

Formula of Pious Consensus Among the Pastors of the Saxon Churches

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by Lukas Unglerus

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About this document

On May 2, 1572 the pastors of Transylvania (modern day Romania) accepted the Augsburg Confession by solemn oath. The Synod elected Pastor Lukas Unglerus to succeed Matthias Hebler as bishop. Hebler had died on September 18, 1571. Unglerus was a learned man who had already made a favorable impression at the four German universities as a member of the church's delegation. His election ushered in a new era not only because he was the first native Transylvanian Saxon to become bishop, but also because he continued to serve as pastor at his parish. Consequently, the office of bishop in the church was associated with his parish for the next 300 years. Unglerus immediately proved his qualifications as a bishop. The new sovereign asked for a summary of the most important articles of faith as taught by the Lutherans. Unglerus wrote it at once. It was adopted by the synod and presented to the sovereign (*Formula pii consensus*). It is the last and concluding confession of the Saxon church dating from the Reformation period. It bears the spirit of Unglerus' teacher Melancthon (especially in the articles on Law and Gospel, justification by faith, good works, the free will, and predestination) and his predecessor Hebler (on Communion). Developments had run their course and come to rest with the solemn acceptance of the Augsburg Confession and the *Formula pii consensus*. The church in Transylvania had entered upon a clear course from which it did not deviate for centuries.

—Adapted from *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, Vol. 3:2410.

Preface

There is a very sweet declaration in the eleventh chapter of the prophet Hosea [11:9]: "I will not destroy Ephraim, as I destroyed the towns near Sodom, nor will I execute my fierce anger, for I am God and not man, and the Holy One dwells in your midst." These words set forth a precious doctrine of consolation, describing the greatest gift of God to the human race: the marvelous preservation of the church of God in this life. For our Heavenly Father in his boundless wisdom, mercy, and goodness not only gathers to himself by his voice a church pleasing to him in this world, but even in the great multitude of the wicked, amid unending and miserable confusions, he preserves her and mightily defends her with his right hand, as the apple of his eye.

There is, therefore, a true church of the Lord gathered in this world, a low and contemptible assembly in the sight of the flourishing part of mankind, and dispersed through the whole world as if in exile, scattered among different governments, and surrounded on every side by an infinite host of wicked enemies, by whom she is oppressed and scorned and afflicted with many woes. And nevertheless the everlasting God does not forget this abject assembly, nor does he watch her idly, but rather in the midst of perils and tumults he is her very present help, and he preserves, rules, and watches over her unto the end of the age. Indeed, it is for the sake of this church, as the prophet here shows, that God repeatedly spares the most wicked empires, unjust kingdoms, and the whole world. For though he could justly and deservedly pour out his wrath because of the sins of men, punishing, ruining, and entirely destroying them like Sodom, nonetheless for the sake of his holy seed he preserves some governments so that they may be the appointed shelters for his church in this world; and so that this holy assembly of the church may have its dwelling place even in the midst of the wicked, he mitigates and very often removes the deserved punishment. Even amid the most terrible confusion and collapse of empires, he mightily defends his church: by whom he wishes to be truly known, worshipped, and invoked; from whom he wishes to hear the sound of his Gospel; and through [whom he wishes] to spread the glory of his most holy Name to all eternity.

Concerning this marvelous defense and preservation of the Church of God there are also very sweet promises elsewhere, as in Isaiah 59[:21]: "This is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my Spirit which is in you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your seed, or out of the mouth of your seed's seed, says the Lord, from this time forth and for evermore." And thus chapter 46[:3-4]: "Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been carried from my womb; even to your old age I am He, and to gr

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hairs I will carry you and save you.” And again chapter 54[:10]: “The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my lovingkindness shall not depart from you, and the covenant of my peace shall not be removed, says the Lord who has compassion on you.” And again [?]: “Be steadfast, for you shall see the help of the Lord upon you.” And Christ the Son of God speaks often of this defense of the church [Matthew 16:18, John 10:27-28, Matthew 28:20]: “And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and no one shall take my sheep from out of my hand; I will be with you always, even to the end of the age.”

