



Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church

STATEMENT OF FAITH

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Updated January 2016 to include:

Lay Consecration

Remaining Elements in the Lord's Supper

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The Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church STATEMENT OF FAITH

Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd, not only laid down His life for His sheep, so that they might be saved, but He continues to feed and nourish them with the bread and water of life, so that they may be sustained in His Word and truth to live with Him eternally. However, He and His apostles found it necessary to warn that wolves would enter into the flock, and men would arise from within the flock itself who would speak perverse things to draw away disciples after them.¹ This has proved to be the case throughout the history of the church.

Because of the confusion caused in the church by such false teachers, claiming to speak in the name of Christ, the church has, from time to time, found it necessary to draw up clear statements of faith, setting forth the truth of Christ and rejecting opposing errors. In this way members of the flock of Christ have been helped to distinguish the truth from the errors of their time.

In our own time numerous errors have again arisen in the church, through people who have claimed to speak the Word of Christ, with the result that many have been drawn away after them and many have been confused. It is obvious that serious changes have taken place, not only in the teachings of the church, but in its worship, and its whole attitude to Christ and His Word. In the doctrinally confused world in which we live, many people find themselves in churches where they are uneasy with much that is taught and done. It would seem, therefore, that once again a simple statement of faith, which carefully sets forth the truth of Christ in opposition to modern errors, is called for, so that humble people of God may be helped to see the truth of Christ, and to judge between it and opposing errors. If this is done faithfully, we believe that the true sheep of the Good Shepherd will recognise in it the voice of their Shepherd and therefore be moved to follow Him.²

We believe that this statement of faith is in no sense an expression of a new faith, but simply the faith of the historic Christian church, which was taught by Jesus and His apostles, as set forth in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and as confessed in the Creeds and confessional writings of the true church of God throughout history.

¹ Acts 20:30.

² John 10:27.

The Holy Scriptures

Inspiration

In order to be faithful to Christ, our Good Shepherd, we acknowledge only one source and norm for all the teachings of the church, namely, the books of the Old and New Testaments. These we confidently confess to be the true Word of God, written by prophets, apostles and evangelists under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, so that all the thoughts and words in them are the very Word of God. We believe that this inspiration of the Holy Spirit moved the writers to write what they did, and that this was an inspiration, not simply of the authors themselves, but of the words that they wrote, so that every word or thought expressed by the writers proceeded from God Himself.³ Although every word of the Bible was written by men, nevertheless, every word is God's Word. Christ, the incarnate Word of God, and Holy Scripture, the written Word of God, are inseparably bound together, so that every attack upon Holy Scripture, or unfaithfulness to it is an attack upon Christ Himself. God cannot lie.

Inerrancy

The fact that all Scripture, every word, is given by inspiration of God, and that God's Word is truth,⁴ means that the Scriptures are verbally inspired, and absolutely inerrant. By this we mean that the original autograph copies were in all their parts the infallible truth of God, free from all mistakes, errors, or contradictions whatever, not only in theological or spiritual matters, but also in factual, moral, historical, geographical, or other earthly matters.⁵ The divine origin of Scripture⁶ means that we must accept what the Scriptures teach about themselves. Thus we believe that the Scriptures are without error, not because we have found them to be so by careful study, but because that is the express claim of God's Word. This is a matter of faith, not of demonstration. To hold that the Scriptures can contain errors or conflicting theologies is either to deny that they are God's Word, or to accuse God of lying and deceit.

Authority

The fact that the Holy Scriptures differ from all other writings, in that they alone are the inspired Word of God, necessarily means that they alone are the sole norm from which all teachings of the church are to be taken, and by which all teachers

³ 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21.

⁴ John 17:17.

⁵ 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; John 10:35; John 14:26; John 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Peter 4:11.

⁶ 2 Timothy 3:16.

and teachings of the church must be judged and evaluated. This authority of the Holy Scriptures is the authority of God Himself, so that to heed and obey the inspired Scriptures is to heed and obey God. Since divine inspiration extends to all its words and passages,⁷ the divine authority of Scripture must extend to all the words and thoughts that are expressed in Scripture.

Central Message

The central message of Scripture is the Gospel, justification, the heart of which is justification through faith in Christ, through which God graciously saves sinners.⁸ While this clearly means that no passage of Scripture should ever be interpreted in a way that is contrary to these central truths of God’s Word, it does not mean that it is only the Gospel-content of Scripture that makes it the Word of God. Scripture is God’s Word because it is inspired by Him, and because of its content. The claim that only those things that obviously treat of Christ, touch upon the Gospel, or are derived from the Gospel in this narrow sense are authoritative for the church, clearly rejects the divine authority of the individual words and passages of Scripture. “Gospel reductionism” maintains that only the passages that deal with Christ are authoritative. Though Christ, in the right sense, is a canon within the canon, “Gospel reductionism” uses Scripture against Scripture. For example, God’s creation of the world, the Trinity, eternal damnation etc., cannot be derived from the Gospel in this narrow sense. One cannot even say that the Lord’s Supper is derived from the Gospel. Rather, all the central truths of the Gospel are in the Lord’s Supper. For the same reason it is wrong to hold that passages that more obviously treat of Christ have more divine authority than passages that treat of Him less obviously.

The Divine and Human Natures of Scripture

As Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, has both a divine and a human nature, so the written Word of God has a divine and a human nature. The Scriptures are altogether the Word of God by virtue of their origin, proceeding from God Himself. However, they are also truly human, in the sense that they have been written by human beings in human language according to the rules of human speech and grammar, and in their individual styles.⁹ It is a dangerous error to limit the divine nature of Scripture, as if some passages or thoughts were merely the notions of men, and not in fact the truth of God, and to hold that the false notions of the human authors were allowed to

⁷ 2 Timothy 3:16.

⁸ John 5:39; Acts 10:43; 2 Timothy 3:15; Romans 3:21-28.

⁹ Deuteronomy 30:11-14.

intrude into the text. This completely undermines the divine authority of Scripture, just as the claim that Christ sinned according to His human nature would undermine the entire Gospel.

Principles in Expounding the Scriptures

The divine inspiration and authority of Scripture necessarily implies that the Holy Scriptures do not depend on any human interpretation.¹⁰ The true meaning and intent of any passage of Scripture must be determined, not by theologians of the church, popes or councils, but by the Scriptures themselves. The Scriptures are their own interpreters.¹¹ They must be allowed to shine in their own clear light.¹²

Since God and His Word do not dissemble or deceive, there can be only one intended meaning of any one passage.¹³

Since the Scriptures have been given in human languages, no exposition dare ignore the grammar or the syntax of individual sentences.¹⁴ A faithful teacher of Scripture will use all resources at his disposal to determine the meanings of the words as the first readers understood them. Though human reason must never be the mistress, we affirm that scholarly tools should be used to serve God's Word, which is their master, in the careful exposition of the Scriptures.

No passage dare be interpreted in conflict with its nearer or remote context, for the context of each passage must determine its meaning and application.

When the Scriptures say that certain things happened, no one has the right to say that they actually did not happen.

The literal sense of the words must be taken as the intended meaning unless there are indications that a figurative meaning was intended. When language is figurative, the point of comparison in the simile, metaphor, or parable, must be adhered to. Care must be taken not to interpret symbolic language, such as "a hundred and forty four thousand" in the book of Revelation in a literal sense.¹⁵

Since God's Word is its own interpreter, the Scriptures must be expounded in harmony with themselves. No passage should be understood in a way that contradicts another clear statement of the Scriptures. It is wrong to import one's own assumptions when expounding the Scriptures.

¹⁰ 2 Peter 1:20-21.

¹¹ Compare Matthew 22:31-33 and Exodus 3:6; compare John 3:14-17 with Numbers 21:4-9.

¹² 1 Corinthians 2:13.

¹³ Proverbs 26:24; Psalm 12:6.

¹⁴ Compare the argument that rests on the use of "seed" in the singular in Galatians 3:16.

¹⁵ Compare "signified" in Revelation 1:1.

The divine authority and truthfulness of Scripture extend to all legitimate inferences and deductions that follow from the inspired words themselves. It is just as wrong to restrict the meaning and application of a passage more narrowly than God intended, as it is to apply a passage more widely than God intended.

Furthermore, to accept the Scriptures as our only guide and rule means that human conjectures concerning the historical conditions applying at the time of writing dare not be allowed to determine the interpretation of any passage in a way that is not indicated in the text itself.

Since the Bible is unfolding revelation, the expositor must observe the difference between the “shadows” of the Old Testament and their further explanation and fulfilment in the New. There is freedom from the ceremonial regulations of the Old Testament after their fulfilment by Christ.

All exposition must observe the difference between Law and Gospel. All Scripture must be understood with Jesus Christ as its centre. No teaching may contradict the central article of justification through faith alone.¹⁶

We assert, as an article of faith, the external, objective, propositional reliability and clarity of the Biblical text.¹⁷ When a passage seems obscure, the alleged obscurity dare never be assumed to be in the Scriptures themselves, but in our ignorance, limited understanding, or elsewhere in us. All doctrine must be based on clear passages, and passages that seem difficult¹⁸ must be explained in the light of the clear.

Prophecy in the Scriptures often had the prediction of future events as its focus. Prophecy must be understood in the light of its fulfilment.

While it is true that there are questions that have not been clearly answered in God’s Word, such as traducianism (that the soul of an individual is derived from his or her parents) and trichotomy (that man consists of body, soul and spirit) in the article of Man, it is a rejection of the authority of Scripture to claim that matters on which theologians cannot agree are therefore open questions. When anyone finds some passages unclear, he must seek to understand them in the light of those that are clear, and remember that the fault for his lack of clarity may be his own limited understanding.

¹⁶ Romans 3:21-28.

¹⁷ Psalm 19:7-9; Proverbs 1:4, 6.

¹⁸ Compare 2 Peter 3:16.

We reject the teaching that the apocryphal books, the decisions of councils, the traditions of the fathers, or the pronouncements of church leaders are a valid source and norm of faith.¹⁹

We reject any teaching that the writers of the Bible expressed in their writings erroneous views of the world and other errors, even in slight matters.

We reject any teaching that there can be errors in “the human side of the Scriptures”. For since the human words of the Scriptures are all God’s words, that would attribute error directly to God.²⁰

We reject the teaching that the Scriptures are not the Word of God, but merely contain the Word of God.²¹

We reject the teaching that the Scriptures in themselves lack the power to convert sinners.²²

We reject higher critical theories about the authorship of the books of Moses, multiple Isaiahs, an unhistorical Jonah, a late and fictitious writer of Daniel, and so on.

We reject the so-called quest for the historical Jesus, which disregards much of what the Gospels say about Jesus.

Though the portions of the Scripture that reveal the saving work of Jesus Christ are the heart of God’s Word, and no interpretation of Scripture dare contradict the central teaching of justification through faith, we reject the teaching that only the portions of the Scriptures that reveal the saving work of Jesus Christ are authoritative, and also the teaching that only the articles that can be derived directly from the saving work of Jesus Christ are authoritative.²³

We reject concessions to the theory of evolution, which disregard the biblical account of creation and the account of the flood at the time of Noah, for Jesus Himself endorsed the truthfulness of the creation and the flood account.²⁴

We reject the teaching that the Scriptures are the source of what should be believed only in as far as they agree with human reason.²⁵

We reject the teaching that new revelations are a source and standard of what must be believed.²⁶

We reject the teaching that the Scriptures are incomplete, or that, because they are allegedly obscure, the interpretation of the church or of human reason is needed to clarify them.²⁷

We reject every attempt to allow human reason, rationalistic principles such as “the finite is not capable of the infinite”, personal experience, present needs, philosophical assumptions, belief that miracles cannot happen, and dogmas proclaimed by the church or church hierarchy without scriptural support, both in themselves, and when they determine the interpretation.²⁸

¹⁹ Deuteronomy 4:2; Luke 16:27; John 8:31-32; Mark 7:13; Colossians 2:8.

²⁰ Proverbs 30:6; Matthew 4:4; John 12:48; John 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:12-15; Galatians 6:16; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:16.

²¹ Matthew 5:18-19.

²² John 6:63; John 17:20; Romans 1:16; James 1:21.

²³ John 5:39; 1 Peter 1:9-10; John 10:35; Luke 24:25; 2 Timothy 3:16.

²⁴ Matthew 24:37-39.

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 1:21; Colossians 2:8; 2 Corinthians 10:5; 1 Corinthians 2:4,5,14; 1 Timothy 6:20-21.

²⁶ Hebrews 1:1-2; Galatians 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Luke 16:31.

²⁷ Psalm 19:8; Psalm 119:105, 130; John 5:39; John 20:31; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 3:3-4.

²⁸ Galatians 1:8.

Even if some authors of the Scriptures may have held imperfect world views and had imperfect understanding, we reject the assumption that their inadequate notions obtrude into Scripture.

For more detail on the Scriptures as the source of our faith, see *The Word Shall Stand*, articles 1-12. For more detail on higher criticism, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 28.

THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR FAITH

The Triune God

On the basis of the Holy Scriptures we believe that the three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are God and Lord;²⁹ and that there are not three Gods or Lords, but one God and Lord. Each of these persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, has one and the same divine essence from eternity, is equal in power and majesty, and has qualities, works, and honour that can be attributed only to God. While each had a special function in the plan of redemption, yet, according to Scripture all three persons have shared in creation, salvation, and sanctification. Through faith in this God we have eternal life.³⁰ Since we can know God only by the way in which He has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures, all those who reject this revelation of God, or define Him in a way that is contrary to His revelation of Himself, must be regarded as having a false god and being outside the Christian church.

It is not possible to distinguish the persons of the Trinity in their operations in the world such as creation, giving life, raising the dead, sanctification and inspiration. The persons are distinguished only by the way in which the persons are related to each other. The Son is eternally begotten by the Father.

Much of what is said of the Holy Spirit is said also of Jesus Christ. Each teaches us, and each is our “Advocate” with the Father. We dwell in Them, and They in us. Even the charismatic gifts to believers are common gifts of the three persons, not just of the Holy Spirit.³¹

No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has revealed Him. In a similar way, the Spirit’s work is to reveal the Son to us.³² The person of the Spirit remains unrevealed in the sense that His person is not revealed by the other two persons beyond what the Scriptures tell us of His work in the world. As

²⁹ 1 Corinthians 8:6; Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; John 20:28; Romans 9:5; John 1:1-2; Mark 1:3; John 5:22-23; Hebrews 1:6; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18; 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 3:36; 1 John 2:23.

³⁰ 1 John 5:20; John 17:3.

³¹ 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.

³² John 16:14.

the Father sent the Son into the world, both the Father and the Son have sent the Spirit into the world.³³

The Son's unique work was to become a human being like us to redeem us. Whatever He did in His life here on earth was "for us men and for our salvation." The Spirit's unique work is to point us to Christ, and apply to us here and now the benefits of Jesus' redeeming work.³⁴ Jesus' humanity was conceived by the Spirit, and His ministry on earth was fulfilled as the One anointed (to be the Messiah, the Christ) by the Holy Spirit.³⁵ The Spirit still works through the Gospel.³⁶ When "Christ crucified" is proclaimed, the Spirit's work is being done. The Spirit is both the gift in baptism and the agent of its blessings.³⁷ The Spirit's work in us is God's work. So we worship the Trinity in unity. As children and heirs of God because of Jesus Christ our Lord, we give Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all praise and glory, for ever.

We reject the teaching that God is a material being, and not a Spirit.³⁸

We reject the teaching that God is not the only eternal Being, but that there are other eternal beings besides God.³⁹

We reject the teaching that God does not know everything that will happen.⁴⁰

We reject every reference to the Father as "she", every denial that Jesus was a male, and every attempt to call the Holy Spirit "she". Attempts to argue that the Spirit is feminine because the Hebrew word for "spirit" is feminine confuse grammatical gender and sex. For example, the Greek word for "spirit" is neuter, and the Latin word for "spirit" is masculine.

We reject the teaching that God is not present everywhere.⁴¹

We reject the teaching that the Son is not very God, and not "Jehovah".⁴²

We reject the teaching that the Holy Spirit is merely a power or influence of God, not true God, and not of the same divine essence with the Father and the Son.⁴³

We reject the teaching that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Son differently from the way in which He is the Spirit of the Father.⁴⁴

³³ John 15:26.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:2-5; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13.

³⁵ Acts 10:38.

³⁶ Titus 3:5; John 20:22-23.

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:13.

³⁸ Isaiah 57:15; John 4:24.

³⁹ Psalm 90:2; Romans 11:36; John 1:1-3.

⁴⁰ Hebrews 4:13; Psalm 139:1-4.

⁴¹ Acts 17:27-28; Isaiah 6:3; Psalm 139:7-13.

⁴² John 5:23; John 10:30; John 14:9; John 20:28; Romans 9:5; Romans 10:9-13; 1 John 2:23; 1 John 5:20.

⁴³ Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18; 2 Corinthians 13:14.

⁴⁴ John 15:26; Galatians 4:6; John 16:14-15.

The Natural Knowledge of God

We believe that all people have by nature a knowledge of God. People are able to know God from His works in nature and from their own consciences. However, because of the way in which sin has corrupted human nature, this natural knowledge is not sufficient to lead anyone to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.⁴⁵

We reject the teaching that human beings have no natural knowledge of God.⁴⁶

We reject the teaching that people can be saved through their natural knowledge of God, without God's revelation in the Gospel.⁴⁷

The Person of Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternally pre-existent, only Son of God, is of one substance with the Father.⁴⁸ Before He became man He was the Word, who was with God, and who was God, and who took part in the creation of all things. He was the Lord and focus of the Old Testament before His incarnation, as is shown by the many divine titles given to Him (Immanuel, Son of God, Almighty God, etc.), by the divine properties, attributes, or qualities that the Scriptures ascribe to Him (omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, etc.), by His divine works, and by the honour that is due to Him.

At the right time He assumed our human nature, to become a complete human being.⁴⁹ He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, without a human father, in the womb of the virgin Mary.⁵⁰ He is also of one substance with us in every respect, except for sin, and except for the consequences of sin.⁵¹ His intellectual, religious, social, and physical development was fully human.⁵² So also were the temptations that He faced, and the hunger, exhaustion, suffering, and death that He experienced in His humiliation. He has two distinct natures, divine and human.⁵³ These remain

⁴⁵ Romans 1:18-20; Romans 2:14-15; Romans 10:17; John 17:3; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:11-12; Romans 16:25; 1 Corinthians 1:18-30.

⁴⁶ Acts 17:27; Psalm 94:9; Psalm 10:1-3.

⁴⁷ John 1:18; John 17:3.

⁴⁸ John 10:30; John 1:1-2, 18; John 20:28 Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 1 John 5:20; Jeremiah 23:6; John 5:23; 1 Corinthians 15:47.

⁴⁹ John 1:14; Matthew 1:21; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14, 16, 17; Hebrews 4:15; Galatians 4:4-5; 1 Timothy 2:5; Matthew 16:13-16.

⁵⁰ Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:20.

⁵¹ John 1:14; Matthew 26:38; Hebrews 2:14-17; Hebrews 5:7-8; Romans 1:3; Ephesians 5:30; Luke 1:42.

⁵² Luke 2:52.

⁵³ Matthew 16:13-16; 1 Timothy 2:5-6.

unconfused,⁵⁴ and also inseparably united in one person, the one Christ, who is true God and true man. As we humbly acknowledge this mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, we observe that the doctrine of Jesus' true deity and humanity has always been an offence to human reason. Because of this personal union, it is rightly said, and it is so in deed and truth, that in Him God is man and man is God, that Mary bore the Son of God,⁵⁵ and that God redeemed us with His own blood.⁵⁶ During His humble life on earth He did not, as man, always or fully use the properties, attributes, or qualities that He possessed as God the Son.⁵⁷ He took the place of all sinners under the Law and fulfilled it perfectly instead of them,⁵⁸ and He took their place in sin, guilt, and punishment.⁵⁹ By His blood He has redeemed even those who deny Him.⁶⁰ God has given the human nature of the one person Jesus Christ properties, attributes, or qualities that human nature does not otherwise have.⁶¹

In His state of humiliation on earth Jesus did not, as a human being, always or fully use the divine properties, attributes, or qualities that He had received, and that were available to Him.⁶² However, now in His state of exaltation, as man, He fully uses them.⁶³ Through the personal union of two natures and through His exaltation, Jesus Christ, according to His human nature, has been placed at God's right hand, with all things under His feet. He now shares the rule over all things with the Father, and intercedes for us with the Father. He as man has received all power in heaven and on earth, and has become partaker of all divine majesty, honour, power, and glory.⁶⁴ His blood has the divine power to cleanse from sin;⁶⁵ and His body gives life.⁶⁶ As man He has received the authority to raise the dead and execute judgment.⁶⁷ He is present to His church on earth both as God and as man.⁶⁸

⁵⁴ Colossians 2:9.

⁵⁵ Luke 1:41.

⁵⁶ Acts 20:28; 1 John 1:7.

⁵⁷ Philippians 2:6-8; John 10:18; John 18:6.

⁵⁸ Matthew 3:15; Galatians 4:4-5; Romans 5:19.

⁵⁹ Matthew 27:46; Galatians 3:13.

⁶⁰ Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6; 2 Peter 2:1.

⁶¹ Matthew 28:18; John 5:27; Philippians 2:9; Acts 2:36.

⁶² Philippians 2:6-8; John 10:17; 18:6, 12; Mark 13:32.

⁶³ John 5:22, 26-27; John 6:54; Daniel 7:13-14; Ephesians 1:20-22; Matthew 9:6.8; Matthew 28:18.

⁶⁴ Ephesians 1:20-22; Matthew 28:18; Matthew 9:6-8; John 5:23.

⁶⁵ 1 John 1:7.

⁶⁶ John 6:51, 53-54, 57.

⁶⁷ John 5:21, 22, 26-27.

⁶⁸ Matthew 18:20; Matthew 28:20; Matthew 26:26-28.

We reject the teaching that Christ has only one nature, namely, the divine nature of the Son of God.⁶⁹

We reject the teaching that Jesus has only one nature, namely, the human nature; and the teaching that He has one nature as a mixture, or confusion, of divine and human.⁷⁰

We reject the teaching that Jesus Christ, as the Saviour and Mediator, is subordinate to the Father in essence, majesty, and glory.⁷¹

We reject every other attempt to divide the person of Jesus Christ into two entities.⁷²

We reject the teaching that also after the ascension Jesus' divine nature is not only in, but also outside, the personal union.⁷³

We reject the teaching that since His exaltation only Jesus' divine nature is present on earth, and that His human nature is present only locally, in heaven. For Jesus' human nature is not like a king who sometimes rules in his absence.

