

Confessing the Faith:

The 1689 Baptist Confession for the 21st Century

Preface

This confession is intended to be an exact rendering of the original Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 into modern English.

My goal has been to maintain the structure and language to the extent that these lend themselves to clarity for the modern reader. When the structure or language was archaic, only then did I consider modern equivalent terms or rephrasing. In more difficult cases, I reworked the structure of a paragraph when it could be stated in a significantly more natural way in modern English without compromising the meaning. I don't pretend that the result is readable on a sixth-grade level. The concepts in the confession simply don't lend themselves to such simplistic expression. Furthermore, I have avoided changing well-established theological terms unless I judged that they were obscure and could be greatly clarified by a modern expression. In a few cases the meaning of the original term was unclear, or the term could not easily be rendered by an equivalent modern term. In these cases, I used footnotes. Footnotes in italics indicate the original term. Non-italic footnotes clarify the meaning.

I commend this modern-language version in the words of the preface to the original:

We shall conclude with our earnest prayer, that the God of all grace, will pour out those measures of his holy Spirit upon us, that the profession of truth may be accompanied with the sound belief, and diligent practise of it by us; that his name may in all things be glorified, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

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Print Notice

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Chapter 1

The Holy Scriptures

1. The Holy Scriptures are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.¹ The light of nature and the works of creation and providence so clearly demonstrate the goodness, wisdom, and power of God that people are left without excuse; however, these demonstrations are not sufficient to give the knowledge of God and his will that is necessary for salvation.² Therefore, the Lord was pleased at different times and in various ways to reveal himself and to declare his will to his church.³ To preserve and propagate the truth better and to establish and comfort the church with greater certainty against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and the world, the Lord put this revelation completely in writing. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are absolutely necessary, because God's former ways of revealing his will to his people have now ceased.⁴

¹2 Timothy 3:15-17; Isaiah 8:20; Luke 16:29, 31; Ephesians 2:20. ²Romans 1:19-21; Romans 2:14,15; Psalm 19:1-3. ³Hebrews 1:1. ⁴Proverbs 22:19-21; Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 1:19, 20.

2. The Holy Scriptures, or the Word of God written, consist of all the books of the Old and New Testaments. These are:

THE OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

THE NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude, Revelation.

All of these are given by the inspiration of God to be the standard of faith and life.⁵

⁵2 Timothy 3:16.

3. The books commonly called the Apocrypha were not given by divine inspiration and so are not part of the canon or standard of the Scriptures. Therefore, they have no authority for the church of God and are not to be recognized or used in any way different from other human writings.⁶

⁶Luke 24:27, 44; Romans 3:2.

4. The authority of the Holy Scriptures obligates belief in them. This authority does not depend on the testimony of any person or church but on God the author alone, who is truth itself. Therefore, the Scriptures are to be received because they are the Word of God.⁷

⁷2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 John 5:9.

5. The testimony of the church of God may stir and persuade us to adopt a high and reverent respect for the Holy Scriptures. In fact, the heavenliness of the contents, the power of the system of truth, the majesty of the style, the harmony of all the parts, the central focus on giving all glory to God, the full revelation of the only way of salvation, and many other incomparable qualities and complete perfections, all provide abundant evidence that the Scriptures are the Word of God. Even so, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Scriptures comes from the internal work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.⁸

⁸John 16:13,14; 1 Corinthians 2:10-12; 1 John 2:20, 27.

6. The whole counsel of God concerning everything essential for his own glory and man's salvation, faith, and life is either explicitly stated or by necessary inference contained in the Holy Scriptures. Nothing is ever to be added to the Scriptures, either by new revelation of the Spirit or by human traditions.⁹

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that the inward illumination of the Spirit of God is necessary for a saving understanding of what is revealed in the Word.¹⁰ We recognize that some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the church are common to human actions and organizations and are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian wisdom, following the general rules of the Word, which must always be observed.¹¹

⁹2 Timothy 3:15-17; Galatians 1:8,9. ¹⁰John 6:45; 1 Corinthians 2:9-12. ¹¹1 Corinthians 11:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 14:26, 40.

7. Some things in Scripture are clearer than others, and some people understand the teachings more clearly than others.¹² However, the things that must be known, believed, and obeyed for salvation are so clearly set forth and explained in one part of Scripture or another that both the educated and uneducated may achieve a sufficient understanding of them by properly using ordinary measures.¹³

¹²2 Peter 3:16. ¹³Psalms 19:7; Psalm 119:130.

8. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the native language of the ancient people of God.¹⁴ The New Testament was written in Greek, which at the time it was written was most widely known to the nations. These Testaments were inspired directly by God and by his unique care and providence were kept pure down through the ages. They are therefore true and authoritative^b, so that in all religious controversies the church must make their ultimate appeal to them.¹⁵ All God's people have a right to and a claim on the Scriptures and are commanded in the fear of God to read¹⁶ and search them.¹⁷ Not all of God's people know these original languages, so the Scriptures are to be translated into the common language of every nation to which they come.¹⁸ In this way the Word of God may dwell richly in all, so that they may worship him in an acceptable manner and through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures may have hope.¹⁹

^b*authentic*

¹⁴Romans 3:2. ¹⁵Isaiah 8:20. ¹⁶Acts 15:15. ¹⁷John 5:39. ¹⁸1 Corinthians 14:6, 9, 11, 12, 24, 28.
¹⁹Colossians 3:16.

9. The infallible rule for interpreting Scripture is the Scripture itself. Therefore, when there is a question about the true and full meaning^c of any part of Scripture (and each passage has only one meaning, not many), it must be understood in light of other passages that speak more clearly.²⁰

^c*sense*

²⁰2 Peter 1:20, 21; Acts 15:15, 16.

10. The supreme judge for deciding all religious controversies and for evaluating all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, human teachings, and individual interpretations^d, and in whose judgment we are to rest, is nothing but the Holy Scripture delivered by the Spirit. In this Scripture our faith finds its final word.²¹

^d*private spirits*

²¹Matthew 22:29, 31, 32; Ephesians 2:20; Acts 28:23.

Chapter 2

God and the Holy Trinity

1. The Lord our God is one, the only living and true God.¹ He is self-existent² and infinite in being and perfection. His essence cannot be understood by anyone but him.³ He is a perfectly pure spirit.⁴ He is invisible and has no body, parts, or changeable human emotions. He alone has immortality, dwelling in light that no one can approach.⁵ He is unchangeable,⁶ immense,^{a,7} eternal,⁸ incomprehensible, almighty,⁹ in every way infinite, absolutely holy,¹⁰ perfectly wise, wholly free, completely absolute. He works all things according to the counsel of his own unchangeable and completely righteous will¹¹ for his own glory.¹² He is most loving, gracious, merciful, and patient. He overflows with goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. He rewards those who seek him diligently.¹³ At the same time, he is perfectly just and terrifying in his judgments.¹⁴ He hates all sin¹⁵ and will certainly not clear the guilty.¹⁶

^atranscends all space

¹1 Corinthians 8:4, 6; Deuteronomy 6:4. ²Jeremiah 10:10; Isaiah 48:12. ³Exodus 3:14. ⁴John 4:24. ⁵1 Timothy 1:17; Deuteronomy 4:15, 16. ⁶Malachi 3:6. ⁷1 Kings 8:27; Jeremiah 23:23.

⁸Psalms 90:2. ⁹Genesis 17:1. ¹⁰Isaiah 6:3. ¹¹Psalms 115:3; Isaiah 46:10. ¹²Proverbs 16:4; Romans 11:36. ¹³Exodus 34:6, 7; Hebrews 11:6. ¹⁴Nehemiah 9:32, 33. ¹⁵Psalms 5:5, 6. ¹⁶Exodus 34:7; Nahum 1:2, 3.

2. God has all life,¹⁷ glory,¹⁸ goodness,¹⁹ and blessedness in and of himself; he alone is all-sufficient in himself. He does not need any creature he has made nor does he derive any glory from them.²⁰ Instead, he demonstrates his own glory in them, by them, to them, and upon them. He alone is the source of all being, and everything is from him, through him, and to him.²¹ He has absolute sovereign rule over all creatures, to act through them, for them, or upon them as he pleases.²² In his sight everything is open and visible.²³ His knowledge is infinite and infallible.

It does not depend upon any creature, so for him nothing is contingent or uncertain.²⁴ He is absolutely holy in all his plans, in all his works,²⁵ and in all his commands. Angels and human beings owe to him all the worship,²⁶ service, or obedience that creatures owe to the Creator and whatever else he is pleased to require of them.

¹⁷John 5:26. ¹⁸Psalm 148:13. ¹⁹Psalm 119:68. ²⁰Job 22:2, 3. ²¹Romans 11:34-36. ²²Daniel 4:25, 34, 35. ²³Hebrews 4:13. ²⁴Ezekiel 11:5; Acts 15:18. ²⁵Psalm 145:17. ²⁶Revelation 5:12-14.

3. This divine and infinite Being consists of three persons,^b the Father, the Word or Son, and the Holy Spirit.²⁷ These three have the same substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence without this essence being divided.²⁸ The Father is not derived from anyone, neither begotten nor proceeding. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father.²⁹ The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.³⁰ All three are infinite and without beginning and are therefore only one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being. Yet these three are distinguished by several distinctive characteristics and personal relations. This truth of the Trinity is the foundation of all of our fellowship with God and of our comforting dependence on him.

^b*subsistences*, or individual instances of a given essence

²⁷1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14. ²⁸Exodus 3:14; John 14:11; 1 Corinthians 8:6. ²⁹John 1:14,18. ³⁰John 15:26; Galatians 4:6.