These and similar promises are not empty or vain words, but are truly effective, for they proceed from the mouth of him who is [Psalm 33:4] “the Lord, faithful in all his words,” and they are welcome to pious minds, providing sure consolations, in which we too, who exercise the teaching office in the Saxon churches, share by the gift of God, as fellow citizens of the true church of God. For we see clearly and have in fact experienced the result of the divine promises, that is, the present help of God, for he has thus far marvelously preserved and defended the church which by the voice of Christ he has gathered together in these lands, [though she is] surrounded by cruel enemies and many perils. [He has defended her] not only against the savage and monstrous cruelty of [foreign] nations, and the incursions and devastation of the enemy, but much more against the mad wrath of the devil, who was raging against the church of Christ with horrible errors, blasphemies, and lies through his pestilent instruments and fierce wolves, tearing and disturbing the Lord's flock. But [God] did not permit them to uproot his holy seed among us, but mercifully protected his church beneath the shadow of his wings, preserving in her the truth and light of the true doctrine of his Gospel.

Our Saxon churches have thus far enjoyed the rich fruit of this greatest divine gift, while amid the ragings of many severe perils and the frequent upsets of the kingdom they have by God's protection remained unharmed. Nor even, amid the confusion of the horrible errors with which restless spirits troubled this kingdom for a number of years (to the hurt of many souls), were our churches shaken or contaminated; rather, they stood firm in the same confession of faith, true doctrine, and conviction of mind. For this great lovingkindness and mercy of God we give thanks to God from our inmost hearts, insofar as the present fragility of our nature permits, and we acknowledge that the defense and preservation of our churches has not come about by chance, nor has it been the product of human prudence or wisdom; rather, [it has come] through the singular counsel, prudence, and goodness of God, by which he wished to make these churches of the Saxon people as it were an example to the neighboring peoples of his divine nature and mercy.

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This great gift of God was very evident for many years under the happy government of the serene and pious King John [Sigismund], of holy memory, who deserved so well of our entire country. For since he was adorned with great learning, and supplied with a nearly divine intelligence, he never let himself be deceived by the false counsels of the wicked, who endeavored to make him harm the Saxon churches or hinder the course of the Gospel in them. Instead, he was their generous and faithful guard and defender, so that even as the churches of other peoples in this kingdom were repeatedly disturbed by horrible contentions and errors, he nevertheless wished that ours should always remain untroubled and pure, nor did he ever permit the impertinence of the mad Arians to rage as they desired against our congregations. By such piety, prudence, and mercy, worthy of a Christian prince, he has obtained the immortal praise of all posterity, and surely all the pious were of the hope that, had God willed this most serene prince to continue longer in authority, he would have repudiated all those false seductions with which false teachers troubled him, and would have joined himself at last in true faith to the confession of our churches.

But the great gift of God in preserving the church now shines forth much more brightly in the fact that, after the death of the most serene King John, Almighty God has again had mercy on our afflicted country and has by his goodness raised up and given as it were from heaven a truly heroic prince [Stephen Bathory], in whose breast shines Christian prudence, erudition, virtue, piety, and love and care for true religion. He cares not only for the external administration of the country, its peace, and its physical defense, but much more indeed for the salvation of his subjects' souls, praying above all else that in this kingdom, which has as yet been spared from the cruelty of the Turks, true religion, faith, piety, and concord, which are the highest gifts of God, might flourish, and that the stirring up of dissensions, the raging of perverse teachings, and the scandal of errors might be removed. For he is showing in the happy and well-favored beginning of his reign the true, genuine, and studious zeal of a Christian prince by defending not only the second table [of the Law], but also the first, in which true religion and the pure worship of God is taught. This holy and pious intention our most illustrious and merciful prince has recently made clearly manifest to our people by sure indications, in using his authority to enjoin the pastors and ministers of the Saxon churches to gather in synod. There he set forth his pious thoughts and will concerning religion through the eminent and reverend lord Denis, the faithful preacher of his highness, and wished that there should take place among all the ministers of these churches a peaceable discussion from the Word of God of the several articles of faith, and that a firm concord should be preserved in the true and

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salutary doctrine, ecclesiastical discipline, and external rites; and this in such a way that the minds of our teachers should be fully set forth, and that the state of the churches of these regions might be clearly seen by all.