We reject the teaching that it is impossible for God, with all His power, to cause the natural body of Jesus to be present at the same time in more than one place.⁷⁴

We reject the teaching that God took a risk when His Son became incarnate, meaning that Jesus Christ could have sinned. When we assert that Jesus' temptations were real ones for Him, we assert that He remained holy and sinless, and reject the assertion that He could have harboured evil thoughts and desires.⁷⁵

We reject the views that Jesus was not really a Jew, and that He was not genetically connected with Abraham, David and Mary. As a human being, He was descended from human stock, in spite of His conception by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary.⁷⁶

We reject the teaching that the communion between the two natures in Jesus Christ is not true and real, but that the statements, "God is man" and "Man is God" are only figures of speech,⁷⁷ or that the sharing of properties, attributes, or qualities with His human nature is not real, but only nominal.⁷⁸

We reject the teaching that Jesus' divine nature and His human nature worked, and still work, independently of each other as He performed, and still performs, His work of prophet, priest, and king. If that were so, His work of redemption would have been that of a mere man.⁷⁹

We reject the teaching that Jesus Christ is our Mediator only according to His human nature.⁸⁰

We reject the teaching that Jesus' human nature in the state of humiliation did not possess divine majesty, and that divine majesty was given to Him only at His exaltation.⁸¹

⁶⁹ John 1:14; 1 John 4:2-3; 1 Timothy 3:16.

⁷⁰ 1 Timothy 3:16; John 1:14.

⁷¹ John 5:23; Philippians 2:6; John 10:30-33; John 14:9-10.

⁷² Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:5; John 1:14; 1 Timothy 3:16;

⁷³ John 1:14; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 3:16; Colossians 2:9; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Matthew 28:20.

⁷⁴ Matthew 18:20; Matthew 28:20; Matthew 26:26-28.

⁷⁵ Hebrews 5:7-9; Hebrews 4:15; John 8:46; Hebrews 7:26.

⁷⁶ Luke 3:23-38; Romans 1:3; Luke 1:30; Luke 1:30. Luke 2:6-7.

⁷⁷ Luke 1:35; 1 Corinthians 15:47; Matthew 16:16; Romans 9:5.

⁷⁸ 1 Peter 3:18-22; Acts 20:28; Romans 8:32.

⁷⁹ 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 3:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 1:4; Ephesians 5:2, 25.

⁸⁰ 1 Timothy 2:5; Titus 2:13; 1 Timothy 3:16.

We reject the teaching that Jesus Christ, according to His humanity, does not now possess divine majesty, but only limited power and created gifts, which His human nature received after His exaltation, so that He does not know all things, and cannot do all things.⁸² This error is based on a principle of human reason, that the finite human nature of Jesus cannot possess infinite properties, attributes, or qualities.⁸³

We reject the teachings that as a man Jesus first received divine glory when He was baptised, or when He ascended into heaven.⁸⁴

We reject the teaching that it is idolatry if people place their confidence in Jesus Christ not only according to His divine nature, but also according to His human nature, or if people worship His human nature, or worship Him in both natures.⁸⁵

We reject the teaching that Jesus Christ is not divine, does not possess divine majesty, and must not be worshipped as God.⁸⁶

What Jesus Christ Has Done

We believe that Jesus Christ truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried, in order that He might reconcile us to God, and be the sacrifice to take away the inherited sin of all people and the sins that they commit.⁸⁷ He is the only Saviour of the world.⁸⁸ We believe that He descended into hell and truly rose on the third day. He rose and showed Himself alive to His disciples and others over a span of forty days, and was finally taken up into heaven in the sight of His disciples.⁸⁹ He sits at the right hand of the Father and reigns for ever, with dominion over all creatures. He gathers, guides, and protects His church on earth, and intercedes with the Father for believers.⁹⁰ At the last day He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and take His elect to live with Him in eternal bliss.⁹¹

The purpose of Jesus Christ's incarnation and His life, death, and resurrection was to save and redeem mankind by fulfilling the law of God for them in their stead, and by suffering the punishment for their sins as their substitute. To accomplish this it

⁸¹ John 2:11; John 1:14; John 11:40; John 13:31.

⁸² John 1:14; John 2:11; Matthew 28:18; Psalm 2:8; Colossians 2:3; Ephesians 4:10; Philippians 2:9; John 5:26-27.

⁸³ Psalm 102:27; John 2:11; Hebrews 1:12-13; Ephesians 1:20-21.

⁸⁴ John 1:14; Colossians 2:9; 1 John 4:2-3.

⁸⁵ John 20:27-28.

⁸⁶ John 5:23; Romans 14:10-11; Philippians 2:9-10.

⁸⁷ Galatians 4:4-5; Isaiah 53:4-5; 1 Peter 2:24; Revelation 5:9; Revelation 14:13; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:23-26; Acts 4:12; Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:6; Romans 8:32; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21.

⁸⁸ Luke 1:34-35; Matthew 1:20-25; Isaiah 43:11; Acts 4:12.

⁸⁹ 1 Peter 3:18-19; Colossians 2:15; Ephesians 4:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:17-18; Romans 4:25.

⁹⁰ Acts 1:9; Psalm 68:18; Psalm 110:1; Ephesians 1:20-22; John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1.

⁹¹ Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Matthew 25:31-46.

was necessary that our Saviour should be true man, on the one hand, so that He might be under the Law, and fulfil it for us, and so that He might suffer and die in our stead. It was also necessary for Him to be true God, on the other hand, so that His fulfilling of the law and His suffering and death might be sufficient for all of mankind. The life and death of the Son of God was the price He paid for the redemption of sinners.

We reject the teaching that Jesus has not fulfilled the Law in our stead.⁹²

We reject the teaching that Christ has fulfilled the Law only for the elect.⁹³

We reject the teaching that Christ came into the world chiefly to proclaim new laws for people to follow to be righteous.⁹⁴

We reject the teaching that Jesus has made satisfaction only for original sin and has borne only the eternal punishments of sin, so that human beings must make satisfaction for sins that they have committed after baptism, and must bear temporal punishments.⁹⁵

We reject the teaching that Jesus has died only for the elect, and has made satisfaction only for their sins.⁹⁶

We reject the teaching that Jesus' death is not in itself a perfect satisfaction for our sins, but that the Father merely judged it so by special grace.⁹⁷

We reject the teaching that, though Jesus died for the sins of the world, His atonement was limited to believers, and that it began only in the year AD 1844.⁹⁸

We reject the teaching that the death of Jesus did not pay the penalty for our sins, but has only made it possible for God's love to forgive the sins of the penitent.⁹⁹

We reject the teaching that Jesus has not redeemed us by His suffering and death, but that He has merely obtained for people the opportunity during "the Millennium" to earn eternal life by their own obedience.¹⁰⁰

We reject the teaching that Jesus is not our only Mediator before God, but that the saints also, especially Mary, have merits that are precious before God and are available to others, and that they intercede for us. It is blasphemous to call Mary a "co-redemptrix of the human race."¹⁰¹

We reject the teaching that Jesus did not suffer the wrath of God and the agony of being forsaken by God, which is the essence of the torments of the damned.¹⁰²

We reject the teaching that Jesus did not really and truly descend into hell.¹⁰³

⁹² Romans 5:19; Philippians 2:7-8; Galatians 4:4-5.

⁹³ 2 Corinthians 5:15-19; John 1:29; 1 Timothy 4:10; 2 Peter 2:1; Titus 2:11.

⁹⁴ Galatians 3:24; John 5:45; Galatians 4:4-5; Matthew 22:37-40.

⁹⁵ Hebrews 10:10-14; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:1-2; Romans 5:10.

⁹⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:15, 18; John 1:29; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Romans 8:32; Hebrews 2:9; Titus 2:11; 2 Peter 2:1.

⁹⁷ Romans 5:10; John 19:30; 1 Peter 2:24.

⁹⁸ Hebrews 1:3; Romans 8:34; 1 Timothy 4:10; Titus 2:11; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 John 1:7.

⁹⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; John 1:29; 1 John 3:8.

¹⁰⁰ Isaiah 53:6; Matthew 20:28; John 14:6; Luke 16:26; 1 John 1:7; 1 John 2:1-2.

¹⁰¹ John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5.

¹⁰² Galatians 3:10-13; Romans 6:23; Psalm 16:10; Matthew 27:46.

We reject the teaching that Jesus did not arise bodily from the dead.¹⁰⁴

We reject the teaching that Jesus' sitting at God's right hand does not mean His supreme rule over all things, His power and majesty, according to His human nature, but only limited power, and that He is confined to a certain place in heaven.¹⁰⁵

We reject the teaching that Jesus' human nature is no longer present on earth, but is represented here only by the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁶

For more detail on the person and work of Jesus Christ, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 13.

Who the Holy Spirit Is, and What He Does

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity, true God together with the Father and the Son. That the Holy Spirit is not simply a quality or power of God, but a divine person, is evident from the fact that He is addressed in Scripture as a person. He knows the mind of God and searches the deep things of God.¹⁰⁷ That He is truly divine is taught in Scripture by the divine names given to him,¹⁰⁸ the divine properties, attributes, or qualities that the Scriptures ascribe to Him, such as omnipresence and omniscience,¹⁰⁹ the works that He does, which only God can do, and by the worship that is due to Him.¹¹⁰ Quite rightly, we baptise in the name of the Spirit along with the Father and the Son. In the *Gloria* the Spirit is linked with the Father and the Son in worship. It would be idolatry to worship the Spirit if He were not God.

The Holy Spirit was active in bringing all things to the remembrance of the disciples,¹¹¹ and inspiring prophets, apostles, and others to write the Holy Scriptures, so that we today have the written Word of God. He also works through this Word of God to bring sinners to a knowledge of their sins, and to faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour. He furthermore moves them to love Christ and seek to please Him by holy living, and keeps them in the true faith through the Word of God and the Sacraments. Thus the Holy Spirit is active in building the Church of Jesus Christ in preparation for the eternal marriage feast.

¹⁰³ 1 Peter 3:18-19; Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 4:9.

¹⁰⁴ John 2:19; Philippians 3:20-21; Matthew 28:2-3; John 20:19, 26; Matthew 17:9; Psalm 16:9-11.

¹⁰⁵ Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3; Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Peter 3:22. Note: In Acts 3:21 the New International Version wrongly translates "He must remain in heaven". It should read, either "It is necessary for heaven to receive Him," or "It is necessary for Him to receive heaven."

¹⁰⁶ Matthew 28:20.

¹⁰⁷ Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; John 14:26.

¹⁰⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:16; Acts 5:3-4.

¹⁰⁹ Psalm 139:7-10; 1 Corinthians 2:10.

¹¹⁰ 1 Peter 4:14.

¹¹¹ John 14:26; John 16:12-13.

Creation

Despite numerous theories regarding the origin of the universe, it is clearly and explicitly taught in the Holy Scriptures that God Himself created heaven and earth by His almighty Word, out of nothing, in six days of normal duration, of one evening and one morning each.¹¹² He did this in the manner and order so clearly set out in the historical account of Genesis chapter 1. We believe with Scripture that originally everything that God created was very good.¹¹³ This means that at least in the case of human beings there was no corruption, sickness or death. These evils came into the world later through sin. We accept the many references in the Scriptures as the only reliable source for discovering the origin of the universe. Since no human being was present when God created the world, we must accept by faith God's own account of creation as the truth.¹¹⁴ We believe that the universal flood at the time of Noah explains many of the geological conditions of the world as it is today.¹¹⁵ Though there is limited variation within particular kinds, this is not evolution. We believe that plants and animals were created in such a way that they reproduce only according to their own kinds.¹¹⁶ We believe that all continuing productivity in creation is due to God's ongoing blessing.¹¹⁷ The Bible is very precise in relating how long each patriarch lived before a particular son was born, and there are few real uncertainties about Old Testament chronology. It is obvious from the scriptural record that creation did not occur millions of years ago.

The doctrine of creation determines not only man's relationship to his fellow-creatures, but also to God Himself, and so is the basis of all true morality. It is, moreover, presupposed by the redemption and is the foundation of it. Jesus Christ, the second Adam, has set right all that was ruined by the first Adam.¹¹⁸ This means that every attack upon the Scriptural doctrine of creation is also an attack on the Gospel and on true morality.

¹¹² Job 26:13; Psalm 33:6; Colossians 1:16-17; Genesis 1:1; Genesis 1:31; compare with Exodus 20:11, where the six days includes heaven and earth; Hebrews 2:10; Romans 4:17.

¹¹³ Genesis 1:31.

¹¹⁴ Hebrews 11:3.

¹¹⁵ Genesis 6-9.

¹¹⁶ Genesis 1:11; 21, 24.

¹¹⁷ Genesis 1:22, 28.

¹¹⁸ Romans 5:12-21.

We reject attempts to treat the scriptural account of creation in Genesis as a figurative tale or a myth.¹¹⁹ Those who attempt to do this cannot show where alleged myths end and where factual accounts in Genesis begin.

We reject every attempt to treat science, nature, history, revelation, and faith as separated and unconnected disciplines. The God of creation and the God of revelation is the same God. The Gospel rests on events in this real world. Jesus put right what went wrong in Adam. Jesus was crucified at the time of Pontius Pilate in the real history of this world, and rose again on the third day. To say that denial of the historicity of the events in Genesis 1-3 does not affect the Gospel reflects a serious misunderstanding of the Gospel itself.¹²⁰

We reject the teaching that Adam and Eve were not historical persons, from whom alone the rest of human beings have descended.¹²¹ To regard Adam as mythical attacks the Pauline Gospel contrast between Adam and Christ.¹²²

We reject the assumption that the forces that now operate within God's creation were the same uniform forces as brought the universe into existence.¹²³

We reject the assumption that the world and all life on it evolved slowly over multi-millions of years.¹²⁴

We reject the claim that the first three days of creation were not days of normal duration. Though there was no sun, they are called days of evening and morning, just as the days after the creation of the sun and the moon.¹²⁵

We reject every attempt to compromise the scriptural doctrine of creation with the theory of evolution by asserting that the biblical account is only myth, legend, or allegory, and should not be taken as literal or historical truth.

We reject the assumption that God created creatures through natural selection, and the assumption that, if God was involved, and created the world through a process of evolution, He did not create it as a very good world. These assumptions ignore the Fall into sin, and make God responsible for evil in the world.¹²⁶

We reject the view that Genesis 1:1-2:4 and Genesis 2:4-25 present contradictory accounts of creation.¹²⁷

For more detail on creation and evolution, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 20.

¹¹⁹ 2 Peter 1:16.

¹²⁰ Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:4, 12-22; John 20:1.

¹²¹ Genesis 3:20; Acts 17:26; Romans 5:12-19.

¹²² Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; 1 Corinthians 15: 45-47; Ephesians 4:22, 24.

¹²³ Compare "and God said..." in Genesis 1: 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, Genesis 1:2; 2 Peter 3:4.

¹²⁴ Psalm 33:6; John 1:1-3; Psalm 148:5.

¹²⁵ Genesis 1:15-19; compare Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 23, 31.

¹²⁶ Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; Genesis 3:1-34; 1 Corinthians 14:33.

¹²⁷ Compare Matthew 19:4-5.

The Spiritual Condition of Human Beings, the Image of God, and Sin

We believe and teach that human beings did not evolve from primitive ape-like ancestors, but were created by God as mature and perfect creatures. We believe that God at first created only one man, Adam, not from other creatures or from organic matter, but from the dust of the ground, and breathed into him the breath of life, so that he became a living soul.¹²⁸ Adam and Eve were distinct from the animal creation, because God created them in His own image and likeness, that is, in righteousness, holiness, and knowledge of God. In this condition Adam and Eve lived in close communion with God and nature.¹²⁹

Despite Adam's perfection and bliss in the Garden of Eden, God said, "It is not good that man should be alone." God then caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and took one of his ribs, from which He made a woman, and brought her to Adam, thus instituting the estate of marriage between one man and one woman.¹³⁰

We believe that man and woman did not remain in their state of original perfection, but Eve was deceived into eating the forbidden fruit, and Adam too sinned, and was held responsible, so that their natures became corrupt, and all their natural offspring were conceived and born in sin. Since then human beings (except our Lord Jesus) have been conceived and born in sin.¹³¹ They have inherited sinful natures, and have lost their original righteousness and communion with God.¹³² As a result of the Fall, sin has enslaved their minds, wills, words, and deeds, and they are unable of themselves to apply themselves to the grace of God. All people are by nature spiritually blind, dead in sin, enemies of God, and subject to God's wrath.¹³³ Because of the bondage of their minds and wills, people cannot, by any efforts or any good works of their own, by progress, or by culture, become reconciled to God and overcome death and damnation.¹³⁴ In this condition human beings are inclined only to evil, doomed to physical death and eternal rejection from the presence of God. Original sin is not an essential element in human beings, for in heaven human beings

¹²⁸ Genesis 2:7.

¹²⁹ Genesis 1:26-27; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10.

¹³⁰ Matthew 19:4-6.

¹³¹ John 3:6.

¹³² Genesis 8:21; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:7; John 3:6; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12, 18, 19; Ephesians 2:1-3; 4:22; Matthew 7:17. Seth was born in the image of his sinful father, Adam, Genesis 5:3.

¹³³ Ephesians 2:1-3; Genesis 8:21; John 3:5-7.

will be free of it; but it is the corruption of our whole human nature. Because of this original sin, they have no strength or ability in themselves, or even any inclination, to reconcile themselves to God or trust in Him.

Sin is the transgression of God's Law, in thoughts, words, and deeds, and in failing to do what God has commanded.¹³⁵ Because of man's inherited sinful nature he cannot but give expression to this sinful condition in acts of disobedience to God's will.

People can be saved only by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world.¹³⁶ Physical death among human beings is not something originally inherent in nature, but the direct consequence of human sin.¹³⁷ Even when human beings are brought to faith through the Holy Spirit's work, they still retain their evil and corrupt natures, which war against their renewed minds.¹³⁸

We reject the teaching that the image of God consists in the free will of human beings and their control over their desires by their reason, and also the teaching that the original righteousness of Adam and Eve was not part of the image of God, but an additional gift.

We reject the teaching that the image of God was no more than human beings' dominion over the rest of creation.

We reject the teaching that, though Adam and Eve were innocent, they were not perfectly holy before the fall into sin; and the teaching that they were at first morally neutral, or that then they had childlike, immature dispositions, which were able to develop.

We reject the assumption that there is no real difference between human beings and animals except for superior intellectual ability.

We reject the teaching that, when God created Adam and Eve, their bodies were subject to death, and the teaching that their souls were created subject to death.¹³⁹

We reject the teaching that God created human beings in such a way that they had to sin.¹⁴⁰

We reject the teaching that the scriptural account of the Fall of Adam and Eve is not an actual historical report, but an allegory.¹⁴¹

We reject the teaching that original sin is not the corruption of the whole human nature with all its faculties, but only a weakening of free will and the loss of additional gifts of grace.¹⁴²

We reject the teaching that there is no original sin, and that human nature has not been entirely corrupted and perverted by original sin.

¹³⁴ Romans 7:18; James 2:10; Psalm 130:3.

¹³⁵ 1 John 3:4; John 4:17; Matthew 5:21-37; James 1:15.

¹³⁶ Romans 3:24-28; Romans 5:16-18; Romans 8:1; Galatians 3:10-14.

¹³⁷ Romans 5:12; Romans 6:23.

¹³⁸ Romans 7:18-25.

¹³⁹ Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23; Matthew 10:28.

¹⁴⁰ Psalm 5:5; John 3:16; 1 John 2:16; Deuteronomy 32:4; Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 5:1-3.

¹⁴¹ Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; 1 Corinthians 11:3.

¹⁴² John 3:5-6; Ephesians 2:1; Romans 3:23.

We reject the teaching that there is no sin in the true sense of the word, only unnecessary feelings of guilt.

We reject the teaching that evil desires in regenerate people are not sin.¹⁴³

We reject the teaching that Mary was conceived and born without sin and remained sinless.¹⁴⁴

We reject the teaching that human beings after Adam and Eve have not become subject to God's wrath and condemnation because of Adam's sin.¹⁴⁵

Since all sins deserve God's punishment in hell, there is little point in talking about small sins and great sins.¹⁴⁶

We reject the teaching that some sins are in themselves venial while others are in themselves mortal.¹⁴⁷

We reject the teaching that human beings can, by their own strength, make themselves acceptable to God, or choose to believe in Christ for salvation.

We reject the lessening of original sin that is apparent when people speak of faith as a decision to accept God's grace.¹⁴⁸

We reject the teaching that infants are without original and actual sin. We reject the teaching that children do not need baptism.¹⁴⁹

We reject the teaching that natural man is able to please God by his own efforts.¹⁵⁰

We reject the teaching that some sins are punished only during this life and not eternally.¹⁵¹

We reject the teaching that, in spite of the Fall, human beings have retained their free will in spiritual matters, and have retained some power to do what is good in God's sight.¹⁵²

We reject attempts to define sin as nothing more than a broken relationship with God.¹⁵³

The Law of God

All statements of the Bible that tell people what they should do and should not do, and that speak of God's anger and threats of punishment against human sin, are Law.¹⁵⁴ Many laws in the Old Testament of a political or ceremonial nature were intended only for the Jews and so do not apply to us.¹⁵⁵ Many of these pointed forward to the Gospel, and have been fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The chief purpose of the moral

¹⁴³ Romans 7:7; Galatians 5:17; James 1:15.

¹⁴⁴ John 3:6; Job 14:4; Luke 1:46-47.

¹⁴⁵ Ephesians 2:3; Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12.

¹⁴⁶ Matthew 5:21-22; Galatians 3:10.

¹⁴⁷ James 2:10; Galatians 3:10; Matthew 5:18-19, 22; Ezekiel 18:20.

¹⁴⁸ Ephesians 2:1-3, 8-9; Romans 7:11-24.

¹⁴⁹ Genesis 8:21; Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3; John 3:6; Ephesians 2:3; Ephesians 4:22.

¹⁵⁰ Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3; Isaiah 48:8; Romans 7:17-18; Genesis 8:21; Romans 5:12; Psalm 14:1.

¹⁵¹ Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10; Isaiah 48:8.

¹⁵² 2 Corinthians 3:5; Ephesians 2:1; Romans 3:11-12; Romans 7:18.

¹⁵³ Romans 7:7-8; 1 John 3:4.