Chapter 3

God's Decree

1. From all eternity God decreed everything that occurs, without reference to anything outside himself.¹ He did this by the perfectly wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably. Yet God did this in such a way that he is neither the author of sin nor has fellowship with any in their sin.² This decree does not violate the will of the creature or take away the free working or contingency of second causes. On the contrary, these are established by God's decree.³ In this decree God's wisdom is displayed in directing all things, and his power and faithfulness are demonstrated in accomplishing his decree.⁴

¹Isaiah 46:10; Ephesians 1:11; Hebrews 6:17; Romans 9:15, 18. ²James 1:13; 1 John 1:5. ³Acts 4:27, 28; John 19:11. ⁴Numbers 23:19; Ephesians 1:3-5.

2. God knows everything that could happen under any given conditions.⁵ However, his decree of anything is not based on foreseeing it in the future or foreseeing that it would occur under such conditions.⁶

⁵Acts 15:18. ⁶Romans 9:11, 13, 16, 18.

3. By God's decree, and for the demonstration of his glory, some human beings and angels are predestined (or foreordained) to eternal life through Jesus Christ,⁷ to the praise of his glorious

grace.⁸ Others are left to live in their sin, leading to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice.⁹

⁷1 Timothy 5:21; Matthew 25:34. ⁸Ephesians 1:5, 6. ⁹Romans 9:22, 23; Jude 4.

4. These predestined and foreordained angels and people are individually and unchangeably designated, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or decreased.¹⁰

¹⁰2 Timothy 2:19; John 13:18.

5. Those people who are predestined to life were chosen by God before the foundation of the world, according to his eternal and unchangeable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will. He chose them in Christ for eternal glory, purely as a result of his free grace and love,¹¹ without anything else about them serving as a condition or cause moving him to do so.¹²

¹¹Ephesians 1:4, 9, 11; Romans 8:30; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9. ¹²Romans 9:13, 16; Ephesians 2:5, 12.

6. Just as God has appointed the elect to glory, so he has by the eternal and completely free purpose of his will foreordained all the means.¹³ Therefore, those who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ¹⁴ and effectually called to faith in Christ by his Spirit working at the appropriate time. They are justified, adopted, sanctified,¹⁵ and kept by his power through faith to salvation.¹⁶ No one but the elect are redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved.¹⁷

¹³1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13. ¹⁴1 Thessalonians 5:9, 10. ¹⁵Romans 8:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13. ¹⁶1 Peter 1:5. ¹⁷John 10:26; 17:9; 6:64.

7. The doctrine of the high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care so that those heeding the will of God revealed in his Word and obeying him may be assured of their eternal election by the certainty of their effectual calling.¹⁸ In this way this doctrine will give reasons for praise,¹⁹ reverence, and admiration of God, as well as humility,²⁰ diligence and rich comfort to all who sincerely obey the gospel.²¹

¹⁸1 Thessalonians 1:4, 5; 2 Peter 1:10. ¹⁹Ephesians 1:6; Romans 11:33. ²⁰Romans 11:5, 6, 20.

²¹Luke 10:20.

Chapter 4

Creation

1. In the beginning God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit¹ was pleased to create or make the world and all things in it, both visible and invisible, in a six-day period, and all very good.² He did this to manifest the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness.³

¹John 1:2, 3; Hebrews 1:2; Job 26:13. ²Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1:31. ³Romans 1:20.

2. After God had made all the other creatures, he created humanity. He made them male and female,⁴ with rational and immortal souls,⁵ thereby making them suited to that life lived unto God for which they were created. They were made in the image of God, being endowed with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.⁶ They had the law of God written in their hearts⁷ and the power to fulfill it. Even so, they could still transgress the law, because they were left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change.⁸

⁴Genesis 1:27. ⁵Genesis 2:7. ⁶Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 1:26. ⁷Romans 2:14, 15. ⁸Genesis 3:6.

3. In addition to the law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁹ As long as they obeyed this command, they were happy in their communion with God and had dominion over the creatures.¹⁰

⁹Genesis 2:17; ¹⁰Genesis 1:26, 28.

Chapter 5

Divine Providence

1. God the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom, upholds, directs, arranges, and governs all creatures and things,¹ from the greatest to the least,² by his perfectly wise and holy providence, to the purpose for which they were created. He governs according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and unchangeable counsel of his own will. His providence leads to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.³

¹Hebrews 1:3; Job 38:11; Isaiah 46:10, 11; Psalms 135:6. ²Matthew 10:29-31. ³Ephesians 1:11.

2. All things come to pass unchangeably and certainly in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God,⁴ who is the first cause. Thus, nothing happens to anyone by chance or outside of God's providence.⁵ Yet by the same providence God arranges all things to occur according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or in response to other causes.⁶

⁴Acts 2:23. ⁵Proverbs 16:33. ⁶Genesis 8:22.

3. In his ordinary providence, God makes use of means,⁷ though he is free to work apart from them,⁸ beyond them,⁹ and contrary to them¹⁰ at his pleasure.

⁷Acts 27:31, 44; Isaiah 55:10, 11. ⁸Hosea 1:7. ⁹Romans 4:19-21. ¹⁰Daniel 3:27.

4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God are so thoroughly demonstrated in his providence, that his sovereign plan includes even the first fall and every other sinful action both of angels and humans.¹¹ God's providence over sinful actions does not occur by simple permission but by a form of permission that God most wisely and powerfully

limits and in other ways arranges and governs.¹² Through a complex arrangement of methods he channels sinful actions to accomplish his perfectly holy purposes.¹³ Yet he does this in such a way that the sinfulness of their acts arises only from the creatures and not from God. Because God is altogether holy and righteous, he can neither originate nor approve of sin.¹⁴

¹¹Romans 11:32-34; 2 Samuel 24:1, 1 Chronicles 21:1. ¹²2 Kings 19:28; Psalms 76:10. ¹³Genesis 50:20; Isaiah 10:6, 7, 12. ¹⁴Psalms 50:21; 1 John 2:16.

5. The perfectly wise, righteous, and gracious God often allows his own children for a time to experience a variety of temptations and the sinfulness of their own hearts. He does this to chastise them for their former sins or to make them aware of the hidden strength of the corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts so that they may be humbled. He also does this to lead them to a closer and more constant dependence on him to sustain them, to make them more cautious about all future circumstances that may lead to sin, and for other just and holy purposes.¹⁵ So whatever happens to any of his elect happens by his appointment, for his glory, and for their good.¹⁶

¹⁵2 Chronicles 32:25, 26, 31; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9. ¹⁶Romans 8:28.

6. God, as the righteous judge, sometimes blinds and hardens wicked and ungodly people because of their sins.¹⁷ He withholds his grace from them, by which they could have been enlightened in their understanding and had their hearts renewed.¹⁸ Not only that, but sometimes he also takes away the gifts they already had¹⁹ and exposes them to situations that their corrupt natures turn into opportunities for sin.²⁰ Moreover, he gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan,²¹ so that they harden themselves in response to the same influences that God uses to soften others.²²

¹⁷Romans 1:24-26, 28; Romans 11:7, 8. ¹⁸Deuteronomy 29:4. ¹⁹Matthew 13:12. ²⁰Deuteronomy 2:30; 2 Kings 8:12, 13. ²¹Psalms 81:11, 12; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. ²²Exodus 8:15, 32; Isaiah 6:9, 10; 1 Peter 2:7, 8.

7. The providence of God in a general way includes all creatures, but in a special way it takes care of his church and arranges all things to its good.²³

²³1 Timothy 4:10; Amos 9:8, 9; Isaiah 43:3-5.

Chapter 6

The Fall of Mankind, and Sin and Its Punishment

1. God created humanity upright and perfect. He gave them a righteous law that would have led to life if they had kept it but threatened death if they broke it.¹ Yet they did not remain for long in this position of honor. Satan used the craftiness of the serpent to overcome Eve, who then seduced Adam. Adam acted without any outside compulsion and deliberately transgressed the law of their creation and the command given to them by eating the forbidden fruit.² God was

pleased, in keeping with his wise and holy counsel, to permit this act, because he had purposed to direct it for his own glory.

¹Genesis 2:16, 17. ²Genesis 3:12, 13; 2 Corinthians 11:3.

2. By this sin our first parents fell from their original righteousness and communion with God. We fell in them, and through this, death came upon all.³ All became dead in sin⁴ and completely defiled in all the capabilities and parts of soul and body.⁵

³Romans 3:23. ⁴Romans 5:12ff. ⁵Titus 1:15; Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10-19.

3. By God's appointment, they were the root and the representatives of the whole human race. Because of this, the guilt of their sin was accounted, and their corrupt nature passed on, to all their offspring who descended from them by ordinary procreation.⁶ Their descendants are now conceived in sin⁷ and are by nature children of wrath,⁸ the servants of sin, and partakers of death⁹ and all other miseries—spiritual, temporal, and eternal—unless the Lord Jesus sets them free.¹⁰

⁶Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22, 45, 49. ⁷Psalms 51:5; Job 14:4. ⁸Ephesians 2:3.

⁹Romans 6:20; 5:12. ¹⁰Hebrews 2:14, 15; 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

4. All actual transgressions arise from this first corruption.¹¹ By it we are thoroughly biased against, and disabled and antagonistic toward all that is good, and we are completely inclined toward all that is evil.¹²

¹¹James 1:14, 15; Matthew 15:19. ¹²Romans 8:7; Colossians 1:21.

5. During this life, this corruption of nature remains in those who are regenerated.¹³ Even though it is pardoned and put to death through Christ, yet both this corruption of nature and all actions arising from it are truly and actually sin.¹⁴

¹³Romans 7:18,23; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8. ¹⁴Romans 7:23-25; Galatians 5:17.

Chapter 7

God's Covenant

1. Though rational creatures are responsible to obey God as their Creator, the distance between God and these creatures is so great that they could never have attained the reward of life except by God's voluntary condescension. He has been pleased to express this through a covenant framework.¹

¹Luke 17:10; Job 35:7, 8.