For since this kingdom of Transylvania has sometimes been falsely accused and denounced before all Christian princes and peoples as if it had fallen away altogether from true religion and Christian faith, and were everywhere infected by the detestable heresies of the Arians and Anabaptists--the occasion for this pernicious rumor being given by certain troublesome, wrong-headed, and pestiferous men, enthusiasts, wicked disciples of Servetus, who disturbed the unified state of these churches with perverse and blasphemous doctrines, hateful struggles, and poisonous writings--it was therefore necessary that this pious synod should be held, so that the stains of this belief, with which this kingdom has been falsely branded, should be uncovered, and that it should be manifest to everyone that there still remain many truly orthodox Hungarian and Saxon churches, proclaiming the uncorrupted voice of the Gospel, and observing the right use of the sacraments, and standing far apart from blasphemies and damnable errors. At this synod the pastors of the Saxon churches, in humble and faithful obedience to the command of their most illustrious prince, assembled in great number, and having gathered all the articles [of faith] from the Word of God have established a true concord, which they have confirmed not only in faith and by public confession, but also by their own free subscription.

We give thanks, then, to God the eternal Father with his Son and the Holy Spirit, for the salutary prosecution and outcome of this proposal, for he gathers among us a true church for himself by his Word and reveals the light of the Gospel, preserves the assembly of teachers and hearers in one religion and pious concord, and protects our assemblies from impious errors and abominable blasphemies. We will indeed pray ceaselessly to God with ardent minds and words that he may preserve the most illustrious prince of the realm in this most pious counsel and intention; [that he may] more and more stir up his mind by the Holy Spirit to the true knowledge and fear of God, to the love of the true Christian religion, and to the advance and defense of the church of God; and that he may give [him] a prosperous rule over the kingdom, prudence, and a brave and sound spirit, so that all his counsels and deeds may be above all pleasing to God, salutary for the church, and most prosperous for the kingdom and all his subjects! Amen.

But since we have been commanded to set down the acts of the synod in writing and bear public witness to our agreement, we wish in the following propositions to teach very briefly, summarily, simply, and in order, the individual articles of the doctrine as it is taught in our churches. We bear witness that we proclaim, establish, and teach nothing

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new, unfamiliar, or foreign; nor do we like Ecebolius suddenly dream up or invent religions of the year or of the month; but [we hold to] the established truth, received once for all from the word of God. This faith and doctrine has now for thirty years been restored and approved in our churches, and constantly proclaimed with the greatest unanimity; and, with the help of God, we will endeavor to pass it on to our posterity.

Article I *On Doctrine*

With one mind, heart, and faith we believe, and openly confess with our mouths before God and the holy church in heaven and on earth, that in all the human race there is only one true doctrine concerning God and eternal salvation, which is contained in the writings of the prophets and apostles. This [doctrine] we embrace with all our hearts according to the natural sense which is produced by a pious comparison of the divine Scriptures among themselves and which was then set forth in the creeds: the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian, with which the pious confession which the reformed churches of Germany presented to the emperor Charles V and the states of the German Empire at Augsburg also agrees. With this [confession] our Saxon churches in Transylvania have also by God's gift firmly agreed thus far, and in the same true confession of Christian doctrine they will, with God's help, faithfully persevere to the end. We pray, therefore, to the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that he would govern our minds by his Holy Spirit, preserving them in the true faith and salutary doctrine, that we may be citizens of Christ's church in all eternity! Amen. But whatever departs from this norm of true doctrine, or shall be found to differ from it, we anathematize and condemn, such as the idolatry of the heathen, the blasphemies of the Jews and Muslims [Mahometans], the insane inventions of the Manichaeans, and the wicked and monstrous opinions of the enthusiasts, Anabaptists, and Arians, both old and new. And we detest also the idolatrous worship and wicked corruptions of the Roman pontiffs and the Jesuits, which are contrary to the Word of God and the orthodox church, as are the many horrible blasphemies which have been recently scattered in our country by the fanatical spirits begotten by the devil.

