has been entrusted to him, the Lord Jesus calls to himself from out of the world, through the ministry of his word, by his Spirit, those who are given to him by his Father,⁴⁰⁸ so that they may walk before him in all the ways of obedience which he prescribes to them in his word.⁴⁰⁹ Those who are thus called, he commands to walk together in particular societies or churches, for their mutual edification, and for the due performance of that public worship, which he requires of them in the world.⁴¹⁰
6. The members of these churches are saints because they have been called by Christ, and because they visibly manifest and evidence their obedience to that call by their profession and walk. Such saints willingly consent to walk together according to the appointment of Christ,⁴¹¹ giving themselves up to the Lord and to one another, according to God's will, in avowed subjection to the ordinances of the gospel.⁴¹²
7. To each of these churches thus gathered, according to the Lord's mind as declared in his word, he has given all the power and authority which is in any way required for them to carry on the order of worship and discipline which he has instituted for them to observe.

⁴⁰⁵ Matt 16:18.

⁴⁰⁶ Matt 28:18-20; Eph 4:11-12; Col 1:18.

⁴⁰⁷ RBC takes exception to the claim that antichrist is the Pope of Rome and chooses rather to stand in the tradition of those Reformed Creeds that do not identify precisely the person of the antichrist, such as the Genevan Confession (1536), the French Confession (1559), the Belgic Confession (1561), the Second Helvetic Confession (1561), and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563).

⁴⁰⁸ John 6:37; 10:16; 12:32; 15:19.

⁴⁰⁹ Matt 28:20; Col 3:16.

⁴¹⁰ Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 14:25.

⁴¹¹ Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2.

⁴¹² Acts 2:41-42; 2 Cor 9:13.

He has also given all the commands and rules for the due and right exercise of this power.⁴¹³

8. A particular church gathered and completely organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members. The officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the church are bishops or elders and deacons. These are to be appointed for the peculiar administration of ordinances and the execution of power or duty with which the Lord has entrusted them and to which he has called them. This pattern of church order is to be continued to the end of the world.⁴¹⁴
9. The way appointed by Christ for the calling of any person fitted and gifted by the Holy Spirit for the office of bishop or elder in a church, is that he is to be chosen by the common consent and vote of the church itself.⁴¹⁵ Such a person should be solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer, with the laying on of hands of the eldership of the church (if there be any previously appointed elder or elders). The way of Christ for the calling of a deacon is that he is also to be chosen by the common consent and vote of the church and set apart by prayer, with the laying on of hands.⁴¹⁶
10. Because the work of pastors is to apply themselves constantly to the service of Christ in his churches by the ministry of the word and prayer, and by watching for their souls as they that must give an account to him,⁴¹⁷ the churches to which they minister have a pressing obligation to give them not only all due respect, but also to impart to them a share of all their good things, according to their ability.⁴¹⁸ This must be so done that the pastors may have a comfortable supply and that they may not have to be entangled in secular affairs,⁴¹⁹ and may also be able to exercise hospitality towards others.⁴²⁰ All this is required by the law of nature and by the express command of our Lord Jesus, who has ordained that they that preach the gospel should live by the gospel.⁴²¹

⁴¹³ Matt 18:18; 1 Cor 5:13; 2 Cor 2:6-8; Titus 1:5.

⁴¹⁴ Acts 20:17, 28; Eph 4:11; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9.

⁴¹⁵ Among Reformed Baptist churches, the limits and extent of such consent is commonly set forth in their individual constitutions. Although RBC acknowledges the vital importance of the church's consent in the matter of its selection of officers, final human authority for such decisions falls under the purview of the eldership cf. fns. 417-18. See our Constitution, Articles IV-V.

⁴¹⁶ Acts 6:3, 5-6; 14:23; 1 Tim 4:14.

⁴¹⁷ Acts 6:4; 2 Tim 2:15; Heb 13:17.

⁴¹⁸ Gal 6:6-7; 1 Tim 5:17-18.

⁴¹⁹ 2 Tim 2:4.

⁴²⁰ 1 Tim 3:2.

⁴²¹ 1 Cor 9:6-14.