¹⁵⁴ Romans 13:8-10; Romans 1:18-3:20; Galatians 3:10.

¹⁵⁵ Colossians 2:16; Romans 14:1-6; Galatians 4:9-11.

law is to show people that they are sinful, and to help them understand their sinfulness better.¹⁵⁶ Because all people are sinful, the Law of God always condemns them,¹⁵⁷ but the Law does other things besides condemn. It has the beneficial value of restraining gross wickedness to some extent,¹⁵⁸ and has a third function, that of a rule or signpost, in that it shows believers what things they should do to please God in thankful response to His grace.¹⁵⁹

The term “the third use of the law” refers to the function of the Law that shows Christians what they should do to lead a truly godly life. Some have rejected this function of the Law and claim that, because Christians are under the freedom of the Gospel, they no longer need the Law to show them right from wrong. They argue that Christians live only by the Gospel and are guided only by the so-called “law of love”. Others argue that, since the Law always condemns, condemnation is the only function of the Law, and that it should not function as a signpost that indicates what Christians should do to please God.

We believe that, though Christians are indeed freed from the curse of the Law, in the sense that the Law no longer condemns them, because their sins have been washed away, and are clothed with Christ’s perfect righteousness, yet they too need the Law, and should rejoice in it, because it teaches them how best to please their Lord and Saviour.¹⁶⁰ The Gospel of God’s love to them in Christ empowers Christians and motivates them to live in love toward God and their neighbours.¹⁶¹ The rule, or signpost that points to what pleases God is the Law, in its third use.¹⁶²

We reject the claim that because Christians are under the freedom of the Gospel they do not need the law to show them right from wrong.

We reject the claim that Christians live only by the Gospel and are guided only by the so-called “law of love”.

Though love to God and to other human beings is the summary of what the Law requires,¹⁶³ we reject the suggestion that there is a law of love greater than God’s commandments, which can excuse the breaking of any of God’s commandments.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁶ Romans 3:19-20; Romans 7:7, 11-13; Galatians 3:19.

¹⁵⁷ Romans 7:14-24; Galatians 3:10-12.

¹⁵⁸ 1 Timothy 1:8-10; Romans 2:14-15.

¹⁵⁹ Psalm 119:9, 105; Psalm 40:8; Leviticus 19:2.

¹⁶⁰ Romans 7:22.

¹⁶¹ 1 John 4:19; 2 Corinthians 5:14.

¹⁶² Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:10.

¹⁶³ Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 22:37-40; 1 John 3:15.

¹⁶⁴ John 14:15.

We reject the claim that Christians do not need the Law of God to guide them because they are moved by God's love to them, or because they are governed by their love to God or their love for their neighbours. Christians need God's law in so far as they retain their old sinful natures.

God's Universal Grace and Particular Grace

God's grace, which brings us salvation, is His undeserved favour to sinful people.¹⁶⁵ The Scriptures teach that God's grace is universal, for God sincerely wants to save all people, and does not want any to be lost.¹⁶⁶ Jesus Christ has also paid the ransom for every sinner.

However, the Scriptures teach both universal grace and the particular grace of God's eternal election. We must teach both, although we cannot harmonise the two. It pleased God, already before the creation of the world, to choose particular people as His own, whom He has foreknown, called by the Gospel, and justified, by bringing them to faith in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit's work, so that they will be eternally saved.¹⁶⁷ Christians should draw great comfort from this, because they know that nothing here in time can affect God's eternal purpose for them, and nothing can pluck them out of their Saviour's hand.¹⁶⁸ God's gracious eternal election is a cause of their faith in Jesus the Saviour.¹⁶⁹ Though the Scriptures foretold that the Messiah's close friend would lift up his heel against Him,¹⁷⁰ and though Jesus called Judas, the "son of perdition",¹⁷¹ the Scriptures nowhere say that a person is lost because God in eternity elected him to damnation. However, no one should speculate about God's hidden counsels, why some are saved and not others. Scripture teaches that those who are saved are saved by God's grace alone, and those who are lost are lost by their own fault.¹⁷² God created no one for condemnation. God wants all to believe in Christ, and promises to all the working of the Holy Spirit for conversion and salvation. God graciously receives all sinners who repent, and excludes no one, for His mercy is greater than the sins of all the world.¹⁷³ We acknowledge that the Scriptures teach both that God sincerely desires to save all people,¹⁷⁴ and that God has chosen only some to

¹⁶⁵ Ephesians 2:4-8; Romans 3:24; John 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:9.

¹⁶⁶ 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 23:37.

¹⁶⁷ Romans 11:5-6; Romans 8:28-30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.

¹⁶⁸ Ephesians 1:4, 11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; John 10:27-29; Romans 8:30.

¹⁶⁹ Acts 13:48; John 15:16.

¹⁷⁰ Psalm 41:9.

¹⁷¹ John 17:12.

¹⁷² Matthew 22:3-6; John 3:18; John 3:36; 2 Peter 2:1.

¹⁷³ Romans 5:20.

¹⁷⁴ 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 23:37.

salvation. God's universal grace extends to all sinners but His election of grace extends to those who will finally be saved. We admit that we cannot reconcile universal grace and particular grace, but affirm that there can be no contradictions in God.¹⁷⁵ We affirm that salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith, for Christ's sake, without works.¹⁷⁶ All who perish do so by their own fault, because they are either unwilling to hear the Gospel, or fall away from grace, either by false belief, or through unrepented sin against God's Law.

We reject the teaching that the grace of God is something in human beings, rather than only in God, that it is infused into them by the sacraments, and that Mary was, and is, "full of grace".¹⁷⁷

We reject the teaching that God created the majority of human beings for eternal damnation for His own greater glory, and is unwilling that they should be converted and saved.¹⁷⁸

We reject the teaching that God elected certain persons because He foresaw their faith. Such a teaching either explains nothing, or is open to the teaching that God chose some people because they had a better disposition towards God's grace, because of their better conduct, or because of their stronger determination to remain in the faith.¹⁷⁹

We reject any attempt to limit God's universal grace to His gracious particular election.¹⁸⁰

We reject the teaching that Jesus did not die for all people but only for the elect.¹⁸¹

We reject any teaching that God is the cause of anyone's damnation. For people are lost through their own sin and unbelief, not because of an absolute decree of God, or because God has withheld His grace from them.¹⁸²

We reject any teaching that human beings may take credit in any way for their salvation.

We reject the teaching that God's election was an absolute act, in the sense that He decreed it apart from the satisfaction that Jesus Christ made for the sins of the world.¹⁸³

We reject the teaching that the elect cannot fall from grace or wholly lose their faith for a time, even in spite of unbelief and unrepented sin.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁵ James 1:17; Numbers 23:19; Romans 3:4.

¹⁷⁶ Romans 4:4-5; Romans 3:20-28.

¹⁷⁷ Care must be taken not to confuse God's grace (charis) with charismatic gifts in people (charismata).

¹⁷⁸ 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 22:5-7; Matthew 23:37; 1 Thessalonians 5:9.

¹⁷⁹ Romans 9:11-12, 16; 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 11:5.

¹⁸⁰ Romans 11:32; 2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9.

¹⁸¹ 2 Corinthians 5:15, 19; 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 John 2:2; 2 Peter 2:1.

¹⁸² Hosea 13:9; Matthew 23:37; Acts 7:51; Acts 13:46; John 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Luke 14:16-24; Galatians 5:4; Ezekiel 18:26; 1 Timothy 1:19. In Romans 9:22 translations like "prepared for destruction" should read: "who prepared themselves for destruction." In 1 Peter 2:8 the meaning is not that God destined people to stumble, but "They stumble because they disobey the word. That is also the end to which they have been appointed."

¹⁸³ Ephesians 1:3-6; 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8.

¹⁸⁴ Psalm 51:10-13; Matthew 26:69-70; 2 Samuel 12:1-13; Psalm 37:24; John 20:25, 29; 1 Corinthians 10:12.

We reject the teaching that the elect cannot be certain of their salvation in spite of their faith in Christ.¹⁸⁵

The Law and the Gospel

The Law of God is all teaching of Holy Scripture that reveals the righteous will of God for human beings. It tells them what they should do or avoid in order to please God in thoughts, words and deeds. The Law is also every statement that reproves sin and reveals God's wrath against sinners, and His punishment of them. The Law condemns all who do not obey God perfectly. However, the Law cannot give sinful people the ability to keep it, so that no one will be saved by doing what the Law requires.¹⁸⁶ The Law instructs us in moral living and shows us our sin and condemnation.

By "Gospel" in the strict sense we mean all portions of the Scriptures that reveal God's mercy, love, and grace to fallen sinners, and that tell them what God has done for them in Jesus Christ, and still does for them, to forgive and save them. The Gospel is God's gracious message of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ the Saviour, through which the Holy Spirit works faith in sinful people, and saves them.¹⁸⁷ Since the Fall of Adam salvation is not possible through the Law,¹⁸⁸ even though the law offers salvation conditionally. The Gospel alone shows us the grace of God and offers salvation. We believe that it is necessary to make a clear distinction between the Law and the Gospel with their respective functions in order that the Word of God may be taught properly. The Holy Spirit works and motivates new lives and good works in believers through the Gospel and the Sacraments.¹⁸⁹

All attempts to mix the functions of Law and Gospel are serious perversions of the Law and the Gospel, and subvert the Christian faith. These include seeking salvation, or grace and comfort, in the Law, and pointing to Christ and the Gospel as guides for moral improvement. The latter would mean that people are condemned by Christ, and led to despair by the Gospel.

Though the term "Gospel" is sometimes used in a broad sense, as when, for example, we speak of "the Gospel according to Matthew", we reject the teaching that in the strict sense the Gospel is

¹⁸⁵ Romans 8:38-39; 2 Timothy 1:12; Philippians 1:6; Luke 10:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Peter 5:12; 2 Peter 1:10.

¹⁸⁶ Romans 4:15; Galatians 3:21; Deuteronomy 27:26; Romans 3:20; Psalm 143:2.

¹⁸⁷ John 3:16; Romans 1:16; Romans 10:4; Galatians 1:4; Galatians 3:13; Colossians 1:13-14; 1 Timothy 1:15; Luke 2:10.

¹⁸⁸ Galatians 3:21-22; Romans 3:19-21; Romans 3:28.

¹⁸⁹ Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 4:15; John 17:20; 1 Peter 1:23; Titus 3:5

the doctrine concerning good works.¹⁹⁰ That good works are to be done is Law. That the Holy Spirit enables us to live the new life and do them is pure Gospel. We also reject the teaching that the Gospel includes the teaching of the Law.

We reject the teaching that the Gospel is the inner light that the Holy Spirit gives to human beings without using means.¹⁹¹

We reject the teaching that the promises of the Gospel are conditional, and that God gives them only to those who obey His laws and those of the church.¹⁹²

We reject the teaching that people become Christians by obeying the Law.¹⁹³

We reject the teaching that in the New Testament Christians are subject to ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, as though food regulations still apply, or that the Old Testament law of the Sabbath now applies to the Sunday, or that Christians must give a tenth of their goods to the church.¹⁹⁴

We reject the teaching that the custom of women's wearing a head-covering at the time of St Paul is part of the moral law for the whole New Testament.¹⁹⁵ Laws of the Old Testament concerning dress should also not be directly applied to Christians of the New Testament in legalistic ways.

For more detail on Law and Gospel, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 16.

Conversion, or The Bestowal of Faith

We believe that conversion is God's bestowal of faith. No person by nature has saving faith in Christ.¹⁹⁶ Faith is the gift that the Holy Spirit grants in conversion by His grace.¹⁹⁷ Conversion consists in this, that a sinner, having learned from the Law of God that he is lost and condemned in sin, and having been offered the grace and forgiveness of God in the Gospel, is moved by the Holy Spirit to believe and accept this grace of God, so that he puts his faith and trust, not in himself, but in Christ alone for salvation.

Because all people, since the Fall of Adam, are dead in sin¹⁹⁸ and inclined only to evil,¹⁹⁹ and, because people as they are by nature regard the Gospel of the

¹⁹⁰ 1 Timothy 1:15; John 1:17; John 3:16; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 6:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 1:10.

¹⁹¹ Luke 4:18; Ephesians 1:13; Romans 10:17.

¹⁹² Romans 10:5-8; Romans 11:6; Romans 4:16; Acts 16:31.

¹⁹³ Galatians 3:2, 5; Galatians 3:21, 22; 2 Corinthians 3:6.

¹⁹⁴ Hebrews 10:1; Colossians 2:16; Galatians 5:12-13; Acts 15:10, 28-29; Romans 14:5-6; Galatians 4:10-11; Mark 2:27; Galatians 5:3; Galatians 2:3-5.

¹⁹⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. Compare Augsburg Confession XXVIII, section 54.

¹⁹⁶ Romans 3:23; Romans 7:18.

¹⁹⁷ 1 Peter 1:3-4; John 3:5-6; Ephesians 2:1; James 1:18; Psalm 103; Psalm 51:7; Psalm 51:12; Jeremiah 31:18.

¹⁹⁸ Ephesians 2:1-3.

¹⁹⁹ Genesis 6:5; Genesis 8:21.

crucified Christ as foolishness,²⁰⁰ they cannot, and do not even want to, believe in Christ or put their trust in Him for salvation. Conversion is not the work of a human being in whole or in part.²⁰¹ The cause of a person's conversion is the working of the Holy Spirit through the message of the Gospel. The consenting will of a human being is not a cause of conversion, because human beings by nature resist the gracious work of the Holy Spirit until He makes the unwilling willing in conversion.

Conversion is not a long process, but occurs in a moment. Before conversion a person is blind, dead, and an enemy of God.²⁰² After conversion a person has been turned towards God in faith. The Spirit of God has worked faith to accept God's verdict of justification, and he is reconciled to God. The Holy Spirit wants to convert not only a few, but all people, and He works where and when it pleases God in those who hear the Gospel. If any hearers nevertheless remain unconverted, the cause is not any lack in God's grace, but solely their obstinate resistance.²⁰³

We believe that God seriously wants to save all people,²⁰⁴ and that Jesus Christ died for all.²⁰⁵ The invitation to receive the Gospel is seriously intended for all who hear it. Nevertheless, not all will be saved. Those whom God has ordained to eternal life will come to faith and believe the Gospel.²⁰⁶ Even if the Holy Spirit works faith in some people for a time, they may sadly fall from faith and reject God's grace. Those who come to faith and are saved do so by the grace of God alone, while those who are lost are lost purely by their own fault.²⁰⁷ We cannot answer the question why all who hear the Gospel are not converted, since God's grace is universal, and since all are equally corrupt. This is a mystery, which belongs to the unsearchable judgments of God. Those who try to solve this mystery by their reason will err either by denying the universal grace of God, as in Calvinism, or by denying that salvation is by God's grace alone, as in Arminianism and Semi-Pelagianism.

We reject every kind of synergism, which teaches that conversion is brought about, not only by the grace of God, but in part also by a person's cooperation, correct conduct or attitude, decision, or

²⁰⁰ 1 Corinthians 2:14.

²⁰¹ 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; Ephesians 2:8-9; Ephesians 2:12; Romans 10:17. John 15:16; John 6:44.

²⁰² 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1; Romans 8:7.

²⁰³ Matthew 23:37; Acts 7:51.

²⁰⁴ 1 Timothy 2:4.

²⁰⁵ 1 Timothy 2:6; 2 Corinthians 5:15.

²⁰⁶ Acts 13:48.

²⁰⁷ Hosea 13:9.

less guilt in comparison with others,²⁰⁸ his refraining from serious wilful resistance, his self-determination, or his conscious decision to accept Christ as his personal Saviour.

We reject the teaching that God does not earnestly wish to convert all who hear the Gospel, but only the elect, and the teaching that God has predestined the rest to eternal damnation by an absolute decree from eternity.²⁰⁹

We reject the teaching that children cannot be converted, or are incapable of faith.²¹⁰

We reject the teaching that once the elect have been converted they cannot again lose faith and fall from grace.²¹¹

We reject the teaching that the Holy Spirit does not work repentance and faith though God's Word, but through the inner light that He gives to people.²¹²

We reject the teaching that faith is not completely the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit but that people can become believers even without the Holy Spirit.²¹³

We reject the teaching that the grace of God in conversion is irresistible.²¹⁴

How God Conveys to Sinners What Jesus Christ Has Done (The Means of Grace)

While it is true that God is almighty and present everywhere in nature to work and do as He wills, so that He does not need external or earthly means to carry out His purposes, yet from Scripture we learn that it has pleased Him to offer to mankind the blessings of Christ's redemption through the external means of grace, which He has ordained. These means of grace are the Word of God, the Gospel in absolution, and the Gospel in visible form in Baptism and in the Lord's Supper.²¹⁵ The work of Christ's atonement is complete and available for all, but in order to benefit anyone it must be received through faith. This faith must be worked in unregenerate people by God. It is the Gospel, or God's message of love and grace, through the atoning life and death of Christ as our substitute, that the Holy Spirit uses to engender this faith in sinners. Baptism is a special, efficacious or effective sign, by which God confirms His call and assures the sinner that his sins are personally washed away. The Lord's Supper is the application to individuals of the very means by which Jesus obtained their forgiveness. The Gospel of God and these sacraments are God's means of

²⁰⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:18; Philippians 2:13.

²⁰⁹ Isaiah 1:18-20; 2 Peter 3:9.

²¹⁰ Luke 18:15-17; Mark 10:14; Matthew 18:6; Matthew 18:10-11; Isaiah 28:9.

²¹¹ Galatians 4:17; Luke 8:13. 1 Corinthians 10:12.

²¹² Romans 10:17; James 1:18; 1 Peter 2:2.

²¹³ 1 Corinthians 12:3; Colossians 2:12; Matthew 16:17; John 6:44, 65.

²¹⁴ Isaiah 65:2; Luke 7:30; John 5:40; Acts 7:51.

²¹⁵ John 6:63; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Acts 20:24, 32; Romans 10:17; John 3:5; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Titus 3:5; Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

offering, conveying, and sealing forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation to sinners. At the same time they are the means by which God creates faith and sustains it in sinners, so that they receive the blessings of salvation, which Christ has won for them.

God has not promised to work faith in any other way than through the means of grace. He has bound us to these means, though He has not bound Himself.²¹⁶ It is the duty of the church to be active in proclaiming the Gospel and administering the Sacraments to all nations.²¹⁷ All other man-made means for building the church do not build it, but harm it, for they deny that the Holy Spirit works faith through the means of grace alone.²¹⁸

We reject the teaching that the rites of confirmation and extreme unction convey God's grace.

We reject the teaching that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not means through which God bestows forgiveness, life, and salvation.

We reject the teaching that God does not offer, convey, and seal the spiritual blessings that Jesus Christ has won only through the Gospel, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, but also directly and without the means of grace, alleging that God does not need a vehicle to convey His grace to sinners.²¹⁹

We reject the teaching that prayer is a means of grace. In the Word and Sacraments God bestows His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation on us. In prayer we are responding to God. Though we pray for forgiveness, and God answers our prayers, our prayers are not God's ordained means of imparting forgiveness.

We reject the teaching that besides Baptism and the Lord's Supper God has made foot-washing, laying on of hands, anointing the sick with oil and other ordinances equally binding or beneficial.

We reject the teaching that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not means of grace, but simply signs and symbols of what God has already graciously done.²²⁰

We reject the teaching that Baptism and the Lord's Supper impart grace simply by performing the action and without faith in the person who receives them.²²¹

We reject as misguided enthusiasm the practice in some modern churches of resorting to entertainment and social attractions to lure people into the church, hoping that these things will lead to real church growth.

²¹⁶ Luke 1:41, 44.

²¹⁷ Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-16.

²¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:11.

²¹⁹ Isaiah 55:10-11; John 6:68; Acts 13:26; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 3:26-27; Ephesians 5:25-26; Luke 7:30.

²²⁰ Ephesians 5:25-27; Luke 7:30; 1 Peter 3:21; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 22:19-20; Matthew 26:27; 1 Corinthians 11:26.

²²¹ 1 Corinthians 11:27, 29; Romans 4:11; Hebrews 11:6; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:26-27.

Justification through Faith

We believe and teach that God in His grace justifies sinners, or declares them innocent, not on the basis of their own goodness or attempts to satisfy Him by their own works,²²² but by His undeserved grace alone. While all people are born in sin and continue to sin daily, God does not impute the guilt of sinners against them, but pardons or forgives them on account of Christ's atoning life, death, and resurrection, as man's substitute. The opposite of God's justification is His condemnation.²²³ The Gospel truth of justification can also be expressed in terms of reconciliation, forgiveness, and adoption. God, in grace, has made people who were enemies His friends;²²⁴ as He has forgiven them their sins,²²⁵ declared them righteous, and made them His children.²²⁶ God justifies sinners without their fulfilling the Law, by grace alone, on account of the active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ.²²⁷ The righteousness of Christ that God imputes to sinners is His obedience.²²⁸ For Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law perfectly on sinners' behalf, took their sin and guilt on Himself, and suffered the full punishment for their sin. While those whom God justifies are in themselves sinful and ungodly,²²⁹ and continue to sin daily,²³⁰ yet by God's verdict they are declared righteous when they believe in Jesus Christ.²³¹ They receive reconciliation, forgiveness, justification, adoption, and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ the Saviour, without their works or merits.²³²

Justification, like reconciliation, works on two levels. One level is objective. God has declared all people righteous in His sight on the basis of Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection. Jesus Christ's atonement is once for all, and eternally valid.²³³ On the basis of Jesus' complete work of satisfaction for all mankind God has declared a universal absolution of the whole world, and this reaches us in the Gospel. Christ

²²² Psalm 130:3-4; Psalm 31:1; Psalm 143:2; Romans 3:28; Ephesians 2:8-9.

²²³ Romans 5:18.

²²⁴ Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

²²⁵ Romans 4:6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:19.

²²⁶ Romans 3:24; Romans 5:9, 18; 2 Corinthians 5:21; John 1:12; Romans 8:15-17.

²²⁷ Romans 3:28; Romans 3:22-24; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Romans 8:33-34; Galatians 3:24.

²²⁸ Romans 5:18-19.

²²⁹ Romans 4:5; Luke 15:2.

²³⁰ 1 John 1:8; Romans 7:14-24.

²³¹ Romans 3:24; 4:3; Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 3:6-8; Philippians 3:9.

²³² Romans 3:21-5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 1:9; Luke 19:10.