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Article II

On God and the Three Persons of the Godhead

With unanimous hearts and lips we confess and by the help of God faithfully defend the doctrine of the Trinity on the basis of the Word of God: that there is only one true God and three consubstantial Persons, the eternal Father, the Son and Word, and the Holy Spirit, as the eternal Godhead has revealed itself in the divine testimonies. The same doctrine is purely explained in the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene, and the Athanasian, and also in the Augsburg Confession and elsewhere. We believe, then, in the unity of the divine essence in God, and in the trinity of subsisting persons in the same, not because of human or philosophical arguments and speculations, but because the eternal Godhead has thus revealed himself in his clear Word by shining testimonies and images, as in the baptism of Christ, and in the Symbol of Christian faith. We make the same confession as the apostolic church, that the eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one and the same God, eternal, infinite, and perfect in himself, in which God we believe with true faith, are baptized, and are saved. And we gladly use this manner of speaking about God along with the orthodox church, so that our true confession may be distinguished from the blasphemies of the Jews, Muslims [Mahometan], and Arians, both because these forms of speech [phrases] agree with the Word of God and the foundation [of our faith], and because their signification describes very accurately the only true God. Nor do we, in naming the three persons of the Godhead, affirm three Gods, nor make a Quaternity, but we say that these three, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are true God, one and undivided in the essence, threefold and distinct in the persons, according to the divine revelation in the Word of God. Thus, therefore, we distinguish these three persons of the Godhead by their own characteristics neither confusing them nor separating them in essence. For the eternal Father is unbegotten, and he eternally begets the Son, his coeternal and consubstantial image. In the fullness of time he sent this Son into the world to assume human nature and to fulfill the promise which had been made concerning the redemption of the human race. The eternal Son of God was eternally begotten of the Father before the ages, according to his divine nature, and at the promised time he descended from heaven and was made man, born of the Virgin Mary according to the flesh. This Son and Mediator is true God and man, not by confusion of substance, but by the unity of the person, because in the unbegotten Son of God these two natures, the divine and the human, are inseparably united, so that God and man are only one Christ, the Redeemer, Savior, and Mediator, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Holy Spirit is not simply a movement cre-

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ated in the saints, but is a real person subsisting of the same essence and Godhead with the Father and the Son, consubstantial and true God; for the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son and is sent into the hearts of believers, in whom he works.

This doctrine is proclaimed in its purity in our churches according to the word of God and is fully set forth with the divine testimonies. But in the profound mystery of the most Holy Trinity, we teach that the minds of the pious are not to indulge in curious human speculations or in pernicious disputations, by which faith and truth are shaken, but that we must simply assent to the pure Word of God and the divine revelations.

But since this doctrine is the special foundation and basis of Christian faith, the most bitter enemy of the human race, the devil, the author of all evil and the father of lies, could not leave this truth unchallenged and unshaken. Rather, to overthrow it he poured out all his force against the church of God, and strove with all his powers to obscure and utterly destroy this true knowledge and invocation of God. Therefore he stirred up against this immovable truth horrible errors and pernicious heresies, with which he tried to topple Christ, the eternal Son of God, from his heavenly glory and despoil him of his divinity. And to accomplish these detestible ends, Satan as ever calls forth his pestilent instruments, men full of contention, swelled up with pride, haters of truth and piety. Such, in the times of John the evangelist, were Ebion and Cerinthus, enemies of the church of God who denied and opposed the divinity of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. And their blasphemy gradually spread itself far and wide, until it was renewed after many years by the impious Samosathenes and Arius. Then there followed many disciples of Antichrist and false apostles, spreading the same impiety, while many other and various blasphemies against the Son of God then gained in strength. For some denied the divinity of Christ and some his humanity; others confused the two natures in Christ, or entirely separated them, stumbling horribly on the rock of offense, among whom were Photinus, Sabellius, Eutiches, Praxeas, Macedonius (who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit), Eunomius, Nestorius, and also many others, of whom the ecclesiastical histories treat. These were all enemies and plagues of the church of the Son of God in the east, and they drew astray the greater part of the world to their blasphemy, so that not only were the churches shaken and despoiled by their madness, but even the cities, kingdoms, and empires of the east were stirred up to mutual destruction and overthrow, until at last the impious plague of the Arians somehow found a place for itself in the empire of the Muslims [Mahometans], where even now it holds its own.

Having in mind these horrible tumults, we shudder with all our hearts when we see similar contentions being stirred up in these last days in the Lord's church in these re-

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gions by certain perverse men, who again with diabolic audacity and temerity revive and summon up from the pit deadly heresies long ago condemned and confuted by the orthodox church. Of these troublers of the pious churches, these fanatic spirits who do not come from the school of the Holy Spirit but from the devil's pit, disciples of Mohammed [Mahomet] and the Koran, such in our time were Servetus of Spain, who was burned in Gaul; Valentin Gentile, truly a "gentile"; and Socinus, Alciatus, and other men of Italian name, who as heretics wandered here and there through the Christian kingdoms, being members of no church, stirring up their fires of blasphemy to the destruction of many souls. The followers of these men, the Antitrinitarians, were to our great peril brought even into our country, already otherwise afflicted, by the efforts of George Blandrata, the doctor, and Francis David Claudiopolitanus, who defend the same damnable errors as the Arians.