2. Since humanity brought itself under the curse of the law by its fall, it pleased the Lord to make a covenant of grace.² In this covenant he freely offers to sinners life and salvation through Jesus

Christ. On their part he requires faith in him, that they may be saved,³ and promises to give his Holy Spirit to all who are ordained to eternal life, to make them willing and able to believe.⁴

²Genesis 2:17; Galatians 3:10; Romans 3:20, 21. ³Romans 8:3; Mark 16:15, 16; John 3:16.

⁴Ezekiel 36:26, 27; John 6:44, 45; Psalms 110:3.

3. This covenant is revealed in the gospel. It was revealed first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation through the seed of the woman.⁵ After that, it was revealed step by step until the full revelation of it was completed in the New Testament.⁶ This covenant is based on the eternal covenant transaction between the Father and the Son concerning the redemption of the elect.⁷ Only through the grace of this covenant have those saved from among the descendants of fallen Adam obtained life and blessed immortality. Humanity is now utterly incapable of being accepted by God on the same terms on which Adam was accepted in his state of innocence.⁸

⁵Genesis 3:15. ⁶Hebrews 1:1. ⁷2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; ⁸Hebrews 11:6, 13; Romans 4:1, 2ff.; Acts 4:12; John 8:56.

Chapter 8

Christ the Mediator

1. God was pleased, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between them, to be the mediator between God and humanity.¹ God chose him to be prophet,² priest,³ and king,⁴ and to be head and savior of the church,⁵ the heir of all things,⁶ and judge of the world.⁷ From all eternity, God gave to the Son a people to be his offspring. In time these people would be redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified by him.⁸

¹Isaiah 42:1; 1 Peter 1:19, 20. ²Acts 3:22. ³Hebrews 5:5, 6. ⁴Psalms 2:6; Luke 1:33. ⁵Ephesians 1:22, 23. ⁶Hebrews 1:2. ⁷Acts 17:31. ⁸Isaiah 53:10; John 17:6; Romans 8:30.

2. The Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, is truly and eternally God. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, having the same substance and equal with him who made the world and who sustains and governs everything he has made. When the fullness of time came, he took upon himself human nature, with all the essential properties and common weaknesses of it⁹ but without sin.¹⁰ He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The Holy Spirit came down upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her. Thus, he was born of a woman from the tribe of Judah, a descendant of Abraham and David in fulfillment of the Scriptures.¹¹ Two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without converting one into the other or mixing them together to produce a different or blended nature. This person is truly God and truly man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and humanity.¹²

⁹John 1:14; Galatians 4:4. ¹⁰Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:14, 16, 17; Hebrews 4:15. ¹¹Matthew 1:22, 23; Luke 1:27, 31, 35. ¹²Romans 9:5; 1 Timothy 2:5.

3. The Lord Jesus, in his human nature united in this way to the divine in the person of the Son, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit beyond measure.¹³ He had in himself all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.¹⁴ The Father was pleased to make all fullness dwell in him¹⁵ so that—being holy, harmless, undefiled,¹⁶ and full of grace and truth¹⁷—he was thoroughly qualified to carry out the office of mediator and guarantor.¹⁸ He did not take this office upon himself but was called to it by his Father,¹⁹ who put all power and judgment in his hand and commanded him to carry them out.²⁰

¹³Psalms 45:7; Acts 10:38; John 3:34. ¹⁴Colossians 2:3. ¹⁵Colossians 1:19. ¹⁶Hebrews 7:26.
¹⁷John 1:14. ¹⁸Hebrews 7:22. ¹⁹Hebrews 5:5. ²⁰John 5:22, 27; Matthew 28:18; Acts 2:36.

4. The Lord Jesus most willingly undertook this office.²¹ To discharge it, he was born under the law²² and perfectly fulfilled it. He also experienced the punishment that we deserved and that we should have endured and suffered.²³ He was made sin and a curse for us.²⁴ He endured extremely heavy sorrows in his soul and extremely painful sufferings in his body.²⁵ He was crucified and died and remained in a state of death, yet his body did not decay.²⁶ On the third day he arose from the dead²⁷ with the same body in which he suffered.²⁸ In this body he also ascended into heaven,²⁹ where he sits at the right hand of his Father, interceding.³⁰ He will return to judge men and angels at the end of the age.³¹

²¹Psalms 40:7, 8; Hebrews 10:5-10; John 10:18. ²²Gal 4:4; Matthew 3:15. ²³Galatians 3:13; Isaiah 53:6; 1 Peter 3:18. ²⁴2 Corinthians 5:21. ²⁵Matthew 26:37, 38; Luke 22:44; Matthew 27:46. ²⁶Acts 13:37. ²⁷1 Corinthians 15:3, 4. ²⁸John 20:25, 27. ²⁹Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9-11.
³⁰Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24. ³¹Acts 10:42; Romans 14:9, 10; Acts 1:11; 2 Peter 2:4.

5. The Lord Jesus has fully satisfied the justice of God, obtained reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those given to him by the Father.³² He has accomplished these things by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he once for all offered up to God through the eternal Spirit.³³

³²John 17:2; Hebrews 9:15. ³³Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:14; Romans 3:25, 26.

6. The price of redemption was not actually paid by Christ till after his incarnation. Yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefit of it was imparted to the elect in every age since the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices that revealed him and pointed to him as the seed that would bruise the serpent's head³⁴ and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.³⁵ He is the same yesterday and today and forever.³⁶

³⁴1 Corinthians 4:10; Hebrews 4:2; 1 Peter 1:10, 11. ³⁵Revelation 13:8. ³⁶Hebrews 13:8.

7. In his work of mediation, Christ acts according to both natures, by each nature doing what is appropriate to itself. Even so, because of the unity of the person, that which is appropriate to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person under the designation of the other nature.³⁷

³⁷John 3:13; Acts 20:28.

8. To all those for whom Christ has obtained eternal redemption, he certainly and effectually applies and imparts it. He intercedes for them,³⁸ unites them to himself by his Spirit, and reveals to them in and by his Word the mystery of salvation. He persuades them to believe and obey³⁹ and governs their hearts by his Word and Spirit.⁴⁰ He overcomes all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom,⁴¹ using methods and ways that are perfectly consistent with his wonderful and unsearchable governance. All these things are by free and absolute grace, apart from any condition for obtaining it that is foreseen in them.⁴²

³⁸John 6:37; John 10:15, 16; John 17:9; Romans 5:10. ³⁹John 17:6; Ephesians 1:9; 1 John 5:20.

⁴⁰Romans 8:9, 14. ⁴¹Psalms 110:1; 1 Corinthians 15:25, 26. ⁴²John 3:8; Ephesians 1:8.

9. This office of mediator between God and humanity is appropriate for Christ alone, who is the prophet, priest, and king of the church of God. This office may not be transferred from him to anyone else, either in whole or in part.⁴³

⁴³1 Timothy 2:5.

10. The number and character of these offices is essential. Because we are ignorant, we need his prophetic office.⁴⁴ Because we are alienated from God and imperfect in the best of our service, we need his priestly office to reconcile us and present us to God as acceptable.⁴⁵ Because we are hostile and utterly unable to return to God, and so that we can be rescued and made secure from our spiritual enemies, we need his kingly office to convince, subdue, draw, sustain, deliver, and preserve us for his heavenly kingdom.⁴⁶

⁴⁴John 1:18. ⁴⁵Colossians 1:21; Galatians 5:17. ⁴⁶John 16:8; Psalms 110:3; Luke 1:74, 75.

Chapter 9

Free Will

1. God has endowed human will with natural liberty and power to act on choices so that it is neither forced nor inherently bound by its nature to do good or evil.¹

¹Matthew 17:12; James 1:14; Deuteronomy 30:19.

2. Humanity in the state of innocence had freedom and power to will and to do what was good and well-pleasing to God.² Yet this condition was unstable, so that humanity could fall from it.³

²Ecclesiastes 7:29. ³Genesis 3:6.

3. Humanity, by falling into a state of sin, has completely lost all ability to choose any spiritual good that accompanies salvation.⁴ Thus, people in their natural^a state are absolutely opposed to spiritual good and dead in sin,⁵ so that they cannot convert themselves by their own strength or prepare themselves for conversion.⁶

^awithout the Spirit

⁴Romans 5:6; Romans 8:7. ⁵Ephesians 2:1, 5. ⁶Titus 3:3-5; John 6:44.

4. When God converts sinners and transforms them into the state of grace, he frees them from their natural bondage to sin⁷ and by his grace alone enables them to will and to do freely what is spiritually good.⁸ Yet because of their remaining corruption, they do not perfectly nor exclusively will what is good but also will what is evil.⁹

⁷Colossians 1:13; John 8:36. ⁸Philippians 2:13. ⁹Romans 7:15, 18, 19, 21, 23.

5. Only in the state of glory is the will made perfectly and unchangeably free toward good alone.¹⁰

¹⁰Ephesians 4:13.

Chapter 10

Effectual Calling

1. In God's appointed and acceptable time, he is pleased to call effectually,¹ by his Word and Spirit, those he has predestined to life. He calls them out of their natural state of sin and death to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ.² He enlightens their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God.³ He takes away their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh.⁴ He renews their wills and by his almighty power turns them to good and effectually draws them to Jesus Christ.⁵ Yet he does all this in such a way that they come completely freely, since they are made willing by his grace.⁶

¹Romans 8:30; Romans 11:7; Ephesians 1:10, 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 14. ²Ephesians 2:1-6.

³Acts 26:18; Ephesians 1:17, 18. ⁴Ezekiel 36:26. ⁵Deuteronomy 30:6; Ezekiel 36:27; Ephesians 1:19. ⁶Psalms 110:3; Song of Solomon 1:4.