²³³ Romans 6:10; 1 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:28; Hebrews 10:10

“was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.”²³⁴ We can tell any person, “*God does not count your sin against you,*” and that is absolutely true, even if the person does not believe.²³⁵ This objective justification is complete and perfect in itself. It does not depend on any contribution or effort on the part of sinful human beings, but is available and efficacious for all. Just as one man, Adam, brought sin, condemnation, and death upon all mankind, so one man, Jesus Christ, has won righteousness, forgiveness, and reconciliation, for all mankind. Through Adam condemnation came upon all mankind, though, by God’s grace, not all will finally be condemned. Similarly, justification has come upon all mankind, even though not all will finally be justified.²³⁶ The Holy Spirit uses this good news of justification for sinners to create faith in their hearts, so that they then put away despair, trust in the grace of God, and rejoice in God’s verdict of justification. That is why the Gospel is good news.

Those who receive in faith what God freely offers them are subjectively or personally justified, so that they benefit from God’s verdict, and will receive eternal life if they remain in faith. Those, on the other hand, who do not believe God’s verdict of justification through Christ cannot benefit from it, and will be lost. Faith is the only means through which sinners can obtain such personal justification or reconciliation before God.²³⁷

The faith through which a sinner is justified before God is not a work of man, but a gift of God, and justifies sinners, not because it is a good or wonderful quality, which has merit before God, but simply by virtue of the fact that it accepts and clings to the atoning work of Christ. Similarly, the grace through which we are justified is a quality in God, not in man.

We believe that God’s verdict of justification for sinners is not unjust or fanciful, as if He simply ignored sin and its fearful punishment, for God Himself has paid the great cost, by offering up His Son to suffer the full punishment for the sins of the world.²³⁸ God, who justifies the sinner for Christ’s sake, is just.²³⁹

This doctrine of justification through faith gives Jesus Christ the honour that is due to Him, and through it alone sinners receive the abiding comfort that God is surely

²³⁴ Romans 4:25.

²³⁵ Romans 4:25; Romans 5:9-10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

²³⁶ Romans 5:18-19.

²³⁷ Ephesians 2:9; John 3:16-18; Acts 10:43.

²³⁸ John 1:29.

²³⁹ Romans 3:26.

gracious to them.²⁴⁰ We affirm that this doctrine of justification by faith is the heart of the true Christian faith. We obtain forgiveness of sin without works of our own, solely by the grace of God, for Christ's sake, through faith.²⁴¹

We reject the teaching that justification is not a judicial act of God by which He imputes Christ's righteousness to believers, but that it consists in sinners' renewal and sanctification through infused grace.²⁴²

We reject the teaching that sins are forgiven, but not for Christ's sake, and not through God's reckoning Christ's righteousness to sinners.²⁴³

We reject the teaching that atonement is not yet complete, and that justification is not the present forgiveness of sin, but merely the promise of future forgiveness to those who confess and forsake their sin.²⁴⁴

We reject the teaching that when God forgives sins He does not remit all punishment, but that sinners must themselves render satisfaction for the punishments of their sins here in time.²⁴⁵

We reject the teaching that, though sinners are justified through faith, they are not justified because they trust in the merit of Christ, but because they willingly obey His Word.²⁴⁶

We reject every form of synergism, by which human beings are thought to contribute something towards their justification or conversion, or even to cooperate with God in the kindling of faith.²⁴⁷

We reject the teaching that sinners are justified through their faith as an act or work, and that their salvation rests upon their good works.²⁴⁸

We reject the teaching that Christians cannot be sure of the forgiveness of their sins, but that they must remain in doubt about their salvation.²⁴⁹

We reject the teaching that only people who feel assurance of God's grace in their hearts may be sure of the forgiveness of their sins.²⁵⁰

For more detail on justification through faith, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 14.

The Nature of Saving Faith

We believe that Jesus Christ has made satisfaction for all sinful people, so that they may be subjectively justified by God, or subjectively reconciled to God.²⁵¹ The

²⁴⁰ 1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 8:38-39; 2 Corinthians 1:19-20; Romans 3:22-25.

²⁴¹ Romans 3:28; 2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 4:5; Ephesians 2:8-9.

²⁴² Romans 3:24-25; Romans 8:33-34; Romans 11:6.

²⁴³ Ephesians 1:7; Romans 11:6; Acts 10:43; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9.

²⁴⁴ Romans 3:24-25; Psalm 103:3.

²⁴⁵ Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 John 4:10; Colossians 2:13; Romans 4:5; Romans 10:4; Hebrews 10:14; Hebrews 9:26.

²⁴⁶ Philippians 3:9; Acts 10:43; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 4:13-16; Romans 10:1-4.

²⁴⁷ John 6:44; Romans 11:6.

²⁴⁸ Romans 3:22; Romans 11:6.

²⁴⁹ Romans 5:1-2; Romans 8:15-16; Romans 8:31-39.

²⁵⁰ John 20:29; 1 John 3:20; Romans 4:18-22; Psalm 51:3, 8, 10-12; Psalm 28:1.

²⁵¹ 2 Corinthians 5:20; Romans 3:22.

Gospel proclaims God's objective justification, or objective reconciliation with all men,²⁵² in order that sinners may believe the message of God's grace. Saving faith is receiving God's gift of forgiveness and life.²⁵³ It is trust or confidence in the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake.²⁵⁴ All people are sinful, and are unable by their own reason or strength to believe in Jesus the Saviour.²⁵⁵ The Holy Spirit works faith in Jesus through the Gospel.²⁵⁶ Faith in Jesus Christ is the only means through which sinners may obtain forgiveness and salvation. This saving faith is not simply a head knowledge or intellectual acceptance of the historical facts of Christ's work of redemption, but reliance on the truths of the Gospel and trust in the person of Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Faith entrusts itself to the love and grace of God, and depends on Him alone for salvation. Such faith is not the work of human beings, as a result of some decision for Christ, but it is the result of the Holy Spirit's work in them through the Word of God and the Sacraments, despite their natural resistance. This faith receives, lays hold of, or accepts the grace of God, who offers forgiveness and salvation to sinners in the Gospel. Through faith they make these blessings their own. In this way the objective justification of the world, available and offered to all in the Gospel, is received by sinners, so that they are personally, or subjectively, justified before God. Thus the Scriptures teach both that sinners are justified through God's grace alone, and that they are justified through faith alone.

Saving faith, like any other faith or trust, is not something that a person can produce in himself, but must be produced in him by the object of his faith, the One in whom he puts his trust. Such faith is therefore not a power or force of man, but of God, in whom he trusts. To be saved through faith alone is therefore to be saved by the power and love of God, not of man.

This receptive nature of faith further means that all claims by people that they can heal others by faith must be rejected. It is God who heals, not human beings by their faith. Faith is a means of receiving blessings, not of bestowing them.

Faith is not like superstition, which is a blind trust or irrational belief and fear, and which is unsupported by any historical facts or evidence in nature. Faith relies on clear historical and factual evidence in the Gospel itself, which is in the world of time

²⁵² Romans 5:9-10; 2 Corinthians 5:19.

²⁵³ Ephesians 2:8-9; Ephesians 1:19; John 6:44; Acts 10:43; John 3:16-17; John 3:36.

²⁵⁴ Romans 3:22, 28; Romans 4:20-21; Hebrews 11:1.

²⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 2:14.

²⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10, 14; Ephesians 2:1, 5-6; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Galatians 3:26-27.

and space.²⁵⁷ True Christianity is *concrete* in the sense that it is trust in, and commitment to, the person of Jesus Christ, who lived in our world of time and space. It is not simply an acceptance of *abstract* Christian teachings and principles. Therefore every effort to question the historical truths of the Scriptures, or to see faith as a commitment to abstract ideas or principles, must be seen as an attack upon true Christian faith, and a turning to pagan superstition.

We reject the doctrine that faith is not confidence in the promises of the Gospel, but the acceptance of what the church teaches.²⁵⁸

We reject the teaching that saving faith is not a sinner's trust in the forgiveness of his sins for Christ's sake, but only assent to the truth of the Gospel.²⁵⁹

We warn that some Fundamentalist apologetics operates with theologies of glory when it attaches faith directly to its claims about factual evidence. For example, even if current claims about the discovery of Noah's ark are shown to be false, we nevertheless believe the statement of the Scriptures that the ark came to rest "on the mountains of Ararat".

We reject the teaching that the object of faith is not the crucified Christ and His righteousness.²⁶⁰

We reject the teaching that love and obedience are the essence of faith and not rather the fruits of faith.²⁶¹

We reject the teaching that saving faith may exist in the hearts of the elect together with deliberate sin and impenitence.²⁶²

For more detail on faith, see *The Word Shall Stand*, articles 15-16.

Repentance

God's kindness leads people towards repentance.²⁶³ We believe that repentance is the conversion of sinners to God when God's Law leads them to acknowledge their sins and feel sorrow for them, and when God's Gospel produces in them faith in Jesus Christ.²⁶⁴ Repentance consists of two parts, sorrow for sin, and faith. God's Law reveals sin, and terrifies and distresses sinners who face God's wrath and His righteous punishments, and leads sinners to sorrow for their sin.²⁶⁵ Through the Gospel the Holy Spirit moves sinners who despair of keeping God's Law to lay hold of God's grace, so

²⁵⁷ John 20:31.

²⁵⁸ John 3:36; Romans 4:20-21; 2 Timothy 1:12; John 20:28-29.

²⁵⁹ Romans 8:38-39; Hebrews 10:22; Hebrews 10:38-39.

²⁶⁰ Acts 16:31; Romans 3:24-25; Romans 8:34; Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23; 1 Corinthians 2:2.

²⁶¹ Galatians 5:4-6; Hebrews 11:1.

²⁶² 1 John 2:3-4; 1 John 5:4; John 3:36; Romans 3:31; James 2:14-26; Ephesians 2:10; 1 John 3:4-9.

²⁶³ Romans 2:4.

²⁶⁴ Luke 18:13.

²⁶⁵ Psalm 51:17; Acts 16:30-31.

that they may obtain eternal life.²⁶⁶ Repentance is not complete until the Gospel works faith in Jesus Christ. Because of the special assurance in absolution for sins that trouble the conscience, private confession should not be abolished.

We reject the teaching that repentance is a sacrament under the name of penance, for the forgiveness of mortal sins that have been committed after baptism, and that it consists in sorrow in the heart, oral confession of all sins to a priest, and carrying out prayers and other works to make satisfaction for the temporal penalties of sins.²⁶⁷

We reject the teaching that faith is not an essential part of repentance.²⁶⁸

We reject the teaching that repentance is essentially giving up certain sins or human effort to improve moral life.²⁶⁹

We reject the Pentecostal view that there is little connection between renewal and repentance.

Baptism

We believe that Holy Baptism offers and conveys the same benefits as the Gospel.²⁷⁰ The Word of the Gospel added to the water by Christ's command makes Baptism what it is.²⁷¹ In it all newcomers to the faith, children included, receive the forgiveness of sins, new spiritual life, deliverance from the devil, eternal life, and incorporation into Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.²⁷² The same blessings as Baptism offers, conveys, and seals are the blessings that faith receives.²⁷³ It is not water in a general or ordinary sense that bestows these blessings. Rather, the Word of God united with the water makes it a "divine, grace-rich water." Faith trusts the Word of God in the water. Though people receive the benefits of Baptism through faith, we believe that God in Baptism works faith.²⁷⁴ God imparts the Holy Spirit through Baptism, and, except in several exceptional circumstances,²⁷⁵ God has regularly

²⁶⁶ 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 Corinthians 12:3.

²⁶⁷ Revelation 2:5; Isaiah 54:10; Isaiah 66:2; Hosea 14:2; Luke 24:46-47; Hebrews 11:6; Jeremiah 31:19.

²⁶⁸ Matthew 3:2; Matthew 5:6; John 3:16.

²⁶⁹ Psalm 6:3-4; Romans 4:6; 1 Kings 8:47; Ezekiel 14:6; Luke 17:4; Acts 26:20.

²⁷⁰ Colossians 2:12; Mark 16:16; Galatians 3:26-27; Acts 2:38-39; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Titus 3:5-7; Ephesians 1:13-14.

²⁷¹ Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Ephesians 5:26.

²⁷² Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27; John 3:5-6.

²⁷³ Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Acts 15:8-9; John 3:5; Colossians 1:13; Romans 6:1-11; Ephesians 2:1-9; Acts 2:39; Acts 19:2-6; Galatians 3:2; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3; 1:23; 2:2; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:11-12; Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 3:22, 28; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16.

²⁷⁴ Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 2:12.

²⁷⁵ Acts 2:1-4; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 8:14-17. The special, visible communication of the Spirit should not be confused with the way in which the Spirit regularly works faith through the Gospel and in baptism.

imparted the Holy Spirit with Baptism.²⁷⁶ The Holy Spirit is both the agent and the gift in Baptism.²⁷⁷ Because baptism joins sinners to Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, baptism is the sign and the power for baptised people to live in sorrow for sin, drowning their sinful natures, to believe in Christ, and to live the new life.²⁷⁸

We reject all attempts to speak of a Baptism of the Holy Spirit without water, which some allege is normally received at a time subsequent to baptism with water, and which they identify with speaking in tongues.

We reject all attempts to disparage Christian Baptism as "water baptism", as though it did not convey the Holy Spirit, and as if it were no different in this respect from the baptism of John the Baptist.²⁷⁹

We reject the teaching that the Greek word for "baptise" can only mean "submerge", and that the only proper mode of baptising is total submersion.²⁸⁰

We reject the teaching that Baptism removes only original sin and the sins that have been committed before Baptism, and that, consequently, Baptism does not continue to affect the whole lives of Christians.²⁸¹

We reject the teaching that Baptism does not work forgiveness of sins, but is simply a sign and picture of cleansing from sin that comes through faith.²⁸²

We reject the teaching that Baptism works forgiveness of sins because being baptised is an act of obedience, and because believing is an obedient decision.²⁸³

We reject the teaching that Baptism does not work forgiveness of sins, but that it is necessary for the forgiveness of sins to be granted during "the millennium".²⁸⁴

We reject the teaching that Baptism is not a washing of regeneration, but simply the solemn reception of people into the church.²⁸⁵

We reject the denial of baptism to infants, and we condemn the re-baptising of those who had been baptised as children when they grow up.²⁸⁶

We reject the baptism of the dead by proxy.²⁸⁷

²⁷⁶ Acts 2:38-39; 9:17-18; 19:1-6; 1 Corinthians 12:13; John 3:5; Titus 3:4-7; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Corinthians 1:22.

²⁷⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:13; John 3:5; Titus 3:4-7.

²⁷⁸ Romans 6:3-11; Colossians 2:11-12.

²⁷⁹ Matthew 3:11; John 1:24-28; Acts 1:5; Acts 18:25; Acts 19:3-6.

²⁸⁰ Mark 7:3-4; Luke 11:38; Acts 1:5; Hebrews 10:22; Acts 22:16.

²⁸¹ 1 Corinthians 6:11; Galatians 3:27; Galatians 5:24; Romans 7:18-21; 1 Timothy 1:15; Romans 6:1-11.

²⁸² Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21.

²⁸³ Mark 16:16; Titus 3:5; Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:11.

²⁸⁴ 1 Peter 3:21.

²⁸⁵ Titus 3:5; John 3:5-6.

²⁸⁶ Acts 2:38-39; Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27; John 3:3-6; Colossians 2:11-12; Luke 18:15-17; Matthew 18:6; 2 Timothy 2:13; Romans 3:3-4; Romans 11:29; 1 Peter 3:21; Ephesians 5:25-27.

²⁸⁷ Acts 2:38; Habakkuk 2:4; Hebrews 9:27 this teaching is wrongly based on 1 Corinthians 15:29.

We reject the teaching that Baptism is merely an ordinance of the church, which may be observed or omitted.²⁸⁸

We reject the teaching that children cannot believe.²⁸⁹

The Lord's Supper

We believe, according to Jesus' clear words, that in the Lord's Supper the bread is His true body, which He gave into death for us, and that the wine is His true blood, which He shed for us. The four writers who record Jesus' institution of this supper do not tell a dream or parable, or use other symbolic language, but record in plain words what happened. They record that Jesus said that the bread that He broke is His body.²⁹⁰ In addition, Paul says that the cup is the communion of Christ's blood, and that the bread is the communion of Christ's body,²⁹¹ and that those who receive this bread and this cup unworthily are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.²⁹² We believe that in this Sacrament Christ's body and blood are present, not only in heaven, but with us here on earth, that we receive them not only with our hearts, but also with our mouths.²⁹³ Through the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament we are involved in, and participate in, the sacrifice and death of Christ for us, as the Old Testament believers ate of some sacrifices offered for them. Through them we receive forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. We believe that we receive these blessings because we eat and drink, in, with, and under, the bread and wine, the body that Jesus gave and the blood that He shed, for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹⁴ Here we proclaim Christ's death,²⁹⁵ we look for His second coming,²⁹⁶ and we have especial oneness with each other as members of His one body, the church.²⁹⁷ We believe that communicants should examine themselves, to discern the Lord's body and blood, in order that they may not eat and drink unworthily.²⁹⁸ Communing together is a confession of unity in faith and must therefore be practised only with those who

²⁸⁸ Acts 2:38-39; Matthew 28:19; Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27; John 3:3-6; Mark 10:14; Matthew 18:11.

²⁸⁹ Matthew 18:2-6, 10-11; Mark 10:15; Galatians 3:26-27.

²⁹⁰ Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

²⁹¹ 1 Corinthians 10:16.

²⁹² 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.

²⁹³ Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.

²⁹⁴ Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20; John 6:51.

²⁹⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:26.

²⁹⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:26; 1 Corinthians 16:22.

²⁹⁷ 1 Corinthians 10:17.

²⁹⁸ 1 Corinthians 11:27-31.

confess the true faith. Those who wish to commune with us must not only confess their sin and believe in Jesus Christ, but also confess the Gospel in all its truth and purity.²⁹⁹

We reject the teaching that Jesus did not institute the Lord's Supper for all times, and that therefore it may be observed or omitted.³⁰⁰

We reject the teaching that Jesus' words, "This is My Body" and "This is My blood" must be understood figuratively.³⁰¹

We reject the withholding of the cup from lay people.³⁰²

We reject the teaching that bread, as a symbol of the body of Christ, must be broken in order to signify the alleged "breaking" of the Lord's body on the cross.³⁰³

We reject the teaching that Christ's body and blood are not really present in the Lord's Supper, and are not received by the recipient's mouth under the bread and wine.³⁰⁴

We reject the belief that in the Lord's Supper communicants feed on Christ only spiritually, by faith.³⁰⁵

We reject the teaching that in the Lord's Supper the substance of the bread and the substance of the wine are changed into the substance of Christ's body and blood, with only the accidents of the bread and wine remaining.³⁰⁶

Although we worship Jesus our Saviour in His real presence, we reject the teaching that Jesus gave us bread and wine to worship without eating and drinking.³⁰⁷

We reject the teaching that the Sacrament of the Altar does not offer, convey, and seal forgiveness of sins, but is only a memorial of Christ's death.³⁰⁸

We reject the teaching that unworthy communicants receive only bread and wine, and not also Jesus' true body and true blood.³⁰⁹

We reject the practice of offering the Lord's body and blood to infants, because they cannot examine themselves.³¹⁰

We reject the teaching that in the Lord's Supper the priest sacrifices Christ's body in an unbloody manner, and for special purposes, and for the sins of the living and the dead.³¹¹

We reject the practice of inviting to the Lord's Supper all who confess their sins, believe in Jesus Christ the Saviour, and accept the real presence, in spite of known doctrinal errors that they otherwise profess or represent.³¹²

299 Romans 16:16-17; 2 John 10-11; Galatians 1:8-9.

300 Mark 14:24; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25; Galatians 3:15.

301 Galatians 3:15; Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 1 Corinthians 11:26-28.

302 Mark 14:23; Galatians 3:15.

303 John 19:33; Exodus 12:46.

304 Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 10:16; Psalm 33:4; Luke 1:37.

305 1 Corinthians 10:16; 1 Corinthians 11:27; Matthew 26:26-28.

306 1 Corinthians 10:16; Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:28.

307 Matthew 26:26-27.

308 Luke 22:19-20; Matthew 26:26-28.

309 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.

310 1 Corinthians 11:28-29.

311 Matthew 26:26-27; 1 Corinthians 11:26; Hebrews 10:18; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Peter 3:18.

For more detail on the Lord's Supper, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 19.

For the AELC position on any remaining elements (reliquiae), please see Appendix, page 77.

The Church

1. The Church Universal

The Bible speaks of the Church in several different ways. In the strict sense of the term the Church is the communion of saints, or the total number of true believers of all times and places, the people who belong to Jesus Christ.³¹³ It is sometimes referred to as the body of Christ, who is its head,³¹⁴ or as the bride of Christ.³¹⁵ This Church will continue to the end of time despite the rage and attacks of Satan against it.³¹⁶ In this sense there is only one Church. Since faith in Christ their Saviour makes people members of this Church, and since this faith is a matter of the heart or soul, no one, except God, can see who is and who is not a member of this Church. In this sense we speak of the Church Invisible. The Church is hidden. Human beings may claim to be Christians, and we, in love, may believe them, but we have no final proof of their claim.³¹⁷

The holy Christian Church, as the body of Christ, or the bride of Christ, is a divine institution in the sense that He has created it, sustains it, and will preserve it as His bride for ever.

Though the Church in this sense is not visible to us, its presence is infallibly attested by certain signs or marks, namely, the proclamation of the pure Word of God, and the administration of the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. The Holy Spirit gathers and preserves it through the Gospel, and Christ governs it through the Gospel.³¹⁸ Because of God's promise that His Word will not be ineffective, we believe that the true Church will be present wherever His Word is faithfully proclaimed.³¹⁹ This does not mean that no Christians will ever be found where the Gospel is not

³¹² Matthew 7:15-16; John 8:31-32; Matthew 28:20; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 13:6; Galatians 1:8-9; Ephesians 5:9; 2 John 10-11; Revelation 22:18-19.

³¹³ Ephesians 2:19-22; Romans 12:4-5; John 10:16; Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Matthew 16:18; John 11:51-52; John 10:27-28.

³¹⁴ Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18.

³¹⁵ Ephesians 5:20-32; Revelation 21:2, 9; Revelation 22:17.

³¹⁶ Matthew 16:18.

³¹⁷ Luke 17:20-21; 2 Timothy 2:19.

³¹⁸ Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 4:15; John 17:20; 1 Peter 1:23; Titus 3:5.