But all of these men who oppose the doctrine of the holy and undivided Trinity, spewing forth blasphemous voices with foul tongues against the Son of God and the Holy Spirit and denying their divinity, we abhor with all our hearts, and with the orthodox church we deservedly condemn such men and give them over to the judgment of God. And since they have now been warned many times to emend their errors by the pious churches and their teachers, and by learned men both of these regions and from afar, and yet tenaciously persist in them, we judge that they are incorrigible and should henceforth not be heard by the true church, but according to the warning of Christ and Paul should be feared and avoided. Meanwhile we will pray to God that in his mercy he would look on them and by his Holy Spirit deign to lead them back to the path of truth and to pious concord with the true church.

Article III

On the Law and the Gospel

The whole Christian doctrine contained in the books of the prophets and the apostles is divided into the Law and the Gospel. These two kinds of teaching have always been proclaimed in the church, and now are proclaimed among us, for by them God has revealed his essence and will to the human race. And the shining distinction between these doctrines must always be observed. For it casts light on the whole of Holy Scripture, just as ignorance of this distinction has always given birth to great darkness and errors in the church.

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Now the Law is a divinely revealed doctrine which God placed in the hearts of men at the beginning of creation, and later repeated at Mount Sinai and elsewhere: teaching what we should be, and what we ought to do and not to do; requiring perfect obedience or conformity with the will of God without any sin; promising good things to those who show obedience; and threatening with wrath and eternal punishment all those who do not continue steadfast in the things written in the Law of God.

The Gospel, on the other hand, is a doctrine not known by nature, but revealed from the secret counsel of the Godhead through the Son, in which God through Christ freely promises the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life to all those who repent and embrace the promise by faith.

But although what the law teaches is impossible for us in the present corruption of our nature, and we cannot fulfill it by our own powers, much less obtain thereby righteousness and the forgiveness of sins--"for by works of the law shall no flesh be justified" [Galatians 2:16]-- nevertheless this doctrine in its kind is necessary in the church and has its proper use. For it gives testimony concerning God, who and what he is, and what he requires of us; and finally it prescribes the rule of right living and the norm of government; it reproves sin in all men and condemns all uncleanness, terrifies consciences by threatening grave punishments, and calls to repentance. The Law is also a schoolmaster leading us to Christ. For since the Law cannot heal our wounds, it shows that the true remedy must be sought elsewhere, that is, in Christ the Mediator. These things are to be set against the Antinomians, who expel the Law of Moses from the church in its entirety and cry out that it ought not to be taught; for they assert that repentance should not be set forth from the decalogue but from the Gospel of Christ. But in fact the Gospel does not abolish the Law, but rather clarifies it and restores it to its true and proper use, and teaches how the Law of God may be fulfilled, that is, through Christ who is the end of the Law.

Article IV

On Sin

As God is in himself most perfect, thus too from the beginning of creation he established all his creatures in perfection, without any stain, defect, or fault; for all things which God made were very good. Thus he created both angels and men with the greatest wisdom; not for corruption, sin, or death, but according to his image he created them perfectly good,

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righteous, and holy, in the greatest perfection, conformed to the mind and will of God, and possessed of full liberty of the will. He shared with them his own light, wisdom, goodness, righteousness, holiness, and immortality, that they might be temples and dwelling-places of God, in whom God himself might dwell and be all in all.

They err, therefore, who rashly dare to assert that men were so created by God that they sinned of necessity, making God the author of sin, when in fact, as Psalm 5[:4] says: "For thou art not a God who delights in wickedness." God neither created nor wills, nor delights in, nor approves, nor commands sin, nor does he compel it, but rather he is moved to terrible wrath by sins, and punishes them most severely, as the divine voice in the decalogue and many examples bear witness. Therefore, the cause and origin of sin must be sought elsewhere, and not insolently cast upon God, who with his own voice uncovers sins and wickedness as abominable things, and abhors and punishes them in all men, apart from forgiveness through Christ the Mediator.

The cause of sin, then, is the free will of the devil and our first parents, who abusing the freedom of their will, fell away from God by their own choice. By this disobedience they became guilty of the wrath of God, and lost entirely the righteousness, wisdom, and justice with which they had been created by God. We condemn, therefore, the madness of Marcion and the Manichaeans, and of those who assert a Stoic necessity for sinning; for these are repugnant to the consensus of the church of God.