2. This effectual call flows from God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in those called. Neither does the call arise from any power or action on their part;⁷ they are totally passive in it. They are dead in sins and trespasses until they are made alive and renewed by the Holy Spirit.⁸ By this they are enabled to answer this call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it. This response is enabled by a power that is no less than that which raised Christ from the dead.⁹

⁷2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 2:8. ⁸1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:5; John 5:25. ⁹Ephesians 1:19, 20.

3. Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit,¹⁰ who works when and where and how he pleases.¹¹ The same is true of every elect person who is incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.

¹⁰John 3:3, 5, 6. ¹¹John 3:8.

4. Those who are not elected will not and cannot truly come to Christ and therefore cannot be saved, because they are not effectually drawn by the Father.¹² They may even be called by the ministry of the Word and may receive some ordinary working of the Spirit without being saved.¹³ Much less can any be saved who do not receive the Christian religion, no matter how diligently they live their lives according to the light of nature and the teachings of the religion they profess.¹⁴

¹²John 6:44, 45, 65; 1 John 2:24, 25. ¹³Matthew 22:14; Matthew 13:20, 21; Hebrews 6:4, 5.

¹⁴Acts 4:12; John 4:22; John 17:3.

Chapter 11

Justification

1. Those God effectually calls he also freely justifies.¹ He does this, not by infusing righteousness into them but by pardoning their sins and accounting and accepting them as righteous.² He does this for Christ's sake alone and not for anything produced in them or done by them.³ He does not impute faith itself, the act of believing, or any other gospel obedience to them as their righteousness. Instead, he imputes Christ's active obedience to the whole law and passive obedience in his death as their whole and only righteousness by faith.⁴ This faith is not self-generated; it is the gift of God.⁵

¹Romans 3:24; 8:30. ²Romans 4:5-8; Ephesians 1:7. ³1 Corinthians 1:30, 31; Romans 5:17-19.

⁴Philippians 3:8, 9; Ephesians 2:8-10. ⁵John 1:12; Romans 5:17.

2. Faith that receives and rests on Christ and his righteousness is the only instrument of justification.⁶ Yet it does not occur by itself in the person justified, but it is always accompanied by every other saving grace. It is not a dead faith but works through love.⁷

⁶Romans 3:28. ⁷Galatians 5:6; James 2:17, 22, 26.

3. By his obedience and death, Christ fully paid the debt of all those who are justified. He endured in their place the penalty they deserved. By this sacrifice of himself in his bloodshed on the cross, he legitimately, really, and fully satisfied God's justice on their behalf.⁸ Yet their justification is based entirely on free grace, because he was given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction were accepted in their place. These things were done freely, not because of anything in them,⁹ so that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God would be glorified in the justification of sinners.¹⁰

⁸Hebrews 10:14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Isaiah 53:5, 6. ⁹Romans 8:32; 2 Corinthians 5:21. ¹⁰Romans 3:26; Ephesians 1:6,7; 2:7.

4. From all eternity God decreed to justify all the elect,¹¹ and in the fullness of time Christ died for their sins and rose again for their justification.¹² Nevertheless, they are not justified personally until the Holy Spirit actually applies Christ to them at the proper time.¹³

¹¹Galatians 3:8; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Timothy 2:6. ¹²Romans 4:25. ¹³Colossians 1:21, 22; Titus 3:4-7.

5. God continues to forgive the sins of those who are justified.¹⁴ Even though they can never fall from a state of justification,¹⁵ they may fall under God's fatherly displeasure because of their sins.¹⁶ In that condition they will not usually have the light of his face restored to them until they humble themselves, confess their sins, plead for pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.¹⁷

¹⁴Matthew 6:12; 1 John 1:7, 9. ¹⁵John 10:28. ¹⁶Psalms 89:31-33. ¹⁷Psalms 32:5; Psalms 51; Matthew 26:75.

6. In all these ways, the justification of believers under the Old Testament was exactly the same as the justification of believers under the New Testament.¹⁸

¹⁸Galatians 3:9; Romans 4:22-24.

Chapter 12

Adoption

1. God has granted that all those who are justified would receive the grace of adoption, in and for the sake of his only Son Jesus Christ.¹ By this they are counted among the children of God and enjoy the freedom and privileges of that relationship.² They inherit his name,³ receive the spirit of adoption,⁴ have access to the throne of grace with boldness, and are enabled to cry "Abba, Father!"⁵ They are given compassion,⁶ protected,⁷ provided for,⁸ and chastened by him as a father.⁹ Yet they are never cast off¹⁰ but are sealed for the day of redemption¹¹ and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.¹²

¹Ephesians 1:5; Galatians 4:4, 5. ²John 1:12; Romans 8:17. ³2 Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 3:12. ⁴Romans 8:15. ⁵Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 2:18. ⁶Psalms 103:13. ⁷Proverbs 14:26. ⁸1 Peter 5:7. ⁹Hebrews 12:6. ¹⁰Isaiah 54:8, 9; Lamentations 3:31. ¹¹Ephesians 4:30. ¹²Hebrews 1:14; 6:12.

Chapter 13

Sanctification

1. Those who are united to Christ and effectually called and regenerated have a new heart and a new spirit created in them through the power of Christ's death and resurrection. They are also further sanctified, really and personally,¹ through the same power, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them.² The dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed,³ and the various evil desires that arise from it are more and more weakened and put to death.⁴ At the same time, those called and regenerated are more and more enlivened and strengthened in all saving graces⁵ so that they practice true holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.⁶

¹Acts 20:32; Romans 6:5, 6. ²John 17:17; Ephesians 3:16-19; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-23. ³Romans 6:14. ⁴Galatians 5:24. ⁵Colossians 1:11. ⁶2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14.

2. This sanctification extends throughout the whole person,⁷ though it is never completed in this life. Some corruption remains in every part.⁸ From this arises a continual and irreconcilable war, with the desires of the flesh against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.⁹

⁷1 Thessalonians 5:23. ⁸Romans 7:18, 23. ⁹Galatians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:11.

3. In this war, the remaining corruption may greatly prevail for a time.¹⁰ Yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part overcomes.¹¹ So the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. They pursue a heavenly life, in gospel obedience to all the commands that Christ as Head and King has given them in his Word.¹²

¹⁰Romans 7:23. ¹¹Romans 6:14. ¹²Ephesians 4:15, 16; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 7:1.

Chapter 14

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.¹ Faith is ordinarily produced by the ministry of the Word.² By this same ministry and by the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper, prayer, and other means appointed by God, faith is increased and strengthened.³

¹2 Corinthians 4:13; Ephesians 2:8. ²Romans 10:14, 17. ³Luke 17:5; 1 Peter 2:2; Acts 20:32.

2. By this faith Christians believe to be true everything revealed in the Word, recognizing it as the authority of God himself.⁴ They also perceive that the Word is more excellent than every other writing and everything else in the world,⁵ because it displays the glory of God in his attributes, the excellence of Christ in his nature and offices, and the power and fullness of the Holy Spirit in his activities and operations. So they are enabled to entrust their souls to the truth believed.⁶ They respond differently according to the content of each particular passage—obeying the commands,⁷ trembling at the threatenings,⁸ and embracing the promises of God for this life and the one to come.⁹ But the principal acts of saving faith focus directly on Christ—accepting, receiving, and resting upon him alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.¹⁰

⁴Acts 24:14. ⁵Psalms 27:7-10; Psalms 119:72. ⁶2 Timothy 1:12. ⁷John 14:14. ⁸Isaiah 66:2.

⁹Hebrews 11:13. ¹⁰John 1:12; Acts 16:31; Galatians 2:20; Acts 15:11.

3. This faith may exist in varying degrees so that it may be either weak or strong.¹¹ Yet even in its weakest form, it is different in kind or nature (like all other saving graces) from the faith and common grace of temporary believers.¹² Therefore, faith may often be attacked and weakened, but it gains the victory.¹³ It matures in many to the point that they attain full assurance through Christ,¹⁴ who is both the founder and perfecter of our faith.¹⁵

¹¹Hebrews 5:13, 14; Matthew 6:30; Romans 4:19, 20. ¹²Peter 1:1. ¹³Ephesians 6:16; 1 John 5:4, 5. ¹⁴Hebrews 6:11, 12; Colossians 2:2. ¹⁵Hebrews 12:2.

Chapter 15

Repentance to Life and Salvation

1. Some of the elect are converted after their early years, having lived in the natural^a state for a time and served various evil desires and pleasures. God gives these repentance to life as part of their effectual calling.¹

^awithout the Spirit

¹Titus 3:2-5.

2. There is no one who does good and does not sin.² Even the best may fall into great sins and offenses, through the power and deceitfulness of the corruption in them, along with the strength of temptation. Therefore, God has mercifully provided in the covenant of grace that believers who sin and fall will be renewed through repentance to salvation.³

²Ecclesiastes 7:20. ³Luke 22:31, 32.

3. This saving repentance is a gospel grace⁴ in which those who are made aware by the Holy Spirit of the many evils of their sin, by faith in Christ humble themselves for it with godly sorrow, hatred of it, and self-loathing.⁵ They pray for pardon and strength of grace and determine and endeavor by provisions from the Spirit to live before God in a well-pleasing way in everything.⁶

⁴Zechariah 12:10; Acts 11:18. ⁵Ezekiel 36:31; 2 Corinthians 7:11. ⁶Psalms 119:6, 128.

4. Repentance must continue throughout our lives, because of the body of death and its activities. So it is everyone's duty to repent of each specific, known sin specifically.⁷

⁷Luke 19:8; 1 Timothy 1:13, 15.