11. Although an obligation lies on the elders or pastors of the churches to be urgently preaching the word by virtue of their office, yet the work of preaching the word is not exclusively confined to them. Therefore others who are also gifted and qualified by the Holy Spirit for the task, and who are approved and called by the church, may and ought to perform it.⁴²²
12. All believers are bound to join themselves to particular churches when and where they have opportunity so to do,⁴²³ and all who are admitted into the privileges of a church, are also under the censures and government of that church, in accordance with the rule of Christ.⁴²⁴
13. No church members, because of any offence which has been given them by a fellow member, once they have performed their prescribed duty towards the person who has caused the offence, may disturb church order in anyway, or be absent from the meetings of the church or the administration of any ordinances on account of any such offence. On the contrary, they are to wait upon Christ in the further proceedings of the church.⁴²⁵
14. Each church and all its members are obligated to pray constantly for the good and prosperity of all Christ's churches everywhere,⁴²⁶ and to help forward everyone who comes into their district or calling, by the exercise of their gifts and graces. It clearly follows that when churches are planted by the goodness of God they ought also to hold fellowship among themselves to promote peace, increasing love and mutual edification as and when they enjoy an opportunity to do so to their advantage.⁴²⁷
15. In cases of difficulties or differences, either in matters of doctrine or administration, which concern the churches in general or any single church, and which affects their peace, union, and edification, or when any members of a church are injured because of any disciplinary proceedings not consistent with the word and correct order, it is according to the mind of Christ, that many churches holding communion together do, through their appointed messengers meet to consider, and give their advice about the matter in dispute, and to report to all the churches concerned. However, when these messengers are assembled, they are not entrusted with any real church power or with any jurisdiction over the churches involved in the problem. They cannot exercise any censure

⁴²² Acts 11:19-21; 1 Pet 4:10-11.

⁴²³ Heb 13:17.

⁴²⁴ 1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thess 3:6, 14-15.

⁴²⁵ Matt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 11:25, 28; Eph 4:2-3; Heb 10:25.

⁴²⁶ Eph 6:18.

⁴²⁷ Rom 15:7; 16:1-2; Eph 4:14-16; 3 John 9-10.

over any churches or persons, or impose their determination on the churches or their officers.⁴²⁸

Chapter Twenty-seven: The Communion of Saints

1. All saints who are united to Jesus Christ, their head, by his Spirit, and by faith, although they are not by this made one person with him, have fellowship in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory.⁴²⁹ Also, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces,⁴³⁰ and are obligated to the orderly performance of such public and private duties as lead to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.⁴³¹

2. Saints, by their profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God and in performing such other spiritual services as advance their mutual edification.⁴³² They are also to give relief to each other in outward things according to their different needs and abilities to meet them.⁴³³ This communion or fellowship, though chiefly exercised by saints in their immediate circle of fellow believers such as families⁴³⁴ and churches,⁴³⁵ is also to be extended (according to the rule of the gospel) to all the household of faith, as God gives the opportunity. This means all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.⁴³⁶ However, their communion with one another as saints does not take away or infringe the personal ownership that each man has of his goods and possessions.⁴³⁷

Chapter Twenty-eight: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

⁴²⁸ Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 19-31; 20:30-33; 1 Cor 5:4-7, 13; 1 Pet 5:1-4.

⁴²⁹ Rom 6:4-6; Phil 3:10; Heb 3:14; 1 John 1:3.

⁴³⁰ Rom 13:8; Eph 4:16.

⁴³¹ Rom 1:12; 15:2; 1 Cor 12:7; 14:12, 26; 15:58; Gal 6:10; 1 Thess 5:11, 14; 1 Pet 4:10-11; 1 John 3:17.

⁴³² Heb 3:12-13; 10:24-25.

⁴³³ Acts 4:32; 11:29-30.

⁴³⁴ Eph 6:4; 1 Tim 5:8

⁴³⁵ 1 Cor 12:14-27.

⁴³⁶ 1 Cor 16:1-3; 2 Cor 8:1-4; 9:12.

⁴³⁷ Acts 5:4; Eph 4:28.

1. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus,⁴³⁸ the only lawgiver, to be continued in his church to the end of the world.⁴³⁹
2. These holy appointments are to be administered only by those who are qualified and called to administer them, according to the commission of Christ.⁴⁴⁰

Chapter Twenty-nine: Baptism

1. Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be to the person who is baptized—a sign of his fellowship with Christ in his death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into Christ;⁴⁴¹ of remission of sins;⁴⁴² and of that person's giving up of himself to God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life.⁴⁴³
2. Those who actually profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects for this ordinance.⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁸ Matt 28:18-19; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:23-25.