Concerning original sin we declare clearly that we teach along with the church of God from the first fathers, prophets, and apostles, that since the fall of Adam all men by nature are burdened with sins, according to their carnal generation and by propagation from their parents, as Paul bears witness in Romans 5:12: "Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin"; Ephesians 2[:3]: "We were by nature children of wrath"; Romans 8[:7]: "The mind of the flesh is at enmity with God"; Psalm 51[:5]: "I was conceived in iniquity." This original sin, the defects, and the wicked inclinations remain even after baptism in children and the regenerate, though what pertains to guilt and condemnation is freely remitted by the mercy of God, and is not imputed to the believers.

Therefore the opinion of the Pelagians is perverse, and we condemn it, as well as those who have followed the delusion of those, like the Manichaeans and Anabaptists, who deny that there is sin in baptized infants and deny that the evil desire which remains is something which fights against the Law of God, and in this way extenuate and destroy the original sin with which we are born.

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Article V

On Forgiveness of Sins and on the Justification of Man before God

Since this article of faith concerning the justification of man before God is above all else the center of our life and salvation, to which everything must be related, it is diligently taught and explained in our churches according to the pure Word of God, and defended against all the corruptions and errors by which the Gospel is darkened, the benefits of the Son of God are obscured, and true consolation is taken from our minds.

For we distinguish between the true righteousness of faith, which alone avails before God, and the righteousness of the Law, works, or discipline, even though this is commanded by God, and despite the fact that it is a great ornament to man that he can, [even] in the present infirmity of his nature, decently regulate his external actions in [this] life. And yet this is in no way a fulfillment of the law, nor does it merit the forgiveness of sins, nor is it the righteousness by which we are righteous and acceptable before God [Galatians 2:16]: “for by works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.” But the righteousness of faith, of which the Son of God teaches us in the Gospel, is very different. For it alone by faith in Christ obtains the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life from the free goodness and mercy of God, through and on account of the merit, obedience, grace, atonement, and intercession of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ--who suffered, was crucified, and was raised for us--and him alone, without any worthiness on our part, apart from our works, virtues, and merits. For this gift of justification is freely given and imputed to those who believe in Christ, through the faith by which we acknowledge both the person and the benefits of the Son of God and apply them to ourselves, and assent to all the articles of faith, and are certain that [our] sins are forgiven us for the sake of Christ according to the promise revealed in the Gospel.

This is a very brief but very true summary of the justification of man before God: that only by true faith in Christ are we received into grace, when our minds with true consolation rest in the only Mediator, and with firm trust, through the Holy Spirit, lay hold of the merit of the Son of God, by which our sins are expiated, and righteousness, salvation, and eternal life are given and distributed [donata et parta] to believers. And in explaining this article it is necessary that we retain the exclusive terms which St. Paul uses, namely: we are justified freely, without works, without the Law. For they speak of the imputation of righteousness and free acceptance by which those who believe are justified by God freely, without their own merits. And this way of speaking pays the proper honor to Christ the Justifier, for through him these gifts are freely given to us. Finally, our con-

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sciences too draw a sure and firm consolation from this [doctrine] in the midst of the despair and fear which arise from the awareness of the wrath of God against sins. And there is also certainty in prayer and confident trust, for a mind doubtful of its reconciliation flees from God and cannot approach the throne of grace with firm trust and prayer.

And thus the other exclusive term, by faith alone, must also be retained in the church and rightly explained; that is, that the word “sola” does not exclude repentance, or contrition, fear of God, a new life, and the other virtues which are present in conversion, as if they were not present. Nor indeed does it attribute our justification to the worthiness or merit of our faith, insofar as it is a virtue in us, as if it were a cause. But it denies that our contrition and other virtues are the cause or merit of the forgiveness of sins, and asserts that the obedience, passion, and death of Christ alone constitute the cause and merit for the sake of which the remission of sins and the inheritance of eternal life are given to believers; and this gift is acknowledged, received, and applied to us by faith alone.