5. God has made full provision through Christ in the covenant of grace to preserve believers in their salvation. Thus, although there is no sin so small that it is undeserving of damnation,⁸ yet there is no sin so great that it will bring damnation on those who repent.⁹ This makes the constant preaching of repentance necessary.

⁸Romans 6:23. ⁹Isaiah 1:16-18; 55:7.

Chapter 16

Good Works

1. Good works are only those works that God has commanded in his holy Word.¹ Works that do not have this warrant are invented by people out of blind zeal or on a pretense of good intentions and are not truly good.²

¹Micah 6:8; Hebrews 13:21. ²Matthew 15:9; Isaiah 29:13.

2. These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruit and evidence of a true and living faith.³ Through good works believers express their thankfulness,⁴ strengthen their assurance,⁵ build up their brothers and sisters, adorn the profession of the gospel,⁶ stop the mouths of opponents, and glorify God.⁷ Believers are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,⁸ so that they bear fruit leading to holiness and have the outcome, eternal life.⁹

³James 2:18, 22. ⁴Psalms 116:12, 13. ⁵1 John 2:3, 5; 2 Peter 1:5-11. ⁶Matthew 5:16. ⁷1 Timothy 6:1; 1 Peter 2:15; Philippians 1:11. ⁸Ephesians 2:10. ⁹Romans 6:22.

3. Their ability to do good works does not arise at all from themselves but entirely from the Spirit of Christ.¹⁰ To enable them to do good works, they need—in addition to the graces they have already received—an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do his good pleasure.¹¹ Yet this is no reason for them to grow negligent, as if they were not required to perform any duty without a special motion of the Spirit. Instead, they should be diligent to stir up the grace of God that is in them.¹²

¹⁰John 15:4, 5. ¹¹2 Corinthians 3:5; ¹²Philippians 2:13; Philippians 2:12; Hebrews 6:11, 12; Isaiah 64:7.

4. Those who attain the greatest heights of obedience possible in this life are far from being able to merit reward by going beyond duty^a or to do more than God requires. Instead, they fall short of much that is their duty to do.¹³

^a *supererogate*

¹³Job 9:2, 3; Galatians 5:17; Luke 17:10.

5. We cannot, even by our best works, merit pardon of sin or eternal life from God's hand, due to the huge disproportion between our works and the glory to come, and the infinite distance between us and God. By these works we can neither benefit God nor satisfy him for the debt of our former sins.¹⁴ When we have done all we can, we have only done our duty and are unprofitable servants. Since our good works are good, they must proceed from his Spirit;¹⁵ and since they are performed by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection that they cannot withstand the severity of God's punishment.¹⁶

¹⁴Romans 3:20; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 4:6. ¹⁵Galatians 5:22, 23. ¹⁶Isaiah 64:6; Psalms 143:2.

6. Nevertheless, believers are accepted through Christ, and thus their good works are also accepted in him.¹⁷ This acceptance does not mean our good works are completely blameless and irreproachable in God's sight. Instead, God views them in his Son, and so he is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, even though it is accompanied by many weaknesses and imperfections.¹⁸

¹⁷Ephesians 1:6; 1 Peter 2:5. ¹⁸Matthew 25:21, 23; Hebrews 6:10.

7. Works done by unregenerate people may in themselves be commanded by God and useful to themselves and others.¹⁹ Yet they do not come from a heart purified by faith²⁰ and are not done in a right manner according to the Word²¹ nor with a right goal—the glory of God.²² Therefore, they are sinful and cannot please God. They cannot qualify anyone to receive grace from God,²³ and yet their neglect is even more sinful and displeasing to God.²⁴

¹⁹2 Kings 10:30; 1 Kings 21:27, 29. ²⁰Genesis 4:5; Hebrews 11:4, 6. ²¹1 Corinthians 13:1.

²²Matthew 6:2, 5. ²³Amos 5:21, 22; Romans 9:16; Titus 3:5. ²⁴Job 21:14, 15; Matthew 25:41-43.

Chapter 17

The Perseverance of the Saints

1. Those God has accepted in the Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect can neither totally nor finally fall from a state of grace. They will certainly persevere in grace to the end and be eternally saved, because the gifts and callings of God are irrevocable. Therefore, he still brings about and nourishes in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit that lead to immortality.¹ Even though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet these things will never be able to move the elect from the foundation and rock to which they are anchored by faith. The felt sight of the light and love of God may be clouded and obscured from them for a time through their unbelief and the temptations of Satan.² Yet God is still the same; they will certainly be kept by the power of God for salvation, where they will enjoy their purchased possession. For they are engraved on the palms of his hands, and their names have been written in the book of life from all eternity.³

¹John 10:28, 29; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 John 2:19. ²Psalms 89:31, 32; 1 Corinthians 11:32. ³Malachi 3:6.

2. This perseverance of the saints does not depend on their own free will but on the unchangeableness of the decree of election,⁴ which flows from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father. It is based on the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ and union with him,⁵ the oath of God,⁶ the abiding of his Spirit, the seed of God within them,⁷ and the nature of the covenant of grace.⁸ The certainty and infallibility of their perseverance is based on all these things.

⁴Romans 8:30 Romans 9:11, 16. ⁵Romans 5:9, 10; John 14:19. ⁶Hebrews 6:17, 18. ⁷1 John 3:9.

⁸Jeremiah 32:40.

3. They may fall into grievous sins and continue in them for a time, due to the temptation of Satan and the world, the strength of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of means of their preservation.⁹ In so doing, they incur God's displeasure and grieve his Holy Spirit;¹⁰ their graces and comforts become impaired;¹¹ their hearts are hardened and their consciences wounded;¹² they hurt and scandalize others and bring temporary judgments on themselves.¹³ Nevertheless, they will renew their repentance and be preserved through faith in Christ Jesus to the end.¹⁴

⁹Matthew 26:70, 72, 74. ¹⁰Isaiah 64:5, 9; Ephesians 4:30. ¹¹Psalms 51:10, 12. ¹²Psalms 32:3, 4. ¹³2 Samuel 12:14. ¹⁴Luke 22:32, 61, 62.

Chapter 18

Assurance of Grace and Salvation

1. Temporary believers and other unregenerate people may deceive themselves in vain with false hopes and fleshly presumptions that they have God's favor and salvation, but their hope will perish.¹ Yet those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus and love him sincerely, endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may be certainly assured in this life that they are in a state of grace. They may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God,² and this hope will never make them ashamed.³

¹Job 8:13, 14; Matthew 7:22, 23. ²1 John 2:3; 3:14, 18, 19, 21, 24; 5:13. ³Romans 5:2, 5.

2. This certainty is not merely an inconclusive or likely persuasion based on a fallible hope. It is an infallible assurance of faith⁴ founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel.⁵ It is also built on the inward evidence of those graces of the Spirit about which promises are made.⁶ It is further based on the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God.⁷ As a fruit of this assurance, our hearts are kept both humble and holy.⁸

⁴Hebrews 6:11, 19. ⁵Hebrews 6:17, 18. ⁶2 Peter 1:4, 5, 10, 11. ⁷Romans 8:15, 16. ⁸1 John 3:1-3.

3. This infallible assurance is not such an essential part of faith *that it is always fully experienced alongside faith*, but true believers may wait a long time and struggle with many difficulties before obtaining it.⁹ Yet with the enabling of the Spirit to know the things freely given to them by God, they may attain this assurance using ordinary means appropriately without any extraordinary revelation.¹⁰ Therefore, it is the duty of all to be as diligent as possible to make their calling and election sure. In this way their hearts may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience. These effects are the natural fruits of this assurance.¹¹ Thus, it does not at all encourage believers to be negligent.¹²

⁹Isaiah 50:10; Psalms 88; 77:1-12. ¹⁰1 John 4:13; Hebrews 6:11, 12. ¹¹Romans 5:1, 2, 5; 14:17; Psalms 119:32. ¹²Romans 6:1, 2; Titus 2:11, 12, 14.

4. True believers may in various ways have the assurance of their salvation shaken, decreased, or temporarily lost. This may happen because they neglect to preserve it¹³ or fall into some specific sin that wounds their conscience and grieves the Spirit.¹⁴ It may happen through some unexpected or forceful temptation¹⁵ or when God withdraws the light of his face and allows even those who fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light.¹⁶ Yet they are never completely lacking the seed of God,¹⁷ the life of faith,¹⁸ love of Christ and the brethren, sincerity of heart, or conscience concerning their duty. Out of these graces, through the work of the Spirit, this assurance may at the proper time be revived.¹⁹ In the meantime, they are kept from utter despair through them.²⁰

¹³Song of Solomon 5:2, 3, 6. ¹⁴Psalms 51:8, 12, 14. ¹⁵Psalms 116:11; 77:7, 8; 31:22; ¹⁶Psalms 30:7. ¹⁷1 John 3:9. ¹⁸Luke 22:32. ¹⁹Psalms 42:5, 11. ²⁰Lamentations 3:26-31.

Chapter 19

The Law of God

1. God gave Adam a law of comprehensive obedience written in his heart and a specific precept not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹ By these God obligated him and all his descendants to personal, total, exact, and perpetual obedience.² God promised life if Adam fulfilled it and threatened death if he broke it, and he gave Adam the power and ability to keep it.³

¹Genesis 1:27; Ecclesiastes 7:29. ²Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:10, 12.

2. The same law that was first written in the human heart continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall.⁴ It was delivered by God on Mount Sinai in ten commandments and was written in two tables. The first four commandments contain our duty to God and the other six our duty to humanity.⁵

⁴Romans 2:14, 15. ⁵Deuteronomy 10:4.