³¹⁹ Matthew 16:18; Isaiah 55:10-11.

proclaimed in all its truth and purity, for human beings, in their inconsistency, may embrace certain errors intellectually, yet still put their faith in Christ alone. However, error is always contrary to God’s Word, and has no right in the Church. Though, by God’s mercy, there are believers in churches that do not teach the Gospel in all its purity, it is never God’s will that His Word should be taught with human alterations, additions, and subtractions.³²⁰

The one true Church, which includes only believers, is the one Church strictly speaking, in the proper sense. With the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* we recognise that the church is often spoken of in a loose or improper sense, as a mixed association of ties and rites, in which unbelievers and hypocrites may be present.³²¹ It is wrong to speak of this as another legitimate church, or a different church. It is better to speak of “the church visible”, or “the church broadly defined” rather than “the visible church”.

We reject the teaching that the church, outside of which there is no salvation, is the visible communion of all, believers and unbelievers, who call themselves Christians, or submit to the authority of some earthly head.³²²

We reject the teaching that the church is the communion of all those who are illumined by the “inner light”, whether they are Christians, Moslems, Jews, or heathen.³²³

We reject the attempt of any visible church to claim that all who do not belong to its visible communion will be damned eternally.³²⁴

We reject the teaching that the church has perished at certain times.³²⁵

We reject the claim that unless a church can duplicate everything in the early church, and can show all the charismatic gifts, including apostleship, prophetic prediction of the future, miracles, and speaking in tongues, it is counterfeit.³²⁶

We reject the false “ecumenical movement,” which assumes that “the Church” is not hidden, but the visible number of all professing Christians, to be brought together through the efforts of church leaders.

2. The Local Church or Congregation

The New Testament repeatedly speaks of churches also in the sense of local congregations. It uses this term to refer to believers in certain places who regularly

³²⁰ Matthew 28:20; 1 Peter 4:11; Galatians 1:8-9; Revelation 22:18-19.

³²¹ Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; Matthew 13:47-50; Acts 5:1-11.

³²² 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Hebrews 3:6; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5; Matthew 23:8.

³²³ Psalm 147:20; Acts 4:12; John 14:6; 1 Corinthians 12:3.

³²⁴ Revelation 2:9; Galatians 6:16.

³²⁵ Psalm 46:5-6; Matthew 28:19-20; Matthew 16:18; Matthew 24:14; Luke 21:24.

³²⁶ Ephesians 2:20; Deuteronomy 13:1-3; Matthew 24:24; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Jeremiah 23:9-40; Deuteronomy 18:20-22; 1 Corinthians 12:30.

meet together with Christ in His real presence through the Gospel and the Sacraments.³²⁷ A local church in this sense is not different from the communion of saints, the Church invisible, but it is the communion of saints in that place.³²⁸ Local churches also have legal and other organisational trappings, which belong to the structure in this world order, and which God has not commanded. There are associations of outward marks, there are office-bearers, and lists of their duties, and organised times of services. However, like the early church at Jerusalem, local churches may have hypocrites in their midst, and in the strict sense local churches are “hidden under the cross.” The church in this sense too consists, not of some organisational structure with constitution or officers, but only of people who are true believers.³²⁹ Even though unbelievers may associate with a Christian congregation, such hypocrites do not belong to the local church in the strict sense any more than the mud is part of a wheel to which it clings. The visible organisation of the congregation containing both Christians and hypocrites may be called the church only in an improper sense.

We believe that the local church or congregation, in the sense of true believers in a certain place, is not merely a human arrangement for the sake of good order, but it is a divine institution, both because it is none other than the communion of saints, the body of Christ, in a particular place, and because it is the direct work of the Holy Spirit as a result of the proclamation of the Word of God. Wherever the Gospel is proclaimed faithfully such local churches come into being.³³⁰

As Jesus Christ rules the Church invisible as the head of His body, so Jesus Christ rules in the local church or congregation through His means of grace, the public exercise of which He has committed to the office of the ministry in the congregation. Just as little as the body may be without a head, so the local church has its head in Christ, who functions through the public administration of the Word and Sacraments. Just as it is not proper to separate the bride from the bridegroom, or the body from the

³²⁷ Acts 2:42; Paul calls the church at Ephesus “the church of God”, Acts 20:28. Compare also the use of the words “come together” in Acts 16:13; 1 Corinthians 11:17-20, 33-34; 1 Corinthians 14:23, 26; Hebrews 10:25.

³²⁸ Acts 11:22; Romans 16:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Revelation 2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14.

³²⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 1:7.

³³⁰ As the family is a divine institution, not simply a human arrangement for the sake of good order that has been commanded by God, but because it was instituted by God when He blessed the marriage relationship, so also the local church or congregation is an institution of God, not because of some divine command, but because God blesses the proclamation of His Word. It is, moreover, God’s will that believers should regularly assemble together, Hebrews 10:25.

head, so it is not proper to think of the local church without the office of the ministry. There are no instances in Scripture where it is known that a local church lacked the public office of the ministry. They belong together, and are interdependent.³³¹

Since all Christians possess all the spiritual rights and privileges that Jesus Christ has given to His church, these spiritual rights and privileges are not the sole possession of popes, bishops, ministers, secular princes, or church councils. All Christians have the spiritual power of the office of the keys, including the power to forgive and retain sins.³³² All Christians also have the right to judge and decide matters of public doctrine. In this sense judging is not wrong, but a solemn duty. Though believers in congregations call men to the public ministry of the Gospel among them, they do not relinquish their duty to judge the doctrinal correctness of those who teach them and preach to them.³³³

Local congregations have the duty to teach those who have received baptism in their midst all that Christ has commanded,³³⁴ and it is the responsibility of a local congregation to apply the spiritual sanction of excommunication when one of its number becomes a manifestly impenitent sinner.³³⁵

We reject the teaching that there can be no hypocrites or impostors in the church visible.³³⁶

3. Synodical Organisations.

The term “churches” is often used in Scripture in the plural for local congregations,³³⁷ and sometimes for churches within a province.³³⁸ However, there is no evidence that the modern phenomena of “synods” or wider church organisations were known in the days of the apostles. This means that synods or wider church organisations cannot claim to have been instituted by God. They are purely human arrangements for the sake of mutual cooperation, confession of what they believe to be the truth, and the benefit of member congregations. We therefore affirm that membership in such human organisations is neither commanded nor forbidden.

³³¹ Acts 14:21-23; Titus 1:5.

³³² 1 Corinthians 3:21; Matthew 16:15-19; Matthew 18:17-18; John 20:22-23; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Peter 2:9.

³³³ 1 Corinthians 10:15; 1 Peter 4:11; Romans 16:17-18; 1 John 4:1-3. Passages like Matthew 7:1 tell us not to usurp the right of God by judging hidden things, such as whether a person has faith or not. Colossians 4:17; Matthew 18:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13.

³³⁴ Matthew 28:19.

³³⁵ Matthew 18:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5.

³³⁶ Matthew 25:1-2; Matthew 13:24-26; Matthew 13:47-48; Matthew 22:10-14; Acts 20:29-30.

³³⁷ Acts 16:5; 1 Corinthians 14:4, 12, 19, 28, 33-35.

³³⁸ 1 Corinthians 16:1; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Corinthians 8:1; Galatians 1:2; Galatians 1:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; Revelation 1:4.

Congregations may join or decline to join synods as they believe to be in their best interests. However, lest human arrangements should take precedence over a divine institution, it is right for congregations that form a synodical organisation to retain their autonomy, and to insist that the duties and responsibilities of the congregations are not compromised by their membership in a synodical body. They should, in the name of the freedom of the Gospel, resist hierarchical control.³³⁹ However, the bonds of common confession and of love are a divine gift and a divine duty, both locally and globally. Churches together in federations or synods are “church” because of the Christians in them. Congregations ought to continue to call their own pastors and have them exercise the public office of the keys in their midst.

We reject the teaching that the church can never be without a hierarchy that has apostolic succession in the sense that its bishops can trace their succession in office back to the apostles themselves. The church is apostolic if it teaches the same pure Gospel as the apostles taught.³⁴⁰

We reject the view that any casual group of believers gathered together for any purpose is church in the sense of Scripture, may exercise church discipline, or may elect for themselves a pastor to administer the office of the keys in their midst.³⁴¹

We reject the view that a local church or congregation is simply a human arrangement for the sake of good order.³⁴²

We reject the view that a synod or any other human organisation can claim to be church on the same level as, or in the same sense as, the divine institution of the local church of God or congregation.

The Public Ministry of the Gospel

While the Scriptures clearly indicate that all true believers are royal priests,³⁴³ so that they all have the spiritual rights and responsibilities of New Testament priests, to proclaim the Gospel and to remit and retain sins, yet the Lord has ordained that each local church should have within it the public ministry of the Gospel. Through the public ministry of the Gospel the Word of God and Sacraments are administered publicly within the congregation. Though the church was built by the Holy Spirit through the preaching and teaching of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and by their continued proclamation of the Gospel in the world, yet these apostles could not

³³⁹ 1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; Matthew 23:2-12.

³⁴⁰ 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:19-22; Matthew 23:8.

³⁴¹ In Matthew 18:16-17 “two or three” is distinct from “the church”; and “two” and “two or three” in Matthew 18:19-20 comes in a separate section, not about the use of the keys, but about agreement in prayer, introduced by “Again, I tell you.”

³⁴² Acts 2:46-47; Matthew 18:17-18; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:5; 1 Timothy 3:15.

³⁴³ 1 Peter 2:9.

live for ever, or be in all places where the Gospel was needed. The church was therefore quick to appoint others as elders, or bishops, or pastors-and-teachers, to carry on the work of the ministry after the apostles had moved on. This appointment was not only carried out by the congregation at the express direction of the apostles, but was also clearly said to have been effected by the Holy Spirit.³⁴⁴

We believe, therefore, that pastors, who are called by congregations, have been called by God, and that the public ministry of the Gospel is an institution of God. When the apostle Paul had established congregations on his missionary journeys, he saw to it that the congregations appointed elders or pastors to carry out the work of the ministry after he had left them. That teaches us that the office of the ministry is derived from the apostolic office, rather than being a kind of extension of the universal priesthood of all believers. The office of the ministry, as in the case of the apostolic office, was available only to the men of the church, whereas all Christians, men, women and children alike, are universal priests, upon whom the Holy Spirit has poured out His gifts.

It is the Lord's will that Christians should gather in local congregations around the Gospel and the Sacraments. Christians are commanded by God not only to worship God in their families but to establish the public preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments in their locality.³⁴⁵ Christians have the right and duty to call men, to serve them in the public ministry of the Gospel and the Sacraments.³⁴⁶ Their lives must be exemplary, and they must be able to teach the sound doctrine of the Gospel, and to correct those who oppose it.³⁴⁷ They must be faithful to the Lord.³⁴⁸ Though the functions of the ministry are to preach the Gospel and to administer the sacraments, the public ministry of the Gospel should not be spoken of only with respect to its functions, but also as an office that Christ has established. A minister of the Gospel is both a servant of Christ and a servant of the congregation.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁴ Acts 13:2-4; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5-9.

³⁴⁵ Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:10-12; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:2; 1 Peter 4:11; Hebrews 10:25; Acts 14:23.

³⁴⁶ Acts 20:24; Acts 21:19; Romans 11:13; 1 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 4:1; 2 Corinthians 6:3-4; Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7; Colossians 4:17; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:11; Acts 6:4; Acts 13:2-4; 2 Corinthians 3:6, 8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Colossians 1:23; Ephesians 3:3,6, 7.

³⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; Titus 1:5-9.

³⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 4:1-5.

³⁴⁹ Philippians 1:1; 2 Timothy 2:24; 2 Corinthians 4:5.

When the called and ordained ministers of the Gospel forgive sins, they pronounce absolution in the name of God as the public representatives of the congregations, to which Jesus Christ has given the office of the keys. Their absolution, because of Christ's command and promise, is "as valid and certain, in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself."³⁵⁰

However, the office of the public ministry of the Gospel has no other authority than the power of Christ in the Word of God. It is the duty of Christians to obey unconditionally the public ministers of the Gospel only when they proclaim to them the Word of God. If the ministers of the Gospel go beyond the Word of God in their teachings, Christians must admonish them, and if they persist, disobey them, and separate from them, in order to remain faithful to Jesus Christ.³⁵¹

Ordination to the public ministry of the Gospel by the laying on of hands is not a divine institution, but a rite that the apostles of the early church practised.³⁵² By it the call of congregations to a pastor is publicly confirmed. When a pastor no longer has a call he is not strictly a pastor.

We believe that hierarchical ranks in the church are by human right. Furthermore, history shows that hierarchical control over the rest of the ministry has repeatedly hindered the Gospel. Christ Himself earnestly warned His disciples not to be called "Rabbi" or "Father".³⁵³ Paul referred to the elected elders at Ephesus as "bishops", who were to be pastors to the flock of God there. The three terms, "elders", "bishops" and "pastors" are not three different offices, but simply different terms for the same public ministry of the Gospel. The apostles Peter and John also referred to themselves as elders.³⁵⁴ We therefore believe that, in obedience to Christ, the church must resist all tendencies to establish hierarchical ranks of clergy within its midst.

We reject the teaching that God has not instituted the public office of the ministry, or that every Christian is a minister in the sense of a public minister of the Gospel.³⁵⁵

We reject the teaching that Jesus Christ has not given the public ministry of the Gospel to the church as such, but only to the apostles, who passed it to bishops as their successors.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁰ Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18; John 20:22-23; 2 Corinthians 2:10.

³⁵¹ 1 Peter 4:11; Titus 1:14; Hebrews 13:17; Luke 10:16; Matthew 23:8; Matthew 18:17-18; John 20:22-23.

³⁵² Acts 13:3; 1 Timothy 5:22; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6.

³⁵³ Matthew 23:8-9.

³⁵⁴ Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1; 3 John 1.

³⁵⁵ Ephesians 4:11-12 ("for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry..." - the comma is important!); Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 4:1; Titus 1:5.

³⁵⁶ Matthew 18:17-18; Matthew 16:15-19; John 20:22-23 (compare Luke 24:53); Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Peter 2:5, 9.

We reject the teaching that the public ministry of the Gospel does not belong to the office of the keys, which Christ has given to the whole church, but that it belongs only to certain persons within the church.³⁵⁷

We reject the teaching that anyone may publicly teach in the church without being duly called to do so.³⁵⁸

We reject the notion that the call to the ministry is essentially an inner call, and the notion that God calls His ministers directly by inner guidance, without the instrumentality of the church. For a person may have an inner conviction that God wants him to be a pastor, and prepare himself through a course of study to be a pastor, but he may not serve as a pastor until a congregation has called him. Only then may he claim to have a divine call.³⁵⁹

We reject the teaching that the calling or appointment of ministers of the Gospel is a privilege that resides inherently in the spiritual heads of the church, such as Pope, cardinals, bishops, or elders.³⁶⁰

We reject the teaching that the ordination of priests is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ to bestow the Holy Spirit, to impart grace, and to imprint an indelible character on them.

We reject the teaching that only those who have been ordained by bishops in apostolic succession, or by prophets, or by elders are true ministers of the Gospel.

We reject the teaching that ranks in the clergy are not of human, but of divine, origin.³⁶¹ For Jesus Christ has not prescribed differences in rank or office. He is the only High Priest and Master, and all those who hold office in the church are brothers.³⁶²

We reject the teaching that only ordained ministers of the Gospel, and not all believers, are priests in the proper sense of the term. For the Old Testament model of high priest, priests, and Levites should not be imposed on the clergy of the New Testament.³⁶³

We reject the teaching that only “priests” in the sense of ministers of the Gospel can forgive sins.³⁶⁴

We reject the teaching that the ministers of the Gospel cannot really forgive sins, but only declare that God forgives.³⁶⁵

We reject the teaching that private confession before a priest is commanded by God and is a part of the sacrament of penance.³⁶⁶

357 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Psalm 68:11; 1 Corinthians 4:1; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Peter 5:2-3.

358 James 3:1; Jeremiah 23:21; Romans 10:15; 1 Corinthians 12:29; Hebrews 5:4.

359 1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23.

360 Matthew 18:17-18; John 20:22-23; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; 2 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Peter 5:2-3.

361 1 Peter 5:1; 1 Corinthians 3:5; John 13:13-14; Matthew 23:8-10.

362 Acts 20:17, compare v.28; Titus 1:5, compare Titus 1:7; Matthew 23:8-10.

363 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:5-6; Revelation 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:5; Hebrews 7:17-18; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:16.

364 1 Peter 2:9; Matthew 18:17-18; John 20:22-23 (compare Luke 24:53).

365 Mark 2:7-10; Matthew 9:6, 8; John 20:22-23; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; 2 Corinthians 4:5; John 20:22-23.

366 John 20:22-23; Matthew 9:2; 2 Samuel 12:13.

We reject the teaching that private confession before a minister of the Gospel must be discarded as papistical.³⁶⁷ For the absolution that follows confession, whether in private or in public, has Christ's command and promise.

We reject the teaching that in private confession it is necessary to recite all sins, in order that the priest as the judge may determine the appropriate penance by which the sinner must render satisfaction.³⁶⁸ For "bind and loose" do not include the power to impose satisfactions. In any case, sinners cannot be saved by their works, but are justified by God's grace alone through faith in Christ.

We reject the teaching that the power to excommunicate does not belong to the whole congregation, but only to the spiritual rulers of the church.³⁶⁹

We reject the teaching that, because a minister of the Gospel is a servant of the congregation, he may be dismissed without proof that he is guilty of ungodly life or false doctrine, or that he is no longer able to teach.³⁷⁰

For more detail on the ministry of the Gospel, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 18.

Lay Consecration

The ministry of Word and Sacrament and the public administration of the Office of the Keys is entrusted to the office of the public ministry. In a congregation, therefore, the man who holds the office of the public ministry is a steward of the mysteries of God.³⁷¹ It is his responsibility to teach and preach the Word of God, and to administer the sacraments.

However, there are in some quarters an opposite tendency to dissipate the ministry by commissioning laymen to carry out certain functions of the public ministry. An example of this is when laymen consecrate the elements in the absence of a called pastor.

While we acknowledge that in cases of extreme need, when the normal order collapses or is inaccessible, love must serve the neighbour as best it can, thus the *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* states: "So in an emergency even a layman absolves and becomes the minister and pastor of another,"³⁷² nevertheless, it must be recognised that the Holy Supper should never be administered privately by someone not occupying the public ministry, or a so-called layman; partly because in respect of the Holy Supper there cannot arise, as with baptism and absolution, an

³⁶⁷ 2 Samuel 12:13; James 5:16.

³⁶⁸ Psalm 19:12; Matthew 6:12; Revelation 1:5-6; 1 Timothy 2:5.

³⁶⁹ Matthew 18:17-18; 1 Timothy 5:20; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; 3 John 9-10.

³⁷⁰ Titus 2:15; Hebrews 13:7; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

³⁷¹ 1 Corinthians 4:1

³⁷² The Book of Concord, Tr. 67

emergency such as would justify the departure from God’s order³⁷³, partly because the Holy Supper “is a public confession and therefore must have public servants,” partly because through such secret communion schisms could easily be occasioned... That the administration of the Holy Supper by a layman is never *recta* [right] and *legitima* [legitimate] and never happens *de jure* [of right, by right, according to law], most [orthodox theologians] declare; but that it is *rata* [valid] and can happen *de facto* [in fact, in reality, from fact], none denies.³⁷⁴

“Emergency” in this context means not mere inconvenience, but imminent danger of death or severe spiritual anguish an affliction, combined with the actual inaccessibility of any orthodox ministers. However, genuine emergency-communions by laymen cannot in the nature of the case be organised into a permanent, ordered practice. This amounts to regularised irregularity, or disorder disguised as order, and thus to a legitimation or disregard for what God Himself has instituted in His church. Whatever love may have to do strictly occasionally and temporarily in extraordinary, emergency cases, the ordinary, regulated, continuing practice can only be public preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments by properly qualified and called ministers of the Gospel.

We reject the use of lay consecration when the regular pastor cannot be present at a divine service because of illness, holidays, or some other short term absence.

The Authority to Forgive Sins

Christ our High Priest has made all Christians royal priests.³⁷⁵ They have direct access to the throne of grace in prayer,³⁷⁶ and offer contrite hearts, thanks, praise, sanctified lives, and the sharing of their goods with those in need, as spiritual sacrifices.³⁷⁷ Jesus has given all Christians the authority to announce and apply in His name the forgiveness that He has won. Those who hear this absolution should know that it is as valid and certain as if Christ spoke it Himself.³⁷⁸ All members of the

³⁷³ 1 Cor. 4:1; Rom. 10:15; Heb. 5:4

³⁷⁴ C.F.W. Walther, Pastoral Theology, 134-135

³⁷⁵ 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6.

³⁷⁶ Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 10:19-22.

³⁷⁷ Psalm 51:17; Hebrews 13:15-16; Romans 12:1.

³⁷⁸ John 20:22-23; Matthew 18:17-20; Matthew 16:19; Matthew 9:8; 2 Corinthians 2:10.

spiritual priesthood have the right and duty to spread the Gospel, judge the teaching of their pastors, encourage one another, and teach children.³⁷⁹

The Unity of the Church, and Church Fellowship

Since it is only the pure Word of God through which Christ governs His Church on earth, and through which the Holy Spirit builds it, and since Satan seeks to undermine and destroy it by false teaching and deception, it is the duty of every Christian to learn to know the truth³⁸⁰ and to reject all error,³⁸¹ that he may not be deceived. Loyalty to Christ requires loyalty to His truth. A denial of the truth of Christ is a denial of Christ Himself.³⁸² The Christian must therefore not only confess the truth of Christ faithfully, but must also reject every false teaching that is opposed to the truth of Christ and dissociate himself from it. Failure to do so makes his own confession meaningless and hypocritical.

As the church of Jesus Christ is not an object of sight, and has always been one, the unity of the Church of Christ is a matter of faith, not of sight.³⁸³ Faithful Christians should seek the unity of the church in the pure teaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments.³⁸⁴ Christians should practise fellowship or recognise it only with those who confess the truth of Christ faithfully, and Christians who have strayed into heterodox churches, or whose churches depart from the pure Gospel, should leave them and seek the communion of orthodox churches.³⁸⁵ Faithful Christians should not associate in sacred things with those who live in rebellion against the pure Word of Christ,³⁸⁶ and they should not join in the worship of those who teach contrary to the truth of Christ. The Scriptures command Christians to anathematise those who teach another Gospel (which is not another). They tell them to avoid those who cause the divisions and the offences that are contrary to the doctrine that we have learned.³⁸⁷ Faithful Christians must recognise and practise fellowship only with those whom they know to hold and confess the truth of Christ. Since they cannot look into people's hearts to see who are true children of God and who are not, they cannot base

³⁷⁹ Acts 8:1, 4; 2 Timothy 1:5; Acts 18:26; Colossians 3:16; 1 John 4:1; Matthew 7:15-16.