⁴³⁹ Matt 28:20; 1 Cor 11:26.

⁴⁴⁰ Matt 28:16-20. The following quotation clarifies further our position with respect to Chapter XXVIII, paragraph 2:

“Although baptizing is not necessarily connected with preaching and teaching; yet the manner in which it is conjoined with them in the commission, appears to indicate that the connection is suitable. No separate class of officers is anywhere provided in the New Testament, for administering the rite, and yet, if we have reasoned correctly, the apostles were under obligation to provide for it. We are led to the conclusion, that this provision was made, in the ordinary method instituted for transmitting the ministerial office. Paul had committed the office to Timothy.... Timothy was, in like manner, to commit the office to others, and enjoin on them the same duties which Paul had enjoined on him. There was a fitness in the arrangement that this ceremonial induction into office, should add the ceremonial authority to baptize.... [T]he authority to administer baptism is conferred in the ordinary course of the ministerial succession, when an individual, called by the Holy Spirit to the ministry of the word, is publicly set apart to this service. The process of reasoning by which we reach this conclusion, is less clear and direct than that which many other subjects admit; but it is sufficiently clear to determine our practice, in the absence of explicit instruction from the holy oracles. We have, moreover, the satisfaction of knowing that this course of procedure has been generally adopted in the churches which have conformed their order most nearly to the Scriptures” (J L Dagg, *Manual of Theology, Second Part: A Treatise on Church Order* [Harrisonburg, VA: Gano Books, 1990 reprint of the 1858 original], 256-57).

⁴⁴¹ Rom 6:3-5; Col 2:12; Gal 3:27.

⁴⁴² Acts 2:38; 22:16.

⁴⁴³ Rom 6:4.

⁴⁴⁴ Acts 2:41; 8:12-13, 36-37; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:14-15, 31-33; 18:8.

3. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, in which the person is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁴⁵
4. Immersion—the dipping of the person in water—is necessary for the due administration of this ordinance.⁴⁴⁶

Chapter Thirty: The Lord's Supper

1. The supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by him the same night on which he was betrayed to be observed in his churches until the end of the world for the perpetual remembrance, and showing forth of the sacrifice of himself in his death.⁴⁴⁷ It was also instituted by Christ to confirm believers in all the benefits of his death; for their spiritual nourishment and growth in him; for their further engagement in and commitment to all the duties which they owe to him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him and with their fellow believers.⁴⁴⁸
2. In this ordinance Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor is there any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sin (of the living or the dead). There is only a memorial of that one offering up of Christ by himself upon the cross once for all,⁴⁴⁹ the memorial being accompanied by a spiritual oblation of all possible praise to God for Calvary. Therefore, the popish sacrifice of the mass, as they call it, is most abominable, being injurious to Christ's own sacrifice, which is the only propitiation for all the sins of the elect.
3. The Lord Jesus has, in this ordinance, appointed his ministers to pray and bless the elements of bread and wine (so setting them apart from a common to a holy use) and to take and break the bread, then to take the cup, and to give both to the communicants [= the participants in Communion], also communicating [= participating] themselves.⁴⁵⁰
4. The denial of the cup to the people, the practices of worshipping the elements, lifting them up or carrying them about for adoration, or reserving them for any pretended religious use, are all contrary to the nature of this ordinance, and to the institution of Christ.

⁴⁴⁵ Matt 28:19-20; Acts 8:38.

⁴⁴⁶ Matt 3:16; John 3:23. "The word 'baptize' means to immerse, and it is clear that the rite of immersion was observed in the ancient church" (John Calvin, *Institutes* 4.15.19).

⁴⁴⁷ 1 Cor 11:23-26.

⁴⁴⁸ 1 Cor 10:16-17, 21.

⁴⁴⁹ Heb 9:11-12, 24-28; 10:10.

⁴⁵⁰ Matt 26:26-27; 1 Cor 11:23-25. See also fn. 441 for part of our rationale for delimiting the administration of the sacraments to the eldership.