3. In addition to this law—usually called the moral law—God was pleased to give the people of Israel ceremonial laws, containing several typological ordinances. In some ways these concerned worship, by prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits.⁶ In other ways they revealed various instructions about moral duties.⁷ Since all of these ceremonial laws were appointed only until the new order^a arrived, they are now abolished and taken away by Jesus Christ. As the true Messiah and the only law-giver, he was empowered by the Father to do this.⁸

^a *reformation*

⁶Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:17. ⁷1 Corinthians 5:7. ⁸Colossians 2:14, 16, 17; Ephesians 2:14, 16.

4. To Israel he also gave various judicial laws, which ceased at the same time their nation ended. These laws no longer obligate anyone as part of that institution. Only their general principles of justice continue to have moral value.⁹

⁹1 Corinthians 9:8-10.

5. The moral law forever requires obedience of everyone, both those who are justified as well as others.¹⁰ This obligation arises not only because of its content but also because of the authority of God the Creator who gave it.¹¹ Nor does Christ in any way dissolve this obligation in the Gospel; instead he greatly strengthens it.¹²

¹⁰Romans 13:8-10; James 2:8, 10-12. ¹¹James 2:10, 11. ¹²Matthew 5:17-19; Romans 3:31.

6. True believers are not under the law as a covenant of works, to be justified or condemned by it.¹³ Yet it is very useful to them and to others as a rule of life that informs them of the will of God and their duty. It directs and obligates them to live according to its precepts. It also exposes the sinful corruptions of their natures, hearts, and lives. As they examine themselves in light of the law, they come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred of sin,¹⁴ along with a clearer view of their need for Christ and the perfection of his obedience. The law is also useful to the regenerate to restrain their corruptions because it forbids sin. The punishment threatened by the law shows them what even their sins deserve and what troubles they may expect in this life due to their sin, even though they are freed from the curse and undiminished severity of it. The promises of the law likewise show them God's approval of obedience and the blessings they may expect when they keep it, even though these blessings are not owed to them by the law as a covenant of works. If people do good and refrain from evil because the law encourages good and discourages evil, that does not indicate that they are under the law and not under grace.¹⁵

¹³Romans 6:14; Galatians 2:16; Romans 8:1; 10:4. ¹⁴Romans 3:20; 7:7, etc; ¹⁵Romans 6:12-14; 1 Peter 3:8-13.

7. These uses of the law are not contrary to the grace of the Gospel but are in sweet harmony with it,¹⁶ for the Spirit of Christ subdues and enables the human will to do freely and cheerfully what the will of God as revealed in the law requires.¹⁷

¹⁶Galatians 3:21. ¹⁷Ezekiel 36:27.

Chapter 20

The Gospel and the Extent of Its Grace

1. Because the covenant of works was broken by sin and was unable to confer life, God was pleased to proclaim the promise of Christ, the seed of the woman, as the means of calling the elect and producing in them faith and repentance.¹ In this promise the gospel in its substance was revealed and made effectual for the conversion and salvation of sinners.²

¹Genesis 3:15. ²Revelation 13:8.

2. This promise of Christ and of salvation through him is revealed in the Word of God alone.³ The works of creation and providence, when assisted only by the light of nature, do not reveal Christ or grace through him, even in a general or obscure way.⁴ Much less are those without the revelation of him in the promise or gospel enabled to attain saving faith or repentance by seeing these works of God.⁵

³Romans 1:17. ⁴Romans 10:14,15,17. ⁵Proverbs 29:18; Isaiah 25:7; Isaiah 60:2, 3.

3. The gospel has been revealed to sinners in various times and in different places, along with the promises and precepts describing the obedience it requires. The particular nations and individuals who are granted this revelation are chosen solely according to the sovereign will and good pleasure of God.⁶ This choice does not depend on any promise to those who demonstrate good stewardship of their natural abilities based on common light received apart from the gospel. No one has ever done this nor can anyone do so.⁷ Therefore, in every age the preaching of the gospel to individuals and nations has been granted in widely varying degrees of expansion and contraction, according to the counsel of the will of God.

⁶Psalms 147:20; Acts 16:7. ⁷Romans 1:18-32.

4. The gospel is the only outward means of revealing Christ and saving grace, and it is abundantly sufficient for that purpose. Yet to be born again, brought to life or regenerated, those who are dead in trespasses also must have an effectual, irresistible work of the Holy Spirit in every part of their souls to produce in them a new spiritual life.⁸ Without this no other means will bring about their conversion to God.⁹

⁸Psalms 110:3; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 1:19, 20. ⁹John 6:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6.

Chapter 21

Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience

1. The liberty Christ has purchased for believers under the gospel is found in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, and the severity and curse of the law.¹ It also includes their deliverance from this present evil age,² bondage to Satan,³ the dominion of sin,⁴ the suffering of afflictions,⁵ the fear and sting of death, the victory of the grave,⁶ and everlasting damnation.⁷ In addition, it includes their free access to God and their obedience to him, not from slavish fear⁸ but from a childlike love and willing mind.⁹

All these liberties were also enjoyed in their essence by believers under the law.¹⁰ But under the New Testament the liberty of Christians is further expanded. They are free from the yoke of the ceremonial law to which the Jewish congregation was subjected; they have greater confidence of access to the throne of grace; and they have a fuller supply of God's free Spirit than believers under the law usually experienced.¹¹

¹Galatians 3:13. ²Galatians 1:4. ³Acts 26:18. ⁴Romans 8:3. ⁵Romans 8:28. ⁶1 Corinthians 15:54-57. ⁷2 Thessalonians 1:10. ⁸Romans 8:15. ⁹Luke 1:73-75; 1 John 4:18. ¹⁰Galatians 3:9, 14. ¹¹John 7:38, 39; Hebrews 10:19-21.

2. God alone is Lord of the conscience,¹² and he has left it free from human doctrines and commandments that are in any way contrary to his word or not contained in it.¹³ So, believing such doctrines, or obeying such commands out of conscience, is a betrayal of true liberty of conscience.¹⁴ Requiring implicit faith or absolute and blind obedience destroys liberty of conscience and reason as well.¹⁵

¹²James 4:12; Romans 14:4. ¹³Acts 4:19, 29; 1 Corinthians 7:23; Matthew 15:9. ¹⁴Colossians 2:20, 22, 23. ¹⁵1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 1:24.

3. Those who use Christian liberty as an excuse to practice any sin or nurture any sinful desire pervert the main objective of the grace of the gospel to their own destruction,¹⁶ and they completely destroy the purpose of Christian liberty. This purpose is that we, having been delivered from the hands of all our enemies, may serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our lives.¹⁷

¹⁶Romans 6:1, 2. ¹⁷Galatians 5:13; 2 Peter 2:18, 21.

Chapter 22

Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day

1. The light of nature demonstrates that there is a God who has lordship and sovereignty over all. He is just and good and does good to everyone. Therefore, he should be feared, loved, praised, called on, trusted in, and served—with all the heart and all the soul and all the strength.¹ But the acceptable way to worship the true God is instituted by him,² and it is delimited by his own revealed will. Thus, he may not be worshipped according to human imagination or inventions or the suggestions of Satan, nor through any visible representations, nor in any other way that is not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.³

¹Jeremiah 10:7; Mark 12:33. ²Deuteronomy 12:32. ³Exodus 20:4-6.

2. Religious worship is to be given to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and to him alone⁴—not to angels, saints, or any other creatures.⁵ Since the fall, worship is not to be given without a mediator⁶ nor through any mediation other than of Christ alone.⁷

⁴Matthew 4:9, 10; John 5:23; Matthew 28:19. ⁵Romans 1:25; Colossians 2:18; Revelation 19:10. ⁶John 14:6. ⁷1 Timothy 2:5.

3. Prayer with thanksgiving is an element of natural worship and so is required by God of everyone.⁸ But to be acceptable, it must be made in the name of the Son,⁹ by the help of the Spirit,¹⁰ according to his will.¹¹ It must be accompanied by understanding, reverence, humility,

fervor, faith, love, and perseverance. Prayer with others must be in a language that is understood.¹²

⁸Psalms 95:1-7; 65:2. ⁹John 14:13, 14. ¹⁰Romans 8:26. ¹¹1 John 5:14. ¹²1 Corinthians 14:16, 17.

4. Prayer is to be made for lawful things and for all kinds of people who are alive now or will live later.¹³ But prayer should not be made for the dead¹⁴ nor for those known to have sinned the sin that leads to death.¹⁵

¹³1 Timothy 2:1, 2; 2 Samuel 7:29. ¹⁴2 Samuel 12:21-23. ¹⁵1 John 5:16.

5. The elements of religious worship of God include reading the Scriptures,¹⁶ preaching and hearing the Word of God,¹⁷ teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord,¹⁸ as well as the administration of baptism¹⁹ and the Lord's supper.²⁰ They must be performed out of obedience to him, with understanding, faith, reverence, and godly fear. Also, purposeful acts of humbling^a with fasting²¹ and times of thanksgiving should be observed on special occasions in a holy and religious manner.²²

^a*solemn humiliation*

¹⁶1 Timothy 4:13. ¹⁷2 Timothy 4:2; Luke 8:18. ¹⁸Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19. ¹⁹Matthew 28:19, 20. ²⁰1 Corinthians 11:26. ²¹Esther 4:16; Joel 2:12. ²²Exodus 15:1-19, Psalms 107.

6. Under the gospel, neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship is now restricted to or made more acceptable by the place where it is done or toward which it is directed. Instead, God is to be worshipped everywhere in spirit and in truth²³—daily²⁴ in each family²⁵ and privately by each individual.²⁶ Also, more formal^b worship is to be performed in public assemblies, and these must not be carelessly or deliberately neglected or forsaken, when God by his word or providence calls us to them.²⁷

^b*solemn*

²³John 4:21; Malachi 1:11; 1 Timothy 2:8. ²⁴Matthew 6:11; Psalms 55:17. ²⁵Acts 10:2.

²⁶Matthew 6:6. ²⁷Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42.