³⁸⁰ Matthew 28:20; John 8:31.

³⁸¹ Galatians 1:8-9; Romans 16:17; Matthew 7:15; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 10-11.

³⁸² Luke 12:8; Mark 8:38.

³⁸³ Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:3-6; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; John 10:16; John 17:20-23.

³⁸⁴ John 10:16; John 17:20; Ephesians 2:19-22; Ephesians 4:3-6; 1 Corinthians 4:15; 1 Peter 1:23; Titus 3:5.

³⁸⁵ Galatians 5:9; 2 Timothy 2:17; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 10:21.

³⁸⁶ 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

decisions about fellowship on love or friendship or other personal criteria. They should be guided in this only by what confesses Christ truly, for changes to the Gospel also rob it of its character as good news. Every kind of unionism, or syncretism, or fellowship in sacred things, with false teachers and those who concur with them, such as preaching and the Lord's Supper, is disobedience to the clear command of Christ, threatens the entire loss of the Gospel, and is the real cause of divisions in the church. Loyal followers of Christ should retain, and seek, true unity with other Christians through full agreement in the teaching of the Gospel.³⁸⁸ Fellowship in preaching, the Lord's Supper, worship, and prayer should rest on agreement in the one doctrine of the Gospel.

Congregations or synodical bodies that have a public confession of faith must be careful to practise fellowship only with those congregations or synodical bodies that confess the Word of Christ in its truth and purity and administer the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. The public confession of a church body is not simply its written statements of belief, but what it allows to be publicly taught and believed in its midst, especially by its pastors and theologians, and by the publications it promotes. Casual intrusions of doctrinal error, when people err through weakness³⁸⁹ and then retract what is wrong, do not affect the orthodoxy of a church body. However, faithful Christians should refuse to deny the truth of the Gospel by worshipping, communing, or doing church work, with those who persistently depart from the truth of the Gospel.³⁹⁰ If a church body's written confession is contradicted by its public practice, and if it does not practise doctrinal discipline against persistent error, its confession is to that degree rendered false or meaningless. Faithful Christians should avoid worshipping or practising fellowship in sacred things with such false church bodies.³⁹¹ To do so is "sinful unionism".

The Lord's Supper has always been seen as a sign of unity between those who commune together at the Lord's table.³⁹² When Christians partake of the Lord's Supper in a church body that has a confession of faith, they thereby declare that they believe that they are one in faith with those who commune with them. Since people

³⁸⁷ Galatians 1:8-9; Romans 16:17-18; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

³⁸⁸ John 8:31-32; Ephesians 4:3-6; John 17:20-23.

³⁸⁹ Romans 14:1-15:3.

³⁹⁰ Galatians 1:8-9; Romans 16:17; Matthew 7:15; 1 John 4:1; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 2 John 10-11.

³⁹¹ 1 Kings 18:21; Matthew 7:15-16; Romans 16:17; Ephesians 4:3-5; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 2 John 10-11.

³⁹² 1 Corinthians 10:17.

cannot honestly hold two differing confessions at the same time, they cannot honestly commune with those whose confession is in conflict with their own. If any do this nevertheless, they deny their own confession, and so deny Christ Himself.³⁹³

It is sinful unionism for pastors and congregations to take part in ecumenical services together with pastors or church bodies that are not in true doctrinal agreement with them. The present “Ecumenical Movement” is committed to achieving visible unity of church bodies, not through doctrinal agreement, but through compromise and failure to confess the full truth of Christ. Loyal Christians should not undertake to respect doctrines and practices that they ought to reject.³⁹⁴

We reject the teaching that the church or its councils or the Pope at Rome cannot err. For infallibility belongs only to the Father, to our Lord Jesus Christ, to the Spirit of truth, and to God’s Word.³⁹⁵

We reject the teaching that Christians who profess conflicting doctrines may practise fellowship in spite of their differences in doctrine.³⁹⁶

We reject participation in the Ecumenical Movement and all its functions, especially in the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches of Australia, the Council of Christian Churches of Aotearoa-New Zealand, Queensland Churches Together, and the Lutheran World Federation.

For more detail on the church, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 17.

Church and State

We acknowledge that the Christian is a member of two realms, the church and the state.³⁹⁷ Both of these kingdoms belong to God,³⁹⁸ and they are opposed by a third kingdom, the kingdom of Satan.³⁹⁹ The church, the kingdom on the right, and the state, the kingdom on the left, differ in nature, scope, means, and purpose.

The church is concerned primarily with the spiritual welfare of people, and the state, the kingdom on the left, is concerned with their physical and material welfare.⁴⁰⁰ The church is governed only by the power of God through the means of grace, the

³⁹³ 1 Kings 18:21; Matthew 7:15-16; Romans 16:17; Ephesians 4:3-5; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 2 John 10-11; Mark 8:38.

³⁹⁴ Galatians 1:8-9; Mark 8:38; John 17:17.

³⁹⁵ Romans 3:4; 2 Timothy 2:19; John 8:31-32; John 17:17.

³⁹⁶ Ephesians 4:3-5; Galatians 5:9; Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11; 2 John 10-11; 1 Corinthians 10:21; 1 Kings 18:21; 1 John 4:1; Jeremiah 23:31; Revelation 18:4.

³⁹⁷ Matthew 22:21.

³⁹⁸ Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17.

³⁹⁹ Matthew 12:25-26; John 12:13; John 14:30; John 16:11; Revelation 16:10.

⁴⁰⁰ Romans 13:4.

Word and the Sacraments.⁴⁰¹ The church must not use any other means, and must reject all external compulsion.⁴⁰² God's law requires people to love Him and their fellowmen, not only in words and deeds, but also in their hearts, desires, and thoughts.⁴⁰³ The church must preach God's Law, but its essential task is to apply God's remedy to diseased souls through the Gospel and the Sacraments, for the sake of their eternal salvation.⁴⁰⁴

The primary form of the kingdom on the left is the family, which God has instituted for the welfare and stability of society.⁴⁰⁵ From this is derived the power of the state to protect the welfare of families on a larger scale (tribe, state, and country). As a power of God, the state has the responsibility to make and enforce laws that are for the good and mental and bodily welfare of its citizens, and not for their harm. The laws of the state usually proceed from natural reason. The state cannot know or punish thoughts and feelings. The state has God's approval and authority as an ordinance of God.⁴⁰⁶ Civic authorities rightfully use their power when they use it to maintain law and external order, to defend their citizens, to reward noble service, to punish those who attack and break such laws, and so endeavour to provide and improve peace and security.⁴⁰⁷ Christians may with a good conscience serve as members of parliament, councillors, magistrates, soldiers, police, and the like.⁴⁰⁸

Just as in this sinful world God keeps a degree of order by requiring sinful children to obey parents who are sinful, so people who govern the state are also sinful. It is God's ordinance that citizens should obey those in authority for conscience' sake,⁴⁰⁹ except when they command them to sin, or enact laws that are contrary to God's will. Just as the Christian, as a member of the church, must seek to have the church guided only by the Word of God, and must protest when the church departs from the Word of God, so, as a citizen of the state, he should seek to have the state governed only by natural reason and conscience. To the extent that a church disregards the Word and will of God and promotes false doctrine, it advances the kingdom of Satan or Antichrist. So also, to the extent that the state proclaims laws that

401 Matthew 28:18-20.

402 John 18:11; John 18:36.

403 Matthew 5:18-48.

404 Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47-48.

405 Exodus 20:12.

406 Romans 13:4.

407 Romans 13:4; 1 Timothy 2:2.

408 Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Acts 5:29.

are opposed to the will of God, it becomes an instrument of Satan's kingdom. Just as it becomes necessary for the Christian to refuse to obey and follow a false, apostate church that teaches contrary to God's Word, so it becomes necessary for the Christian to refuse to obey the evil laws of a state that would require him to act against the will of God.⁴¹⁰ As a Christian he may have to suffer the consequences when he obeys God rather than evil rulers.⁴¹¹

It is important for Christians not to confuse these two realms. They should not expect the power of the sword to protect or promote the church, and they should not expect the Word of God to rule the state.

Since the state rules over non-Christians as well as children of God, over the wicked and rebellious as well as those who are outwardly righteous in a civil sense, it is often necessary for the state to have laws that regulate and curb evil rather than forbid it. As Moses had to allow divorce, even though it was contrary to the will of God at creation,⁴¹² so the state may have to have laws that will not oppose or eliminate all evil, but attempt to regulate and control it in such a way that its citizens can live in peace. This does not mean that the civil power is no longer an ordinance of God.

It is not the task of the church to direct the state to adopt particular social, political, and economic measures.⁴¹³ The church may, when necessary, indicate to the state what the will of God is in moral issues that affect the state. The church may properly speak to state officials only when God's commandments are being flouted. When it does so, it uses God's Law as a curb or restraint. It may well warn state officials that, if they continue to act contrary to the will of God, they and the state will incur the wrath and punishment of God.⁴¹⁴

We reject the teaching that the state must use its power in the interest of the church, and that the church must give direction to the state in social, political, and economic matters by the Word of God.⁴¹⁵

We reject the teaching that no Christian may be a soldier or hold a public office in civil affairs.⁴¹⁶

We reject the view that a Christian may hold public office in civil affairs only if the constitution of the state recognises God as the source of all power.⁴¹⁷

⁴⁰⁹ Romans 13:5.

⁴¹⁰ Acts 5:29.

⁴¹¹ Revelation 2:10.

⁴¹² Matthew 19:7-8; Deuteronomy 24:1.

⁴¹³ Matthew 22:21.

⁴¹⁴ Romans 1:32; Romans 2:4-11; 1 Timothy 1:9-10.

⁴¹⁵ Romans 13:1-2; 1 Timothy 2:1-3; 1 Peter 2:13-15; Matthew 17:27; Matthew 22:21.

⁴¹⁶ Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-2; Luke 3:12-14; Matthew 8:5-7; Acts 10:28.

We reject the teaching that only those who are Christians should be recognised as true officials of the state.⁴¹⁸

We reject the teaching that a Christian must not take or administer an oath.⁴¹⁹

The Antichrist

The Scripture speaks of forces that are actively hostile to Christ and His church,⁴²⁰ and uses the term “antichrist” with reference to some of them. Scripture, however, speaks also of a particular, personal embodiment of such antichristian power, which it calls the “man of sin”, and “the son of perdition” or “antichrist”.⁴²¹

The scriptural marks of this antichrist are that he is involved in a falling away from the faith, that he sits in the temple of God, or the Christian church, and acts as if he were God Himself, claiming to be superior to all authorities in the world. His coming is the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and he will remain until judgment day.⁴²²

We believe that the antichristian power of our time most closely fitting these descriptions of the antichrist in Scripture is still the Roman papacy, whose blasphemous errors, such as the anathema against justification by faith alone without works of love, the sacrifice of the mass, and the dogma of papal infallibility, represent a fearful “falling away” from the Christian faith. In the papacy this takes place not outside but within the church or “the temple of God”. In a unique way the papacy acts as if it were God Himself and exalts itself above every other authority in the world and the church. The papacy still today is attended by many lying signs and wonders, so that, with the church of the Reformation, we cannot but see the antichrist of 2 Thessalonians 2, as embodied in the Roman papacy. The errors and abuses of Antichrist may well take on other forms than what have so far appeared, and may well be identified with other antichristian powers within the church as circumstances change.

All of this neither means nor implies a blanket condemnation of all members of the Roman Catholic Church, for despite all its errors the Word of God is still heard in that church, baptism is still administered in that church, the real presence of Christ’s

⁴¹⁷ Matthew 22:21; 1 Timothy 2:1-3.

⁴¹⁸ Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-18.

⁴¹⁹ Hebrews 6:16; Genesis 14:22-23; John 14:9; 2 Samuel 21:7; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Philippians 1:8.

⁴²⁰ Daniel 11:36-38; Matt. 24:22-25; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-9, 13; 1 John 2:18-22; 1 John 4:1-6; 2 John 7; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

⁴²¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 John 2:18, 22; 2 John 1:7.

⁴²² 2 Thessalonians 2: 1-12.

body and blood is still affirmed in that church, and the absolution is still pronounced in that church. Since the Word of God is effective, we believe that there will be many faithful and devoted children of God in its midst.

We reject the teaching that the Pope is the visible head of the church, the vice-regent of Christ, and that he has all true revelation in the shrine of his heart.⁴²³

We reject the teaching that all Christians must be subject to the Roman Catholic Church as the mother and teacher of all believers.⁴²⁴

We reject the teaching that the church has power to make laws and give commands where God has given no commands.⁴²⁵

We reject the teaching that ordinances that the church makes must be observed as conscientiously as the commands of God.⁴²⁶

We reject the teaching that lay people have no right to judge doctrine, to speak and vote in church assemblies, or to share in the government of the church.⁴²⁷

The Resurrection of the Dead

We believe that, when believers die, their souls are immediately with Christ in heaven.⁴²⁸ We believe that on the last day God will raise the bodies of all the dead, and clothe their souls with the very same bodies that they have possessed in this life. The departed believers will rise from their graves at the last trumpet, and the believers who are still living on earth will be changed in an instant with them, and rise in the clouds to meet the Lord as He returns.⁴²⁹ The believers' bodies will then be glorious, spiritual, strong, immortal, and no longer subject to decay.⁴³⁰ The unbelievers will rise to shame, everlasting disgrace and torment.⁴³¹

We reject the teaching that there will be no resurrection of the body.⁴³²

We reject the teaching that the souls of those who have not yet atoned for the temporal punishment of their sins must be purified in purgatory before they may enter eternal life.⁴³³

⁴²³ Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; Luke 22:25-26; Matthew 20:25-28; 1 Peter 5:2-3; Matthew 23:7-11.

⁴²⁴ 1 Corinthians 7:23; John 3:29-30; 1 Peter 5:2-3; Matthew 23:7-11.

⁴²⁵ 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; 1 Corinthians 7:23; James 4:12; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Peter 5:2-3; Colossians 1:18; Isaiah 8:19-20; Colossians 2:8; Galatians 1:8-9; Matthew 15:3-9; Joshua 23:6; Deuteronomy 4:2.

⁴²⁶ 1 Corinthians 7:35; Romans 12:1; Colossians 2:16.

⁴²⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 10:15; 1 John 4:1; Matthew 7:15; Acts 15:22; Acts 21:22; Romans 14:12; Acts 17:11; 2 Corinthians 1:24; James 4:12; Acts 6:6; Acts 15:22-23; Acts 21:22; 3 John 9.

⁴²⁸ Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 23:43; John 17:24; Philippians 1:23-24; Revelation 14:13.

⁴²⁹ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57.

⁴³⁰ Daniel 12:2; Job 19:25-27; John 5:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:35-57; Philippians 3:21; Matthew 25:34; Romans 8:18; 1 John 3:2.

⁴³¹ Isaiah 66:24; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 1:7.

⁴³² Daniel 12:2; John 11:24-25; Matthew 22:31-32; 1 Corinthians 15:12.

We reject the teaching that souls may be released from purgatory by prayers, giving of money, masses, or the prayers of the living.⁴³⁴

We reject the teaching that the souls of the believers do not possess full salvation before judgment day, and that the souls of the damned do not suffer the full torment of hell until the judgment.⁴³⁵

We reject the teaching that souls may be converted after death and before the judgment.⁴³⁶

We reject the teaching that the souls of the departed experience neither bliss nor torment.⁴³⁷

We reject the teaching that when a person dies the whole person dies, and that both souls and bodies will be raised together at the resurrection.⁴³⁸

We reject the teaching that the scriptural references to departed believers as “asleep in the Lord” mean that their souls are mortal, dead in the grave, and neither in heaven nor in hell.⁴³⁹

We reject the teaching that all people will enter a better world after death.⁴⁴⁰

We reject the teaching that there will be a thousand years of peace on earth for the righteous before judgment day, either before Jesus returns or after He returns.⁴⁴¹

We reject the teaching that at some time before the end of the world there will be a “rapture” in the sense that the believers will be caught up to heaven while the unbelievers will be left on earth to experience the distress of the last times.⁴⁴²

For more detail on the false antithesis “not the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body”, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 21.

The Judgment

We believe that on the last day Jesus will return visibly to judge the living and the dead.⁴⁴³ He will receive into eternal glory all those who have believed in Him to the end. The believers know already that they have God’s favourable verdict for Jesus’ sake, and need have no fear of the judgment, for eternal life is already God’s

⁴³³ Luke 23:43; Luke 2:29; Luke 16:22-23; John 3:36; John 5:24; Philippians 1:23; Hebrews 9:27; Matthew 7:13-14.

⁴³⁴ Galatians 6:8; Psalm 49:7; Proverbs 11:7; 2 Corinthians 5:10.

⁴³⁵ Psalm 16:11; Luke 16:22-23.

⁴³⁶ Proverbs 11:7; 2 Corinthians 5:10.

⁴³⁷ Psalm 16:11; Luke 23:43; Luke 16:19-31; Hebrews 9:27.

⁴³⁸ Matthew 22:32; Luke 20:38; Phil 1:23; Luke 23:43; Matt 10:28; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10.

⁴³⁹ Genesis 25:8; John 17:24; Revelation 6:10; Luke 16:19-31; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8.

⁴⁴⁰ Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 22:31-32; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 25:41, 46.

⁴⁴¹ Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; 1 Timothy 4:18; John 14:3; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Acts 17:31; Revelation 20:4.

⁴⁴² This teaching of such a “rapture” rests on a misunderstanding of 1 Thessalonians 4:17; and Matthew 24:40-41.

⁴⁴³ Acts 1:11; Acts 17:31; Romans 14:10; Matthew 25:31-46.

gift to them.⁴⁴⁴ Jesus Christ will pronounce eternal damnation on all who have not believed in Him as their Redeemer.⁴⁴⁵

We reject the teaching that Jesus Christ will not return to judge the living and the dead.⁴⁴⁶

We reject the teaching that not all must face judgment.⁴⁴⁷

We reject the teaching that it is possible to determine beforehand when Jesus will return for judgment.⁴⁴⁸

Eternal Life and Eternal Damnation

We believe that for believers life in the age to come will be unending bliss, free from all the troubles, sorrow, and death in this world, and full of joy.⁴⁴⁹ The damnation of the unbelievers in hell will last for ever, in shame and torment.⁴⁵⁰

We reject the teaching that all people will inherit eternal salvation in heaven.⁴⁵¹

We reject the teaching that the unbelievers will not suffer eternal damnation.⁴⁵²

We reject the teaching that “eternal destruction” merely means being annihilated permanently, without ongoing torment.⁴⁵³

THE EXPRESSION OF OUR FAITH

Prayer

We believe that in true Christian prayer the soul of the believer communes with God.⁴⁵⁴ Christians should confidently speak to God because of the perfect sacrifice that Jesus Christ has made for their sin. In prayer they ask God for what they need, praise Him, and thank Him for His blessings,⁴⁵⁵ or simply talk to Him of whatever is on their hearts. Christians should pray for themselves and for others, but especially for

444 John 5:24; Romans 5:9-10; Romans 10:9; John 3:36; John 10:27-28; Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:3-6.

445 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:31-46.

446 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3; Matthew 25:31-46.

447 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10.

448 Matthew 24:36; Luke 21:34-36; Mark 13:32; 2 Peter 3:10.

449 Revelation 21:1-22:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 2:10; John 14:2; Matthew 25:31-46; Matthew 25:21.

450 Matthew 25:46; Isaiah 66:24; Mark 9:42-48; Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

451 Hebrews 4:3, 9, 11; Mark 16:16; John 3:18; John 3:36.

452 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Isaiah 16:24; Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41; Matthew 5:26.

453 Revelation 14:11; Revelation 21:8; Matthew 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43-48; Isaiah 66:24; Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

454 Psalm 19:14.

455 Psalm 10:17; Psalm 27:8; Philippians 4:6.

fellow-believers.⁴⁵⁶ Christians should pray at all times and in all places, trusting in Christ, and leaving to God the time and manner in which He will answer their prayers.⁴⁵⁷

We reject the teaching that prayer is a means of grace. Passages of Scripture like the Psalms and Jesus' prayers are Word of God and so means of grace as well as prayers. Though God hears prayers, prayers are responses of believers to God's grace, and not works through which they obtain God's grace.

We reject the teaching that Christians may pray for the dead.⁴⁵⁸

We reject the teaching that departed believers, especially Mary, should be called upon for help, and that relics of departed believers should be venerated.⁴⁵⁹ Images, crucifixes, and pictures may be used as teaching and devotional aids, and treated with respect and reverence; but may not be worshipped without idolatry.

We reject the teaching that only God the Father, not the Son and the Holy Spirit, should be addressed in prayer.⁴⁶⁰

Worship

We believe that the whole of the Christian's life should be a life of worship in the sense of a continual communing with God.⁴⁶¹ However, God calls upon His children to worship Him also in a public assembly with the Word of God and the Sacraments. Such public worship where two or three are gathered together in His name must be distinguished from the private worship of His children, because not everything that is appropriate for private worship is appropriate also for public worship in the special presence of God. While women may indeed pray and prophesy privately they are specifically precluded from such leadership in the public worship of the church.⁴⁶²

We believe that true Christian worship should not be seen as some isolated, contemporary act at a particular time and place, but rather as a part of the universal worship of God by His Church of all ages together with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.⁴⁶³ Such worship is the most profound communion between Christ and His Church, which calls for the utmost reverence, humility and trust, so

⁴⁵⁶ 1 Timothy 2:1-3.

⁴⁵⁷ 1 Timothy 2:8.

⁴⁵⁸ Hebrews 9:27.

⁴⁵⁹ Matthew 4:10; Psalm 65:2; Revelation 19:10; Isaiah 63:16; Luke 11:2-4; Isaiah 45:2; Deuteronomy 4:2; 1 Corinthians 3:8.

⁴⁶⁰ Romans 10:13-14; John 5:23; Isaiah 48:16-17; Psalm 2:12; Acts 7:60; Revelation 22:20; 1 Corinthians 16:22.

⁴⁶¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

⁴⁶² 1 Corinthians 14: 34-35; 1 Corinthians 11:5.