5. The outward elements in this ordinance which are correctly set apart and used as Christ ordained, so closely portray him as crucified, that they are sometimes truly (but figuratively) referred to in terms of the things they represent, such as the body and blood of Christ.⁴⁵¹ However, in substance and nature they still remain truly and only bread and wine as they were before.⁴⁵²
6. The doctrine commonly called transubstantiation, which maintains that a change occurs in the substance of the bread and wine into the substance of Christ's body and blood, when consecrated by a priest or by any other way, is repugnant not only to Scripture⁴⁵³ but even to common sense and reason. It overthrows the nature of the ordinance, and both has been and is the cause of a host of superstitions and of gross idolatries.
7. Worthy receivers, outwardly taking the visible elements in this ordinance, also receive them inwardly and spiritually by faith, truly and in fact, but not carnally and corporally, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death. The body and blood of Christ is not present corporally or carnally but it is spiritually present to the faith of believers in the ordinance, just as the elements are present to their outward senses.⁴⁵⁴
8. All ignorant and ungodly persons who are unfit to enjoy communion with Christ are equally unworthy of the Lord's Table, and therefore cannot without great sin against him, take a share in these holy mysteries or be admitted to the Supper while they remain in that condition.⁴⁵⁵ Indeed those who receive (the elements) unworthily are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, eating and drinking judgment to themselves.⁴⁵⁶

Chapter Thirty-one: Man's State after Death and the Resurrection

1. The bodies of men after death return to dust, and undergo corruption,⁴⁵⁷ but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them.⁴⁵⁸ The souls of the righteous are then made perfect in holiness, are received into paradise where they are with Christ, and look upon the face of God in light

⁴⁵¹ 1 Cor 10:16.

⁴⁵² 1 Cor 11:27.

⁴⁵³ Luke 24:6, 39; Acts 3:21.

⁴⁵⁴ 1 Cor 10:16; 11:23-26.

⁴⁵⁵ 2 Cor 6:14-15.

⁴⁵⁶ 1 Cor 11:29.

⁴⁵⁷ Gen 3:19; Acts 13:36.

⁴⁵⁸ Eccl 12:7; Rev 6:9-11.

and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies.⁴⁵⁹ The souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torment and under darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day.⁴⁶⁰ The Scripture acknowledges no other place than these two for souls separated from their bodies.

2. At the last day, those of the saints who are still alive shall not sleep but shall be changed.⁴⁶¹ And all the dead shall be raised up with their own, same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, and these bodies shall be united again to their souls for ever.⁴⁶²
3. The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonor.⁴⁶³ The bodies of the just shall, by his Spirit be raised to honor, and made conformable to his own glorious body.⁴⁶⁴

Chapter Thirty-two: The Last Judgment

1. God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given by the Father.⁴⁶⁵ In this day not only the apostate angels shall be judged,⁴⁶⁶ but also all people who have lived upon the earth. They shall appear before the tribunal of Christ to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds, and to receive according to what they have done when in the body, whether good or evil.⁴⁶⁷
2. The end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and also his justice, in the eternal damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient.⁴⁶⁸ Then shall the righteous go into everlasting life and receive that fullness of joy and glory with everlasting reward in the

⁴⁵⁹ Luke 23:43; Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 5:6-8; Phil 1:23; Heb 12:23.

⁴⁶⁰ Luke 16:23-24; 1 Pet 3:19; Jude 6-7; Rev 20:13-14.

⁴⁶¹ 1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:17.

⁴⁶² John 20:20, 27; 1 Cor 15:42-44; 1 Thess 4:13-17.

⁴⁶³ Dan 12:2; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15.

⁴⁶⁴ John 6:39; Rom 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Cor 4:14; Phil 3:21.

⁴⁶⁵ John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31.

⁴⁶⁶ 1 Cor 6:3; Jude 6.

⁴⁶⁷ Eccl 12:14; Matt 12:36; Rom 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:10.

⁴⁶⁸ Rom 9:22-23.

presence of the Lord. But the wicked, who know not God and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast aside into everlasting torments,⁴⁶⁹ and punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.⁴⁷⁰

3. As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there will be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin⁴⁷¹ and to give greater consolation to the godly in their adversity,⁴⁷² so also he will have the date of that day kept unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and always be watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come.⁴⁷³ Also, so that men may be affected in such a way that they ever say, “Come Lord Jesus, come quickly!”⁴⁷⁴ Amen.

⁴⁶⁹ Matt 13:41-42; 25:21, 34; 2 Tim 4:8.

⁴⁷⁰ Matt 25:46; Mark 9:48; 2 Thess 1:7-10.

⁴⁷¹ 2 Cor 5:10-11.

⁴⁷² 2 Thess 1:5-7.

⁴⁷³ Mark 13:35-37; Luke 12:35-40.

⁴⁷⁴ Rev 22:20.