7. It is the law of nature that in general a portion of time specified by God should be set apart for the worship of God. So by his Word, in a positive-moral and perpetual commandment that obligates everyone in every age, he has specifically appointed one day in seven for a sabbath to be kept holy to him.²⁸ From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ the appointed day was the last day of the week. After the resurrection of Christ it was changed to the first day of the week, which is called the Lord's Day.²⁹ This day is to be kept to the end of the age as the Christian Sabbath, since the observance of the last day of the week has been abolished.

²⁸Exodus 20:8. ²⁹1 Corinthians 16:1, 2; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10.

8. The Sabbath is kept holy to the Lord when people have first prepared their hearts appropriately and arranged their everyday affairs in advance. Then they observe a holy rest all day from their own works, words and thoughts about their secular employment and recreation.³⁰ Not only that, but they also fill the whole time with public and private acts of worship and the duties of necessity and mercy.³¹

³⁰Isaiah 58:13; Nehemiah 13:15-22. ³¹Matthew 12:1-13.

Chapter 23

Lawful Oaths and Vows

1. A lawful oath is an element of religious worship in which a person swearing in truth, righteousness, and judgment solemnly calls God to witness what is sworn¹ and to judge the one swearing according to the truth or falsity of it.²

¹Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 10:20; Jeremiah 4:2. ²2 Chronicles 6:22, 23.

2. People should swear by the name of God alone and only with the utmost holy fear and reverence. Therefore to swear an empty or ill-advised oath by that glorious and awe-inspiring name, or to swear at all by anything else, is sinful and to be abhorred.³ Yet in weighty and significant matters, an oath is authorized by the Word of God to confirm truth and end all conflict.⁴ So a lawful oath should be taken when it is required by legitimate authority in such circumstances.⁵

³Matthew 5:34, 37; James 5:12. ⁴Hebrews 6:16; 2 Corinthians 1:23. ⁵Nehemiah 13:25.

3. Whoever takes an oath authorized by the Word of God should consider with due gravity the seriousness of such a weighty act and to affirm nothing in it except what one knows to be true. For the Lord is provoked by ill-advised, false, and empty oaths, and because of them this land mourns.⁶

⁶Leviticus 19:12; Jeremiah 23:10.

4. An oath is to be expressed in the plain and ordinary meaning of the words, without any ambiguity or mental reservation.⁷

⁷Psalms 24:4.

5. A vow must not be made to any creature but to God alone. Vows should be made and performed with the most conscientious care and faithfulness.⁸ However, Roman Catholic monastical vows of perpetual single life,⁹ professed poverty,¹⁰ and obedience to monastic rules, are by no means steps to higher perfection. Instead, they are superstitious and sinful snares in which Christians may not entangle themselves.¹¹

⁸Psalms 76:11; Genesis 28:20-22. ⁹1 Corinthians 7:2, 9. ¹⁰Ephesians 4:28. ¹¹Matthew 19:11.

Chapter 24

Civil Government

1. God, the supreme Lord and King of the whole world, has ordained civil authorities to be under him and over the people, for his own glory and the public good. For this purpose he has armed them with the power of the sword, to defend and encourage those who do good and to punish evildoers.¹

¹Romans 13:1-4.

2. Christians may lawfully accept and carry out the duties of public office when called to do so. In performing their office they must especially maintain justice and peace,² according to the wholesome laws of each kingdom or other political entity. To carry out these duties they are authorized now under the New Testament to wage war in just and necessary situations.³

²2 Samuel 23:3; Psalms 82:3, 4. ³Luke 3:14.

3. Because civil authorities are established by God for the purposes stated, we should submit in the Lord to them in everything lawful that they require. We should submit not only for fear of punishment but also for the sake of conscience.⁴ We ought to make requests and prayers for kings and everyone in authority, so that under their rule we may live a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty.⁵

⁴Romans 13:5-7; 1 Peter 2:17. ⁵1 Timothy 2:1, 2.

Chapter 25

Marriage

1. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman. A man must not have more than one wife nor a woman more than one husband at the same time.¹

¹Genesis 2:24; Malachi 2:15; Matthew 19:5, 6.

2. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife,² for the increase of humanity with legitimate offspring,³ and for the prevention of immorality.⁴

²Genesis 2:18. ³Genesis 1:28. ⁴1 Corinthians 7:2, 9.

3. Everyone who is able to give rational consent may marry.⁵ Yet Christians are to marry in the Lord.⁶ Therefore, those who profess the true religion should not marry unbelievers or idolaters. Nor should the godly be unequally yoked by marrying those who lead evil lives or hold to damnable heresy.⁷

⁵Hebrews 13:4; 1 Timothy 4:3. ⁶1 Corinthians 7:39. ⁷Nehemiah 13:25-27.

4. Marriage should not occur within the degrees of blood relationship or kinship that are forbidden in the Word.⁸ These incestuous marriages can never be made lawful, so that the individuals may live together as husband and wife, by any human law or consent of the parties involved.⁹

⁸Leviticus 18. ⁹Mark 6:18; 1 Corinthians 5:1.

Chapter 26

The Church

1. The catholic—that is, universal—church may be called invisible with respect to the internal work of the Spirit and truth of grace. It consists of the full number of the elect who have been, are, or will be gathered into one under Christ her head. The church is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.¹

¹Hebrews 12:23; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:10, 22, 23; Ephesians 5:23, 27, 32.

2. All people throughout the world who profess the faith of the gospel and obedience to God through Christ in keeping with the gospel are and may be called visible saints,² as long as they do not destroy their own profession by any foundational errors or unholy living. All local^a congregations ought to be made up of these.³

^a*particular* (rendered “local” throughout this

Chapter)

²1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 11:26. ³Romans 1:7; Ephesians 1:20-22.

3. The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error.⁴ Some have degenerated so much that they have ceased to be churches of Christ and have become synagogues of Satan.⁵ Nevertheless, Christ always has had and will have in this world to the very end a kingdom of those who believe in him and profess his name.⁶

⁴1 Corinthians 5; Revelation 2; Revelation 3. ⁵Revelation 18:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12.

⁶Matthew 16:18; Psalms 72:17; Psalm 102:28; Revelation 12:17.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the church. By the Father’s appointment, all authority is conferred on him in a supreme and sovereign manner to call, institute, order and govern the church.⁷ The Pope of Roman Catholicism cannot in any sense be head of the church; rather, he is the antichrist, the man of lawlessness, and the son of destruction, who exalts himself in the church against Christ and all that is called God. The Lord will destroy him with the brightness of his coming.⁸

⁷Colossians 1:18; Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11, 12. ⁸2 Thessalonians 2:2-9.

5. In exercising the authority entrusted to him, the Lord Jesus, through the ministry of his Word, by his Spirit, calls to himself out of the world those who are given to him by his Father.⁹ They are called so that they will live before him in all the ways of obedience that he prescribes for them in his Word.¹⁰ Those who are called he commands to live together in local^a societies, or churches, for their mutual edification and the fitting conduct of public worship that he requires of them while they are in the world.¹¹

⁹John 10:16; John 12:32. ¹⁰Matthew 28:20. ¹¹Matthew 18:15-20.

6. The members of these churches are saints by calling, visibly displaying and demonstrating in and by their profession and life their obedience to the call of Christ.¹² They willingly agree to live together according to Christ's instructions, giving themselves to the Lord and to one another by the will of God, with the stated purpose of following the ordinances of the Gospel.¹³

¹²Romans. 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2. ¹³Acts 2:41, 42; Acts 5:13, 14; 2 Corinthians 9:13.

7. To every church gathered in this way, conforming to Christ's mind as declared in his Word, he has given all power and authority that is in any way necessary to conduct the form of worship and discipline that he has instituted for them to observe. He has also given them commands and rules to use and carry out that power rightly and properly.¹⁴

¹⁴Matthew 18:17, 18; 1 Corinthians 5:4, 5; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8.

8. A local church, gathered and fully organized according to the mind of Christ, consists of officers and members. The officers appointed by Christ are overseers or elders, and deacons. They are to be chosen and set apart by the church called and gathered in this way, for the distinctive purpose of administering ordinances and for carrying out any other power or duty Christ entrusts them with or calls them to. This pattern is to be continued to the end of the age.¹⁵

¹⁵Acts 20:17, 28; Philippians 1:1.

9. Christ has appointed the way to call someone prepared and gifted by the Holy Spirit to the office of overseer or elder in a church. He must be chosen by the collective vote of the church itself.¹⁶ He must then be solemnly set apart by fasting and prayer. The body of elders of the church must lay hands on him if there are any already in place.¹⁷ A deacon must be chosen by the same kind of vote and set apart by prayer and laying on of hands as well.¹⁸

¹⁶Acts 14:23. ¹⁷1 Timothy 4:14. ¹⁸Acts 6:3, 5, 6.

10. The work of pastors is to give constant attention to the service of Christ in his churches in the ministry of the word and prayer. They are to watch over the souls of church members as those who must give an account to Christ.¹⁹ The churches to whom they minister must not only give them all due respect but also must share with them from all their good things according to their ability.²⁰ They must do this so their pastors may have a comfortable living without having to be entangled in secular matters²¹ and so they can show hospitality to others.²² This is required by

the law of nature and by the explicit command of our Lord Jesus, who has ordained that those who preach the Gospel should earn their living by the Gospel.²³

¹⁹Acts 6:4; Hebrews 13:17. ²⁰1 Timothy 5:17, 18; Galatians 6:6, 7. ²¹2 Timothy 2:4. ²²1 Timothy 3:2. ²³1 Corinthians 9:6-14.

11. Although overseers or pastors of churches must be engaged in preaching the word as a function of their office, yet the work of preaching the word is not totally restricted to them. Others who are also gifted and prepared by the Holy Spirit for it and approved and called by the church may and should preach.²⁴

²⁴Acts 11:19-21; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.