⁴⁶³ Revelation 5.

often expressed in Scripture by falling down, bowing or kneeling in the presence of the divine majesty.⁴⁶⁴ For this reason we believe that Christian worship should be characterised by a sense of repentance and humility engendered by the law, and a sense of confident trust and joy engendered by the precious truths of the Gospel. Frivolity and entertainment, which often featured in pagan worship,⁴⁶⁵ has no place in the worship of the true God.

For more detail on worship, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 22.

Women in the Church

We believe with Scripture that God created both man and woman in His image.⁴⁶⁶ After the fall men and women are equally all in sin.⁴⁶⁷ In grace, and in their relationship with Christ, men and women are equal as God's children, no matter under which social conditions they may live.⁴⁶⁸ However, God established differences in the order of His creation, and God still requires these differences to be adhered to. Scripture teaches that it pleased God to create man first, of the dust of the ground, and then woman from man's rib,⁴⁶⁹ and that woman was created to be man's complement.⁴⁷⁰ This implies that man and woman were created to be different from each other, with different roles,⁴⁷¹ but dependent upon each other.⁴⁷² Part of these different roles is that God intended man to function as the head of woman, as Christ is the head of the Church.⁴⁷³ This headship means that a husband should love his wife and take responsibility for her as Christ does for His Church, and that woman is to be subordinate to man, as the Church is to Christ.⁴⁷⁴

This relationship between man and woman is to be evident, not only in marriage, but also in other aspects of daily life. The context of 1 Timothy 2 is not limited to the church, but is general, so that St Paul's injunction, "Let a woman learn in quietness, with total subordination. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have

⁴⁶⁴ Psalm 95:6; Isaiah 45: 23; Revelation 4: 10; 5:14 etc.

⁴⁶⁵ Exodus 32:17-19.

⁴⁶⁶ Genesis 1:27; Genesis 2:23.

⁴⁶⁷ Romans 3:9-20.

⁴⁶⁸ Galatians 3:28.

⁴⁶⁹ Genesis 2:7; Genesis 2:21-23.

⁴⁷⁰ Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 11:9.

⁴⁷¹ Genesis 3:16-19.

⁴⁷² 1 Corinthians 7:2-4; 1 Corinthians 11:11.

⁴⁷³ 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23.

⁴⁷⁴ Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:11.

authority over a man; but rather to be in quietness”,⁴⁷⁵ applies to the relationship between man and woman generally.

The subordinate relationship of woman to man should be respected and obvious also in the churches, where St Paul instructs us that women may not take leading speaking roles, such as uttering prophecy, presenting a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, speaking in a tongue, or giving an interpretation, addressing the congregation publicly, or even asking questions in church. It is shameful for them to speak in these ways.⁴⁷⁶ Any violation of this relationship is a failure to do things decently and in the subordinate role that God has ordained.⁴⁷⁷ It is a failure to recognise the heavenly Bride and Bridegroom relationship between Christ and His Church.⁴⁷⁸

We should treasure highly the things that the Scriptures report about women in Jesus’ day. Jesus’ mother, Mary, was highly privileged. Women like Mary Magdalene, Salome and others, who followed Jesus and His disciples and ministered to them out of their own resources,⁴⁷⁹ remained to watch His crucifixion when most of His disciples had gone. Such women were recompensed in a wonderful way when Jesus chose to reveal to them first of all the glorious news of His resurrection. The Scriptures do not give an exhaustive list of the ways in which either men or women have opportunities to serve Him, but all are encouraged to abound in good works, as they observe the positive and negative words of Scripture.

There were women who prophesied in biblical times (Deborah, Huldah, Anna, the daughters of Philip), and Priscilla was involved with Aquila in teaching Apollos.⁴⁸⁰ Though the Scriptures refer to prophetesses and to teaching by women, such functions were in private situations.⁴⁸¹ God’s will is that only qualified men may serve in the public ministry of the Gospel, and the Scriptures forbid the public teaching of men by women.⁴⁸² They make a distinction between what may happen in the home and in Christian churches.⁴⁸³ They forbid individual speaking by women in Christian

⁴⁷⁵ 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

⁴⁷⁶ 1 Corinthians 14:26-40.

⁴⁷⁷ 1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Corinthians 14:40.

⁴⁷⁸ Ephesians 5:22-27, 32.

⁴⁷⁹ Luke 8:2-3.

⁴⁸⁰ Acts 18:26; 1 Corinthians 14:33-39.

⁴⁸¹ Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Luke 2:36; Acts 18:26; 2 Timothy 1:5; 1 Corinthians 14:33-37; Acts 18:26, “took him aside”.

⁴⁸² 1 Corinthians 14:33-37; 1 Timothy 2:11-14; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6.

⁴⁸³ 1 Corinthians 14:35.

worship.⁴⁸⁴ Such speaking indicates a lack of submission to the men, and is shameful.⁴⁸⁵ This kind of silence is not a custom, as was the head-covering in New Testament times,⁴⁸⁶ but a command of the Lord.⁴⁸⁷ Therefore the public ministry of the Gospel is not open to women. We solemnly warn all those who permit women to be ministers of the Gospel, and agitate for it, that St Paul wrote, at the conclusion of this section, “*If anyone does not acknowledge this, he is not acknowledged.*” The last words are a divine passive, and mean, “God does not acknowledge him/her.”⁴⁸⁸

We reject the view that men and women are to be seen as independent individuals with the same functions and roles in life.

We reject any argument that the scriptural principle of subordination implies lack of ability or inferiority of women.

We reject every attempt to avoid the basic scriptural teaching that the husband is the head of the wife.⁴⁸⁹

We reject any suggestion that there is no useful service open to women in the churches, or that their opinions are not worth considering.

We reject the teaching that women may publicly preach or teach as public ministers of the Gospel.⁴⁹⁰

We reject the use of Galatians 3:28 to advocate that the public ministry of the Gospel should be open to women, because Paul’s meaning is that whether a person is slave, free, male, or female, does not affect his or her standing with the Lord Jesus.

We reject the attempt to avoid the Lord’s command that women should be silent in the churches (in 1 Corinthians 14:33-38) by arguing that in 1 Corinthians 11:5 women were permitted to prophesy in public worship. For the fact that St Paul says, “*Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head*”⁴⁹¹ does not permit a deduction that women actually did regularly pray aloud and individually prophesy in public worship, or that they were permitted to do so.

We reject attempts to argue that, because St Paul’s instructions about the head-covering for women do not apply in the current context, the command to be silent in the churches and to be subordinate does not apply in the current context. For 1 Corinthians 11:17 distinctly calls the wearing of head coverings a “custom”, even though St Paul wanted his congregations to observe it. However, disregarding the silence and subordination of women in the churches is not only shameful, but also disobedience against a “command of the Lord.”⁴⁹²

484 1 Corinthians 14:26-37.

485 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

486 1 Corinthians 11:16.

487 1 Corinthians 14:37.

488 1 Corinthians 14:38.

489 Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 11:3.

490 1 Corinthians 14:33-38; 1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6.

491 1 Corinthians 11:5.

492 1 Corinthians 14:37; compare Smalcald Articles Part III, Article viii, 3-13.

- We reject the use of arguments from reason, history, sociology, and other non-biblical sources to advocate that women may be public ministers of the Gospel.
- We reject the attempt to isolate 1 Corinthians 14:33-39 either from its context, or from St Paul as its author, for the parallel words “Let him be silent” in v. 28 and v. 31 indicate that the words “Let the women be silent” fit precisely into this context; and there is no substantial support in the manuscripts that this section was omitted from 1 Corinthians 14 or displaced in it.
- We reject the perversion of 1 Corinthians 14:34, from “For it is not permitted to them to speak, but let them be subordinate” to “They are permitted to speak, provided that they are subordinate.”
- We reject the argument that 1 Corinthians 14:33-39 applied only to a confused situation in the church at Corinth at St Paul’s time. For St Paul begins the section, “As in all the churches of the saints”, in v.33, and uses the plural “churches” in v.34.
- We reject the view that Paul’s requirement for women to be silent in public worship was merely temporary pastoral advice because of the customs or disorderly conditions at Corinth, and that they should be applied only to congregations today that have similar problems.⁴⁹³
- We reject the argument that, because Paul’s desire was that proper order should be observed in everything, what St Paul said applied only to the disorderly situation in the church at Corinth at that time.
- We reject the attempt to avoid the impact of 1 Corinthians 14:33-38 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 by arguing that married women are under discussion, and not all women. For, though the words for “man” and “husband”, and also “woman” and “wife” are respectively the same words in the biblical languages, the meaning “wife” is required only when there is a reference in the context to husbands, as in 1 Corinthians 14:35, or when the word “man” or “woman” is accompanied by a possessive noun, possessive adjective, or possessive pronoun. Then the words mean “husband” or “wife”. This usage is already quite plain in Genesis 2-3.
- We reject the argument that, if a woman thinks she has the required abilities and feels that God is calling her to serve in the public ministry of the Gospel, she should not be prevented from doing so. For this avoids the clear command of the Lord that women should not speak in the churches, but keep silent, and Paul’s statement that it is shameful for them to do so.
- We reject the attempt to evade the instruction of the Lord in 1 Timothy 2:11 by arguing that “to have authority over the man” only means “grasp authority in a domineering way”. We reject unwarranted translations such as “usurp authority” or “domineer”. The meaning is simply “to have authority”.
- We reject attempts to reduce the command of the Lord about the silence of women in the churches and to ridicule the sincere attempt to obey it, by arguing that silence would have meant that women were forbidden even to join in confessing the Creed and in the Lord’s Prayer in public worship, or even to cough! The speaking in 1 Corinthians 14:26-31 is not speaking in unison, but by individuals, as they present a psalm, a prophecy, a revelation, speak in tongues, or give an interpretation. The rest were instructed to listen and to judge.
- We reject attempts to question the reasons why God has commanded this distinction between men and women in the churches. For God Himself has assigned the reasons, which we are not at liberty to set aside, namely, the prior creation of Adam, and the prior deception of Eve.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹³ 1 Corinthians 14:26-40; see especially v. 33b: “in all the churches of the saints”.

⁴⁹⁴ 1 Timothy 2:13-14.

We reject the argument that, because the Scriptures report the teaching of children by women,⁴⁹⁵ they are therefore permitted to teach men.⁴⁹⁶

We reject leading, individual speaking roles by women in the worship of the congregation, such as the reading of Scripture, the reading of sermons, though written by pastors, prayers, and the distribution of the body and blood of the Lord to communicants. These are clearly contrary to God's command.⁴⁹⁷

We reject the election of women as elders who exercise the important role of supporting the work of the pastor and in administering the care of the congregation.

We reject anything and everything in the practice of the church where women function in such a way that they exercise authority over men, or where they may take leading, speaking roles in the worship of the congregation.⁴⁹⁸

We reject the election of women to any positions of authority in the congregation by which they would exercise authority over men.⁴⁹⁹

We reject the voting of women in congregational meetings when such voting is an exercise of authority in that it seeks to determine the will of the congregation.⁵⁰⁰

For more detail on the role of women in the church, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 23.

Sanctification and Good Works

Christians show their faith by their love.⁵⁰¹ We believe that good works are everything that regenerate persons think, speak, or do in faith, in the power of the Holy Spirit, conforming to God's commandments, glorifying God, and benefiting their neighbours.⁵⁰² Though faith alone justifies, a faith that is alone, in the sense that it produces no good works, is no faith at all.⁵⁰³ In the wider sense sanctification is everything that God does in believers, including their conversion, justification and good works. Jesus Christ Himself is our sanctification, as well as being our justification and redemption.⁵⁰⁴ In the narrower sense, sanctification refers to the good works of the regenerate. Since the lives of believers are never perfect, they need ongoing forgiveness for the infirmities in their good works.⁵⁰⁵ We believe that

495 2 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:14.

496 1 Timothy 2:11.

497 1 Corinthians 14:33-37.

498 1 Timothy 2:11; Ephesians 5:22-24.

499 1 Timothy 2:12.

500 1 Timothy 2:12.

501 Galatians 5:6; John 13:35.

502 Matthew 15:19; John 15:5; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:7.

503 Romans 3:28; Galatians 5:6; James 2:14-28.

504 1 Corinthians 1:30.

505 1 John 1:8-9; Philippians 3:12; Romans 7:21-24; Galatians 5:17.

believers must do good works, because God commands them, and as their thankful response to God's grace.⁵⁰⁶

We reject the teaching that perfect holiness and perfect good works are possible for believers already in this life.⁵⁰⁷

We reject the teaching that people who have not been born again can perform good works.⁵⁰⁸

We reject the teaching that, when people obey special commands of the church, such as chastity, poverty, and obedience to the head of a monastery, these are good works, even though they have no special command of God.⁵⁰⁹

We reject the teaching that righteous people can perform good works beyond what God requires from them in the Ten Commandments, and for the benefit of others.⁵¹⁰

We reject the teaching that the good works of Christians are perfectly good and holy.⁵¹¹

We reject the teaching that good works are necessary to salvation.⁵¹²

Marriage

God has instituted marriage as a life-long union of one man and one woman.⁵¹³ Marriage comes into being before God by the mutual and unconditional consent of the contracting parties, not by the mere exercise of a marriage ceremony. Among Christians this consent is now normally given publicly and in the presence of witnesses at a marriage ceremony conducted by a pastor of the church. Marriage is also a civil matter and as such is subject to legitimate laws of the state.

Scripture teaches that in this marriage relationship the husband should love his wife with the self-sacrificing love of Christ for His Church, and the wife should be subordinate to her husband in all things as the Church does to Christ her Lord.⁵¹⁴

The purposes of marriage are that the male and the female should complement each other, be companions, give mutual aid and assistance, that marriage should act as a curb to licentiousness through the proper use of God's gift of sexuality by the two people who are one flesh, and that human beings should increase through God's gift of children.⁵¹⁵ No divorce takes place without sin, for it is against God's will.⁵¹⁶

⁵⁰⁶ Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:17-18.

⁵⁰⁷ Philippians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 4:15; James 3:2; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 8:7.

⁵⁰⁸ Ephesians 2:10; Matthew 7:16; John 15:5.

⁵⁰⁹ Colossians 2:16-23; 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

⁵¹⁰ Isaiah 64:6; Luke 17:10; Psalm 49:7-8.

⁵¹¹ Hebrews 12:1; Romans 7:8, 23; Galatians 5:17; Isaiah 64:6.

⁵¹² Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 2:8-10; John 3:16; Habakkuk 2:4; John 3:36.

⁵¹³ Romans 7:2; Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6.

⁵¹⁴ Ephesians 5:22-32.

⁵¹⁵ Genesis 24:58; Genesis 2:18; Genesis 2:22-24; Genesis 1:28; Ephesians 5:33; 1 Corinthians 7:2-5; Psalm 128:2-3.

However, there may be divorce and remarriage in cases of marital infidelity and malicious desertion.⁵¹⁷

Abortion

God created human beings in the beginning with the intention that they should continue to bear His image, and human life is distinct from other life because it has come from the breath of God.⁵¹⁸ Though the image of God has been lost in the fall into sin, God has nevertheless continued to place His protection over all human life.⁵¹⁹ Human life begins at conception, and God the Creator shapes infants from the beginning. Babies are distinct from their mothers from the very beginning, and God knows all individuals intimately while they are being wonderfully made.⁵²⁰ The same individuals whom God has known in the womb are those who later grow to maturity, and God continues to search and know human beings throughout their lives.⁵²¹

God forbids all murder. Abortion is not only murder, but the murder of a closest relative, or complicity in such murder.⁵²² Therefore we warn all those who practise abortion, procure it, or legislate for it, that God threatens to punish them for this form of murder. Besides, untimely death is also tragic.⁵²³ Apart from the murder involved in abortions, every child should be given the opportunity to be born again in baptism and instructed in the knowledge of Jesus the Saviour. We urge those who have had abortions to repent and receive God's forgiveness, and we urge those who advocate and practise abortion to forsake it and repent.⁵²⁴

It is the duty of all people to endeavour to preserve and protect all human life at every age, and it is the duty of all Christians to speak up for those who cannot defend themselves, and this must apply particularly to unborn infants.⁵²⁵ Though it is not the church's task to agitate for specific political measures, yet, in cases where God's commandments are being flagrantly flouted, as they are in abortion and euthanasia, it is the Church's duty to remind legislators: "God, the giver of human life, has

⁵¹⁶ Matthew 19:6.

⁵¹⁷ Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:3-6; 1 Corinthians 7:15.

⁵¹⁸ Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:7; Acts 17:24-25; Colossians 1:16.

⁵¹⁹ Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13.

⁵²⁰ Job 10:8, 12; Job 31:15; Psalm 71:6; Psalm 119:73; Psalm 139:13-18; Ecclesiastes 11:5; Isaiah 44:2; Isaiah 49:1, 2, 5; Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15; Luke 1:44; Genesis 25:22-23.

⁵²¹ Psalm 139:1-6.

⁵²² Genesis 9:5; Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17; Romans 12:9; Matthew 15:19; Proverbs 6:16-17.
⁵²³ Job 3:16.

⁵²⁴ Deuteronomy 27:25; Amos 1:11; Matthew 25:45-46.

⁵²⁵ Psalm 41:1; Psalm 82:4; Proverbs 24:11; Proverbs 31:8; Matthew 18:10; Matthew 25:40.

commanded, ‘You shall not murder’, and He will punish you if you practise, promote, or permit it.” We recognise it as our duty to encourage both single and married women who face the temptation to have abortions not to have them. We should support them, and use all spiritual means to encourage them to keep the child that God has created within them.

We reject the argument that the baby is a part of the mother, and that the mother can therefore do what she likes with this so-called “part of her body”. Even medically the child has a different set of inherited characteristics from the mother, and about half of all babies have a different sex from their mothers.

We reject the argument that the quality of life of the parents and the family justifies abortion as a form of birth control. A mother who aborts her baby because she considers her own quality of life selfishly violates the quality of life for her defenceless baby.

We reject all forms of birth control that after conception expel a fertilised human ovum from the mother.

We reject all dehumanising and heartless ways of speaking about the unborn infant, such as “the product of conception”, “the foetus”, and “number one” for its head, for these desensitise people to the awful reality of abortion. They foster the notion that the baby is not really a human being. In fact, every embryonic human being, subject to God’s will, if allowed to run full term, is born and grows up like all other human persons.

Euthanasia

Euthanasia is contrary to God’s command, “You shall not murder.”⁵²⁶ Suicide is self-murder, and assistance to suicide, as it occurs in euthanasia, is complicity in murder. Those who ignore this cannot escape a guilty conscience before God, the judge. For He will punish murderers and those who have complicity in murder.

God Himself has distinguished human life from animal life by creating human beings in His own image.⁵²⁷ God has also distinguished human life from animal life by endowing human life with spirit.⁵²⁸ Each human person bears the stamp of God’s original design. God pointed to the original image of Himself in human beings when He threatened His retribution on those who are guilty of taking human life.⁵²⁹ Therefore how human beings put down animals when they are old and miserable cannot be the way in which they treat their fellow human beings. God alone knows whether disease or injury is incurable. Since our times are in God’s hands,⁵³⁰ it is His

⁵²⁶ Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17; Romans 13:9.

⁵²⁷ Genesis 1:26-27.

⁵²⁸ Genesis 2:7.

⁵²⁹ Genesis 9:6.

⁵³⁰ Psalm 31:15; Acts 17:26.

prerogative alone to decide when and how an individual should move to the existence that continues beyond temporal death.

Christians have the special duty, for Jesus' sake, to encourage, support, and suffer with, those who are weak or defenceless.⁵³¹ Therefore, even if there is legislation in favour of euthanasia, Christian people are bound to continue their determined opposition to it.⁵³²

We reject arguments in favour of euthanasia that are based on so-called "quality of life" as fallacies. For human life does not have to be perfect in every respect to be worth living.

We reject arguments in favour of euthanasia based on the claim that each individual has the right to choose whether he or she wants to live on.

We reject every attempt to cheapen human life through sanctioning voluntary euthanasia. Once the principle is established that citizens' lives may be ended with others' help, all people who are incurably sick or physically defective are in principle put at risk.

We reject the assumption that one or more doctors may decide whether a person's life should continue or not. For that is God's prerogative.

Homosexuality

We condemn the practice of homosexuality as contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture,⁵³³ and we warn those who practise, and have practised it without repentance, to repent and seek the grace and mercy of God. God's Word and history show that God punishes a civilisation given to such wickedness.⁵³⁴

Gambling

The gambling that is under discussion here is not taking just any risk, but deliberately taking a risk in the hope of winning back by chance more than has been risked, where these following features are also present: 1) no just equivalent is given to those who have lost, and 2) there is a covetous desire to win on this basis. It is important not to define gambling as merely taking a risk or accepting a free prize. It is deliberately seeking to gain in such a way that harm is done to the neighbour (stealing and covetousness). We recognise that gambling is contrary to God's commandments, "You shall not steal" and "You shall not covet."⁵³⁵ Gambling is a serious social evil in our times. It fosters greed,⁵³⁶ selfish neglect,⁵³⁷ and the notion that any increase in

⁵³¹ Proverbs 31:8.

⁵³² Acts 5:29.

⁵³³ Genesis 19:4-7, 24; Jude 7; Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:24-28, 32; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10.

⁵³⁴ Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:24 etc.

⁵³⁵ Ephesians 4:28; Exodus 20:15, 17; Romans 7:7-8.

⁵³⁶ 1 Timothy 6:9-10.

wealth is a proper goal, even when it harms the neighbour. Gambling also militates against godly contentment.⁵³⁸

We reject attempts to defend gambling because the proceeds sometimes support praiseworthy causes. For it is wicked to think that anyone may do evil that good may come.⁵³⁹

We reject the argument used to support gambling, that a person's property is entirely at his disposal to handle as he wishes. For responsibility to God and their neighbour ought to determine all that children of God do with their property.

We reject the argument used to support gambling, that the others involved in gambling have in principle agreed that chance should decide whose desire to win will be satisfied, and that this agreement takes away the element of stealing. For agreement to do something that is sinful does not make it right. Such an argument is as wrong as a contention that an agreement to fight a duel takes away the element of murder.