12. All believers are obligated to join themselves to local^a churches when and where they have the opportunity. Likewise, all who are admitted to the privileges of a church are also subject to the discipline^b and government of it, according to the rule of Christ.²⁵

^b*censures*

²⁵1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15.

13. Church members who have been offended and have performed their duty concerning the person by which they are offended, should not disrupt any church action or absent themselves from the assemblies of the church or administration of any ordinances because of the offence at any of their fellow members. Instead, they should look to Christ in the further action of the church.²⁶

²⁶Matthew 18:15-17; Ephesians 4:2, 3.

14. Every church and all its members are obligated to pray continually for the good and prosperity of all churches of Christ in every place.²⁷ They must also—at every opportunity within the limits of their stations and callings—exercise their gifts and graces to benefit every church. Also, when churches are raised up by the providence of God, insofar as they enjoy opportunity and favorable circumstances for it, they should have fellowship among themselves for their peace, growth in love, and mutual edification.²⁸

²⁷Ephesians 6:18; Psalms 122:6. ²⁸Romans 16:1, 2; 3 John 8-10.

15. Cases of difficulties or differences—doctrinal or administrative—may arise, touching on the peace, union, and edification of all churches in general or an individual church. Other cases may occur when a member or members of a church are injured in or by disciplinary action that is not in keeping with truth and order. In such cases, it is according to the mind of Christ for many churches having fellowship together to meet through their messengers to consider and give their advice concerning the issue in dispute and to report their advice to all the churches concerned.²⁹ Nevertheless, these assembled messengers are not entrusted with any church authority, strictly speaking. Neither do they have any jurisdiction over the churches themselves, to exercise any

discipline either over any churches or individuals or to impose their decision on the churches or officers.³⁰

²⁹Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23, 25. ³⁰2 Corinthians 1:24; 1 John 4:1.

Chapter 27

The Communion of Saints

1. All saints are united to Jesus Christ their head by his Spirit and by faith, although this does not make them one person with him. They have fellowship in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory.¹ Since they are united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces² and are obligated to carry out these duties, both public and private, in an orderly way to promote their mutual good, both in the inner and outer aspects of their lives.³

¹1 John 1:3; John 1:16; Philippians 3:10; Romans 6:5, 6. ²Ephesians 4:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. ³1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14; Romans 1:12; 1 John 3:17, 18; Galatians 6:10.

2. Saints by profession are obligated to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in worshiping God and in performing other spiritual services that promote their mutual edification.⁴ They are to aid each other in material things according to their various abilities and needs.⁵ They should especially exercise communion in the relationships they have in their families⁶ and churches.⁷ Yet the rule of the gospel also directs them, as God provides opportunity, to extend their sharing to the whole household of faith, to all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, their communion with one another as saints does not take away or infringe on the title or individual ownership that people have in their goods and possessions.⁸

⁴Hebrews 10:24, 25; Hebrews 3:12, 13. ⁵Acts 11:29, 30. ⁶Ephesians 6:4. ⁷1 Corinthians 12:14-27. ⁸Acts 5:4; Ephesians 4:28.

Chapter 28

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

1. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution. They are appointed by the Lord Jesus the only lawgiver and are to be continued in his church to the end of the age.¹

¹Matthew 28:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:26.

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.²

²Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 4:1.

Chapter 29

Baptism

1. Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ. To those baptized it is a sign of their fellowship with him in his death and resurrection, of their being grafted into him,¹ of remission of sins,² and of submitting themselves to God through Jesus Christ to live and walk in newness of life.³

¹Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27. ²Mark 1:4; Acts 22:16. ³Romans 6:4.

2. Those who personally profess repentance toward God and faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.⁴

⁴Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36, 37; Acts 2:41; Acts 8:12; Acts 18:8.

3. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, in which the individual is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.⁵

⁵Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 8:38.

4. Immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary for this ordinance to be administered properly.⁶

⁶Matthew 3:16; John 3:23.

Chapter 30

The Lord's Supper

1. The supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by him the same night he was betrayed. It is to be observed in his churches to the end of the age as a perpetual remembrance and display of the sacrifice of himself in his death.¹ It is given for the confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits of Christ's death, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, and their further engagement in and to all the duties they owe him. The supper is to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Christ and each other.²

¹1 Corinthians 11:23-26. ²1 Corinthians 10:16, 17, 21.

2. In this ordinance Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor is any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sin of the living or the dead. It is only a memorial of the one offering Christ made of himself on the cross once for all.³ It is also a spiritual offering of the highest possible praise to God for that sacrifice.⁴ Thus, the Roman Catholic sacrifice of the mass (as they call it) is utterly detestable and detracts from Christ's own sacrifice, which is the only propitiation for all the sins of the elect.

³Hebrews 9:25, 26, 28. ⁴1 Corinthians 11:24; Matthew 26:26, 27.

3. In this ordinance the Lord Jesus has appointed his ministers to pray and to bless the elements of bread and wine and in this way to set them apart from a common to a holy use. They are to take and break the bread, take the cup, and give both to the communicants while also participating themselves.⁵

⁵1 Corinthians 11:23-26, etc.

4. Denying the cup to the people, worshipping the elements, lifting them up or carrying them around for adoration, or reserving them for some pretended religious use are all contrary to the nature of this ordinance and to the institution of Christ.⁶

⁶Matthew 26:26-28; 15:9; Exodus 20:4, 5.

5. The outward elements in this ordinance, properly set apart for the use ordained by Christ, have such a relationship to Christ crucified that they are sometimes called—truly though figuratively—by the names of the things they represent, that is, the body and blood of Christ.⁷ However, in substance and nature they still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before.⁸

⁷1 Corinthians 11:27. ⁸1 Corinthians 11:26-28.

6. The doctrine commonly called transubstantiation teaches that the substance of bread and wine is changed into the substance of Christ's body and blood by the consecration of a priest or some other way. This doctrine is hostile not only to Scripture⁹ but also to common sense and reason. It destroys the nature of the ordinance and has been and is the cause of many kinds of superstitions and of gross idolatries.¹⁰

⁹Acts 3:21; Luke 14:6, 39. ¹⁰1 Corinthians 11:24, 25.

7. Worthy recipients who outwardly partake of the visible elements in this ordinance also by faith inwardly receive and feed on Christ crucified and all the benefits of his death. They do so really and truly, yet not physically and bodily but spiritually. The body and blood of Christ are not present bodily or physically in the ordinance but spiritually to the faith of believers, just as the elements themselves are present to their outward senses.¹¹

¹¹1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-26.

8. All ignorant and ungodly people are unfit to enjoy communion with Christ and are thus unworthy of the Lord's table. As long as they remain in this condition, they cannot partake of these holy mysteries or be admitted to the Lord's table without committing a great sin against Christ.¹² All those who receive the supper unworthily are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, eating and drinking judgment on themselves.¹³

¹²2 Corinthians 6:14, 15. ¹³1 Corinthians 11:29; Matthew 7:6.

Chapter 31

The State of Humanity after Death and the Resurrection of the Dead

1. The bodies of those who have died return to dust and undergo destruction.¹ But their souls neither die nor sleep, because they have an immortal character^a, and immediately return to God who gave them.² The souls of the righteous are then made perfect in holiness and are received into paradise. There they are with Christ and behold the face of God in light and glory while they wait for the full redemption of their bodies.³ The souls of the wicked are thrown into hell, where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved for the judgment of the great day.⁴ The Scripture recognizes no place other than these two for souls separated from their bodies.

^a*subsistence*; i.e., souls are not subject to dissolution

¹Genesis 3:19; Acts 13:36. ²Ecclesiastes 12:7. ³Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:1, 6,8; Philippians 1:23; Hebrews 12:23. ⁴Jude 6, 7; 1 Peter 3:19; Luke 16:23, 24.

2. At the last day, those saints who are found alive will not sleep but will be changed.⁵ All the dead will be raised up with the very same bodies, not different ones,⁶ though they will have different qualities. Their bodies will be united again to their souls forever.⁷

⁵1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17. ⁶Job 19:26, 27. ⁷1 Corinthians 15:42, 43.

3. The bodies of the unjust will be raised by the power of Christ to dishonor. By his Spirit the bodies of the just will be raised to honor and will be made like Christ's own glorious body.⁸

⁸Acts 24:15; John 5:28, 29; Philippians 3:21.

Chapter 32

The Last Judgment

1. God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ,¹ to whom all power and judgment is given by the Father. In that day, the apostate angels will be judged.² So also, all people who have lived on the earth will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds and to receive a reckoning according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.³

¹Acts 17:31; John 5:22, 27. ²1 Corinthians 6:3; Jude 6. ³2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:10, 12; Matthew 25:32-46.

2. God's purpose for appointing this day is to manifest the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of his justice in the eternal damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient.⁴ For at that time the righteous will go into everlasting life and receive fullness of joy and glory with everlasting rewards in the presence of the Lord. But the wicked, who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, will be thrown into everlasting torments⁵ and punished with everlasting destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power.⁶

⁴Romans 9:22, 23. ⁵Matthew 25:21, 34; 2 Timothy 4:8. ⁶Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:48; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

3. Christ desires that we be firmly convinced that a day of judgment will come, both to deter everyone from sin⁷ and to comfort the godly more fully in their adversity.⁸ For this reason, he has determined to keep the day secret, to encourage people to shake off any fleshly security and always to be watchful, because they do not know the hour when the Lord will come⁹ and so that they may always be prepared to say, "Come Lord Jesus; come quickly. Amen."¹⁰

⁷2 Corinthians 5:10, 11. ⁸2 Thessalonians 1:5-7. ⁹Mark 13:35-37; Luke 12:35, 36. ¹⁰Revelation 22:20.