The New Life, and the Charismatic Gifts

The new life, which begins in Baptism,⁵⁴⁰ is not the chief goal of the Gospel. That is receiving God's gift of eternal life.⁵⁴¹ However, Christians live the new life in Christ (sanctification in the narrow sense) by the motivation and power of the Gospel, and as response to it.⁵⁴²

The three persons of the Godhead give every Christian different charismatic gifts, in varying proportions, for the benefit of others.⁵⁴³ It is a mistake to concentrate on only some of these, like prophecy, healing, and speaking in tongues. People should not refer to proclaiming the Gospel as modern "prophecy", as prophecy regularly included the prediction of future events. St Paul said that when people spoke in tongues it should not occur in Christian assemblies except when someone could interpret, and that no more than two or three should do so.⁵⁴⁴ It is heretical to equate speaking in tongues with being baptised with the Holy Spirit, for, except in exceptional circumstances for His own purposes,⁵⁴⁵ God regularly baptises with the Holy Spirit in the water of Christian Baptism.⁵⁴⁶

⁵³⁷ 1 Timothy 5:8.

⁵³⁸ 1 Timothy 6:6-10; Hebrews 13:15.

⁵³⁹ Romans 3:8.

⁵⁴⁰ Romans 6:4.

⁵⁴¹ Romans 1:16; John 3:16.

⁵⁴² Note the Gospel references in the ethical sections of Paul's letters, for example Philippians 2:1-11; Galatians 5-6; Ephesians 4-6; Colossians 3.

⁵⁴³ 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 1 Corinthians 12:29-30; Romans 12:6-8.

⁵⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 14:9, 12, 13, 15-19, 23, 27-28, 32.

⁵⁴⁵ Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-48; 8:14-17.

⁵⁴⁶ John 3:5; Acts 2:38-39; 9:17-18; 19:1-7; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Titus 3:4-7; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Corinthians 1:22.

We reject the separation of Christian baptism from baptism with the Spirit. When the Scriptures distinguish baptism with water from baptism with the Spirit, the former is invariably the baptism of John the Baptist, which, except when Jesus was baptised, did not confer the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴⁷ There is only one Christian baptism, of water and the Spirit.⁵⁴⁸ The gift of the Spirit is one of the chief gifts in Christian Baptism.⁵⁴⁹ Equating baptism with the Spirit as an experience subsequent to Christian baptism, and or equating it with speaking in tongues, is heretical. The one great event after baptism that all Christians look forward to is not the reception of some charismatic gift, but Christ's return, 1 Corinthians 1:7. None of the charismatic gifts may be demanded as essential for any particular Christian (1 Cor 12:4-11, 29-30). On the day of Pentecost and when the household of Cornelius was baptised, the Spirit came first, and baptism followed. The only occasion when people were baptised without receiving the Spirit immediately was when Philip baptised the Samaritans. In Acts 8:16 the words "not yet" and "only" make it clear that the withholding of the Spirit until Peter and John were present was very unusual, and had a particular reason, as far as the church in Jerusalem was concerned.

Falsehoods in the Charismatic Movement

Though God has true believers among Charismatics, and even though the modern Charismatic Movement lives and works also within many conservative church bodies, this movement has many of the dangerous and unscriptural tendencies of enthusiasm. It often looks for guidance and direction to the immediate working of the Spirit apart from the Word of God, and often looks for hope and assurance of salvation to the feelings and emotions of the human heart, or to visible signs, such as miracles, tongues, and ecstatic experiences, allegedly induced by the Spirit's presence. True Christians should look to Christ and His Word and Sacraments alone for assurance of salvation and for guidance in all spiritual truth.⁵⁵⁰ They should not attempt to find the will of God apart from His Word or to use faith unscripturally as a means to accomplish miracles and wonders as signs of the power and operation of God.⁵⁵¹ For God alone chooses when, how, and by what means He does His saving work: He works through His Word and Sacraments when, where, and how He wills.⁵⁵² God

⁵⁴⁷ Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5. Acts 11:17 shows that the first group of 120 on the day of Pentecost also received baptism after they had received the Spirit. Though the apostles had been disciples of Jesus for three years, they regarded the day when they were baptised and received the Spirit as the beginning of their faith in Jesus.

⁵⁴⁸ John 3:5; Titus 3:5.

⁵⁴⁹ Acts 2:38-39; Acts 10:44-48; Acts 11:15-17; Acts 19:2-6; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

⁵⁵⁰ Galatians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 3:7-11; 1 Corinthians 2:2; Acts 20:32; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Corinthians 1:18; compare *Smalcald Articles* Part III, Article viii, 3-13.

⁵⁵¹ Luke 4:4-12; Matthew 27:39-43; Luke 22:63-64; Acts 19:27-29; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Matthew 16:21-23.

⁵⁵² Isaiah 55:8-12, especially v.8; John 6:44; 1 Corinthians 1:27-29; Deuteronomy 9:15-16.

gives no one the right to imitate or manipulate His will or work, and will allow no one to share His glory.⁵⁵³

Charismatics are preoccupied with the presence of the Holy Spirit, but we should point out that according to Scripture the work of the Spirit in the church is not to attract people to Himself, but to point them to Christ, to testify to His truth, and to bring the blessings of Christ to human beings.⁵⁵⁴ The Holy Spirit Himself inspired the prophets, apostles, and evangelists to write the Word of God, “Christ in letters and ink” (Luther),⁵⁵⁵ and it is through this Word that He leads people to the truth, and creates saving faith in their hearts, rather than through some personal manifestation. The Spirit certainly never ignores or misuses, contradicts, alters, or falsifies, His pure Word.⁵⁵⁶ While the Spirit may, if He chooses, still inspire men and women today, He has not told us that He will do so. It is therefore presumptuous for people to claim that they speak by inspiration of the Holy Spirit apart from the Word of God, and then to demand obedience to what they claim.⁵⁵⁷

We should be reminded of Christ’s warning that Satan is well able to perform lying wonders, also in the churches, and by those who claim to be true prophets or spokesmen of God, as Satan tries to deceive the very elect.⁵⁵⁸ It is our Christian duty to test the spirits and not to be deceived by them.⁵⁵⁹ The only reliable means by which the spirits can be tested is the Word of God in Scripture.⁵⁶⁰ Any prophet whose word fails to come true in any point fails God’s scriptural test: that every God-given prophecy is fulfilled without fail, and thus such false prophets must not be obeyed.⁵⁶¹ Such false prophets receive God’s curses,⁵⁶² and God harshly condemns anyone who

⁵⁵³ Isaiah 48:11; John 4:23-24; Romans 9:15-16; John 3:6-8.

⁵⁵⁴ John 15:26; John 16:7-15; John 14:26-27; Romans 8:27; 1 John 4:2-3; 1 John 5:5-8; Romans 8:4-17.

⁵⁵⁵ 2 Peter 1:16, 19-21; 2 Timothy 3:15-16; Hebrews 1:1-3; then Luke 24:25-27; John 1:1-18; John 5:39; John 7:16.

⁵⁵⁶ John 12:48; Psalm 138:2; Psalm 12:6; John 8:18; John 8:26; John 1:1-18; Matthew 17:5; John 12:28.

⁵⁵⁷ Acts 20:29-32; 1 Corinthians 2:2; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Corinthians 2:13-16; 1 Corinthians 3:11-23.

⁵⁵⁸ Mark 13:22; Matthew 24:23-24; Revelation 16:14; Revelation 19:20; John 4:48; John 8:44; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.

⁵⁵⁹ 1 John 4:1-3; 1 John 2:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 4:12; John 12:48-49; Luke 23:8-9; 1 John 5:19-21; 2 John 7-11.

⁵⁶⁰ 2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:19; Acts 20:32; John 12:48; John 14:26.

⁵⁶¹ Revelation 2:20; Deuteronomy 18:20-22; Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Jeremiah 14:14; Jeremiah 23:9-40; Jeremiah 28:15-16; Ezekiel 13:22-23.

⁵⁶² Jeremiah 28:15; Jeremiah 27:14-16; Jeremiah 23:32, 34, 38-40; Deuteronomy 13:5.

either adds to, or takes anything away from, His Word.⁵⁶³ The Christian's sure foundation is always the Word of the apostles and prophets.⁵⁶⁴

Each person needs to examine all things, including himself, by God's Word alone, for God Himself judges all hearts and actions by His Word.⁵⁶⁵ God's judgment begins in the house of God, the Christian Church.⁵⁶⁶ We recognise that God, in line with His Scriptures, performs healings and wonders, purely in accordance with His will and the believer's faith.⁵⁶⁷ People should ask, "Is this movement, at least in some of its forms, Satan's attempt to undermine biblical Christianity by his own counterpart to Pentecost and counterfeits of it?"

We reject every claim by human beings to speak by the Spirit of God for the church apart from the inspired Word of God in the Scriptures.⁵⁶⁸

We reject every attempt to look for hope and assurance of salvation within human beings, in their own feelings and experience.⁵⁶⁹

We reject claims that "being slain in the Spirit" (in the sense of unnatural, involuntary behaviour, such as falling over backwards), being given to uncontrollable laughter, uttering animal noises, and even making obscene movements, are evidences of the Holy Spirit's work or presence.⁵⁷⁰

We alert Christians to the fact that, while men of God repeatedly fell on their faces before the Lord,⁵⁷¹ Scripture records that only the enemies of Christ fell backwards before Him;⁵⁷² and yet this is common practice in Charismatic circles.

We reject claims that ecstatic utterances or the so-called gift of tongues is necessarily an evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence and work. Such utterances can be induced, and have been practised by witches and Satanists.⁵⁷³

We reject the denial of infant baptism, the designation of Christian baptism as merely water-baptism, and the exaltation of the so-called "baptism of the Spirit" (equated with speaking in tongues) above Christian baptism, instituted by Christ.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁶³ Revelation 22:18-19.

⁵⁶⁴ Ephesians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Acts 8:17-25.

⁵⁶⁵ John 12:47-48; Revelation 3:8; Revelation 19:13; 1 Corinthians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 4:3-5.

⁵⁶⁶ 1 Peter 4:17; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15; Jeremiah 17:9-10, 13-14.

⁵⁶⁷ Luke 4:4; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Matthew 9:2, 22, 29; Matthew 15:28.

⁵⁶⁸ John 10:35; Acts 17:2, 11; Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Acts 3:24; Luke 16:17; Matthew 5:18; Galatians 1:8-9, 12; Revelation 22:18-19; Matthew 22:29; Luke 4:17-21.

⁵⁶⁹ Ephesians 2:8-10; Jeremiah 17:5-7; Jeremiah 9:23-24; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Romans 1:16; Acts 4:12; John 3:35-36; Jeremiah 10:23-24.

⁵⁷⁰ 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 Corinthians 14:40; Galatians 5:22-24; 2 Peter 2:19; 2 Peter 1:5-9; Luke 8:35.

⁵⁷¹ e.g., 1 Kings 18:39; Daniel 8:17; Ezekiel 1:28; Joshua 5:14; Joshua 7: 6; Numbers 16:45; Genesis 17:3; Genesis 17:17.

⁵⁷² John 18:6.

⁵⁷³ Mark 3:11; Luke 4:34-35; Acts 16:16-18; Zephaniah 3:13; Jeremiah 23:28.

⁵⁷⁴ Acts 2:38-39; Galatians 3:26-27; Matthew 28:19.

We reject the claim that true faith will automatically enable Christians to perform miracles, and that such miracles are then an evidence of the power of God, or of the Spirit's presence.⁵⁷⁵

We reject all vaunting of charismatic gifts as evidence of a higher Christianity. True charismatic gifts are given to build others up in love, not for self-glory.⁵⁷⁶

We warn that apparent miracles of healing may be nothing but lying wonders of Satan to deceive people and destroy their faith.⁵⁷⁷

We renounce all practices in the church that for any reason are shameful, use trickery, or misuse God's Word or name.⁵⁷⁸

We reject as unscriptural and deceptive any man-made activity such as repetition or chanting that cause hypnotic effects, formulas and spiritual techniques, contrived creation of mood and "spiritual feeling", for these attempt to engineer or manipulate the coming or working of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁷⁹

We reject any spiritual and religious performance or utterance that promotes the human ego for satanic purposes.⁵⁸⁰

We urge great caution in the practice of personal testimonies, especially in public worship, because they so easily draw attention to human beings and not to God, and because they may be false.⁵⁸¹

We warn Christians that the Christ presented in the Charismatic Movement may not always be the Christ of Scripture, and we reject any manifestation of Jesus that is not in accordance with the Gospel.⁵⁸²

We warn that the Spirit presented in the Charismatic Movement may not always be the true Spirit of God.⁵⁸³

We reject the claim that the rapid growth or popularity of some movement or phenomenon is necessarily an evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence and work.⁵⁸⁴

575 John 10:41; Matthew 7:21-23; Mark 13:22; Matthew 17:19-21; Matthew 13:58; Luke 4:3-4, 9-10; Matthew 24:24; Revelation 16:14; Revelation 19:20; Matthew 12:39.

576 Matthew 7:21-23; 1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Corinthians 14:3-19, 23, 33-34; 1 Corinthians 14:1; 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13; Acts 20:32; 2 Corinthians 12:1-5; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Matthew 25:31-46.

577 Mark 13:22; Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation 16:14; Revelation 19:20.

578 2 Corinthians 4:3-10; 2 Corinthians 2:17; Galatians 1:7-9; 2 Peter 2:18-19; 2 Timothy 3:5-7; 2 Corinthians 11:12-15; 2 Timothy 2:19.

579 Matthew 6:7; Acts 8:8-11, 17-24; Acts 19:13-20; John 8:47; John 3:7-8; John 7:16-18.

580 Matthew 4:1-10; Matthew 16:21-23; Luke 23:35-37; Mark 15:29-32; Galatians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Philippians 3:18-19; Acts 19:13-16.

581 Acts 5:1-4, 8-9; 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 5; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 3:5; 2 Corinthians 11:23-31; Galatians 1:10.

582 Galatians 1:6-10; Matthew 24:5; Matthew 24:23-24; Mark 13:22; 1 John 2:18-19; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 Corinthians 11:14; 2 Corinthians 3:5.

583 Ephesians 2:2; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 4:1-3; Revelation 16:13-14; Revelation 18:2; Acts 16:16.

584 1 Kings 19:18; Matthew 20:16; Matthew 22:14; Matthew 7:13, 21-23; John 6:60, 65-66; John 15:18-21; Luke 21:12; John 16:2.

We reject the belief that the Holy Spirit, against Scripture, promotes prosperity gospels, and the claim that wealth is a true sign that someone is a child of God.⁵⁸⁵

We warn against the ecumenical tendencies of the Charismatic Movement to unite Protestants with Catholics and with others without true unity in scriptural doctrine.⁵⁸⁶

We warn that major Charismatic leaders openly and secretly promote church unity under the unscriptural Papacy, and we point out that the Pope openly promotes the Charismatic Movement.

We reject the belief that any church group has special inside-revelation about the time of Christ's second coming or the "rapture".⁵⁸⁷

For more detail on the Charismatic Movement, see *The Word Shall Stand*, article 24.

The New Age Movement

Against the New Age Movement we affirm the following Christian teachings. God is personal, transcendent, and separate from His creation.⁵⁸⁸ Jesus Christ is truly God,⁵⁸⁹ there is no god but the one true God,⁵⁹⁰ and Jesus is the only Christ and mediator.⁵⁹¹ Satan is real,⁵⁹² and evil truly exists.⁵⁹³ Though God created man in His image, that image has been lost.⁵⁹⁴ Disease, poverty, violence, starvation, war, and death are in this world because of sin.⁵⁹⁵ Death is not merely a stage in the evolutionary process,⁵⁹⁶ but for the Christian the entry into the place that Jesus has prepared in His Father's house.⁵⁹⁷ Fallen human beings have been redeemed by Jesus Christ,⁵⁹⁸ and can find free forgiveness and salvation through Him.⁵⁹⁹ Human beings

585 1 Timothy 6:6-9; Luke 6:20; Luke 7:22; Matthew 11:5; Matthew 19:21-24; Matthew 4:8-10; James 2:5; Philipppians 3:7-11; Philipppians 2:5-7.

586 2 John 7-10; 1 John 2:18-23, Psalm 12:6; John 7:16; Jeremiah 7:23-24, 28; Jeremiah 3:15; Jeremiah 26:2; Jeremiah 51:45.

587 Matthew 24:36, 42; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2.

588 Isaiah 48:11-13.

589 1 John 5:20; Titus 2:13.

590 1 Corinthians 8:5-6.

591 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:6.

592 1 Peter 5:8.

593 John 17:15.

594 Romans 5:12.

595 Genesis 3:17-19; James 4:1-5.

596 Romans 5:12; Romans 6:23.

597 John 14:3.

598 1 Timothy 2:5-6.

599 1 John 1:7; Acts 4:12.

can contribute nothing towards salvation by their own efforts.⁶⁰⁰ Finally every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.⁶⁰¹

Human beings live only once on earth,⁶⁰² and after death face God's judgment,⁶⁰³ and either eternal life or damnation.⁶⁰⁴ The Bible alone reveals God's will and everything that makes people wise to salvation, and no one should question God's Word.⁶⁰⁵ There is no spiritually profitable meditation apart from meditation on God's revelation.⁶⁰⁶ True enlightenment does not come from within, but from the true God.⁶⁰⁷ God's help is available through prayer,⁶⁰⁸ and God's angels watch over believers.⁶⁰⁹ The principle "Love your neighbour as [you love] yourself"⁶¹⁰ does not include a command to love or visualise self,⁶¹¹ but rests on the fact that each human being cares for his own well-being.⁶¹² No kinds of food, including meat, are forbidden to human beings.⁶¹³

We reject New Age blasphemy that God is also part of creation, and that the Father and the Holy Spirit are merely impersonal creative forces.⁶¹⁴

We reject the notions that human beings and the created world have a spark of divinity, and that natural human beings can through an evolutionary process "awaken" and return to godhood.⁶¹⁵ There are no levels of disciples or of spiritual attainment in natural human beings.⁶¹⁶

We reject the notion that human beings are in control of their own destinies.⁶¹⁷ For all potentiality comes from the Lord.⁶¹⁸

600 Romans 3:28; Ephesians 2:8-9.

601 Philippians 2:9-11.

602 Hebrews 9:27.

603 2 Corinthians 5:10.

604 Matthew 25:46.

605 2 Timothy 3:15-16; Genesis 3:1 ("Has God indeed said?")

606 Matthew 16:17; Psalm 1:2.

607 Romans 12:2; Ephesians 1:18.

608 John 16:23.

609 Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 91:11-12.

610 Matthew 22:39.

611 Philippians 2:3.

612 Ephesians 5:29.

613 Mark 7:19; 1 Timothy 4:4-5.

614 Genesis 1:1; 1 Timothy 6:15-16; John 1:3; John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11.

615 Genesis 3:5 ("will be like God"); Psalm 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:13; Deuteronomy 32:39; Ezekiel 28:1-2.

616 Romans 3:20, 23-24.

617 Isaiah 45:7.

618 Ephesians 6:10.

We reject the notion that evil is a figment of imagination,⁶¹⁹ that it is admirable for human beings to get rid of their feelings of guilt by their own efforts, and that good and bad, and regenerate and unregenerate are essentially the same.⁶²⁰

We reject the fiction that there is no objective truth, but that reality is only what people perceive in their own minds.⁶²¹

We reject all who claim to be Christ besides the Lord Jesus.⁶²²

We reject the belief that human beings can take responsibility for their own problems, save themselves by positive thinking,⁶²³ and “forgive” themselves.⁶²⁴

We reject the belief in many life-cycles or reincarnations.⁶²⁵

We reject, and warn against, all involvement with the occult, Satan, and evil spirits.⁶²⁶

We reject the writings of ancient and modern non-Christian religions,⁶²⁷ and whatever claims to be new revelation.⁶²⁸

⁶¹⁹ Luke 11:14; Romans 3:23; Romans 5:12.

⁶²⁰ Genesis 3:5 (“knowing good and evil”). God, who knows about evil, does not know it in the sense that He experiences it.

⁶²¹ John 4:17-18; John 17:17.

⁶²² Matthew 24:5; 23-25.

⁶²³ Romans 5:6.

⁶²⁴ Psalm 49:7; Galatians 1:4; John 15:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

⁶²⁵ Luke 16:19-31; and compare Genesis 3:4 (“You will not surely die”); Hebrews 9:27.

⁶²⁶ Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Ephesians 2:2; Luke 11:24.

⁶²⁷ 1 Timothy 1:4.

⁶²⁸ Jeremiah 23:9-40.

Appendix

The Remaining Elements (Reliquiae)

There has at different times, been some controversy in the Lutheran Church regarding the remaining elements in the Lord's Supper (reliquiae). There are those that will insist that only enough bread and wine be consecrated as can be consumed, so that nothing remains. They base this in the words of Jesus, "Take eat...take drink." The position of the AELC is as follows:

Insisting that communicants must consume all that has been consecrated cannot rest only on Jesus' words, "Eat" and "Drink." One could insist only if He had said, "Eat all" and "Drink all." Treating His words as if He had included "all" rests on silence, which ought not to compel consciences.

Yes, the word "all" does occur in Matthew 26:27, "All drink from it," (where "all" is in apposition with the implied subject "you" of the imperative verb); and Mark 14:23, "And they all drank from it" (where "all" is in apposition with the subject of the indicative verb). In both cases "all" is masculine plural, referring to the disciples. "All" is not the object of the words "drink" and "drank," and the pronoun "it" is neuter, referring to the cup. The *KJV* in Matthew 26:27 "Drink ye all of it" can mislead people in two ways, first as though "all" meant "all of the contents of the cup" and as if "all" were the object of the verb. In older English "of" is often a variant of "from," as in the wording of the Nicene Creed, "God of God," where the Greek is "ek" ("out of" or "from") The Son is God derived from God. The meaning in Matthew 26:27 is not "Drink it all." Mark's "And they all drink of it" does not necessarily mean "And they drank it all," but "And they all drank from it" (i.e., from the cup).

While the practice of using up all consecrated elements in the Supper cannot be condemned, and it does have the advantage of avoiding endless debates, nevertheless, a practice, no matter what it has to commend it, should not bind consciences when it has no clear command. Jesus did not say "Eat it all" or "Drink it all." Therefore, we recommend:

1. When preparing the wine and wafers, a careful estimate of the quantity be made, so that there's not a lot of unused elements left over after the service.
2. It is good Lutheran practice to treat the unused consecrated elements with reverence. Unused consecrated bread and wine may be:
 - a) Reverently consumed in the sacristy by the pastor or assistants after the service; or

- b) Retained for future sacramental use (except in the case of the wine which has been passed around in the common cup); or
- c) In the case of wine, poured onto the earth where it is not liable to profanation, and, in the case of the bread, buried at a similar site.