Therefore we reject and condemn all errors and corruptions in this article, as repugnant to the Word of God, such as the doctrine of the papists and monks concerning the “*opus operatum*”, in which they pretend that men can attain righteousness, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life by their own virtues, qualities, and merits. We condemn as well the Pharasaic righteousness of external discipline which Pelagius and Origen asserted along with others, as if we could satisfy the law of God by it. We also reject the cold synecdoche concerning “formed faith” and the conjuncture of all virtues or works with faith in justification, which the modern papal teachers artfully seek to defend, asserting that faith is merely knowledge and a preparation, so that thereafter we may be truly justified through love and the other virtues. Likewise [we reject] those who say that the terms “freely” and “alone” must be cast away, and who teach concerning justification that it is sufficient to believe in the forgiveness of sins in general, but in such a way that when it comes to the application of the benefits and merits of Christ to the individual, we must always be doubtful because of our unworthiness. We also reject along with the Christian churches the vain robbery of Osiander concerning a newly-created, essential, and indwelling righteousness, which takes away from the merit and righteousness of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom alone we attribute glory, righteousness, redemption, and our salvation.

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Article VI

On Good Works and their Necessity, or on the New Obedience

Concerning this article of doctrine we faithfully maintain agreement and in our churches assiduously teach from the Word of God the function and exercise of good works. For we know that they are pleasing to God in the reborn and are absolutely required in conversion. For the Holy Spirit does not work in those who persevere in crimes against conscience, nor does he dwell in them, but such men are enemies of God who do not have true faith.

We teach, therefore, that a new obedience in conformity with the will of God, or good works, must necessarily follow in all those who have been reconciled by faith through Christ. For there is a necessary and immutable order whereby the rational creature obeys God the Creator, and we are converted and received by God for this purpose, that we may thenceforth avoid sins and exercise ourselves in the new obedience and a life conformed to the divine will. And it is certain that the grace of God, the Holy Spirit, and the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven are lost by those who pollute themselves with evil works, as is expressly stated in 1 Corinthians 6, Ephesians 5, and elsewhere. And God punishes evil works or crimes with horrible punishments, both temporal and eternal, and wishes that in this life discipline should be cultivated, and that the tranquility of political society should be preserved, and that men should be invited to the knowledge of God and the exercise of virtues by the honorable example of others. And yet it must by no means be asserted that good works are necessary to the attainment of salvation and eternal life, as if they were some kind of cause. For as the forgiveness of sins is freely given for the sake of Christ alone, without any works, and is received by faith alone, so too are salvation and the inheritance of eternal life given freely, apart from any works. Romans 6[:23]: "But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Therefore it is a horrible blasphemy to attribute to our works and merits the honor due to Christ alone, who alone by his death and resurrection fully merited the righteousness and eternal life given to all the pious. And it is an awful slaughter of consciences, and drives timid minds to despair, to transfer the cause of justification to our works. For it is impossible that a man should be justified by works of the Law.

Now we call those works good and necessary which are taught in the Decalogue, and which are done by shining faith in Christ. These works are pleasing to God in the reborn, by faith, and they have moreover very sweet promises and rewards both spiritual and corporal, by which God wishes to be known as the author of all our benefits. For he

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wishes these corporal goods to be sought from him in faith, with a good conscience, concerning which it is said in 1 Timothy 4[:8]: "Godliness holds promise for the present life, and also for the life to come;" Mark 10[:30]: "They shall receive a hundredfold in this life;" Matthew 5[:12]: "Your reward is great in heaven." But these rewards are to be received, not because our works have obtained them by merit but from the free mercy and lovingkindness of God, which is firmly promised to the believers because of faith in Christ.

But concerning other works, not commanded by God, such as superstitious kinds of worship, dreamed up by the popes apart from the Word of God, we pronounce according to the rule of Christ: "In vain you worship me with the precepts of men," Matthew 15[:9], 19[:17?]. For such works are not necessary, rather, they are displeasing to God, and are to be entirely condemned, such as the sale of masses, the invocation of the saints, the worship of idols, and similar horrible profanations.

Article VII *On Predestination*

In the mystery of predestination we do not teach the people that the hidden counsel of God and the number of the elect are to be investigated by human curiosity, but we lead the minds of the pious to the express will of God revealed in the Word, by which without doubt he wills all men to be saved. Neither are we to imagine discrimination, or respect of persons, or unfairness, or injustice in God, but God in His great mercy is rich toward all those who call on him and flee to him in true faith. These he receives out of pure grace through the Son, and [he] calls all sinners to salvation and repentance. For he does not wish the destruction or death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted Word receive the offered grace and that many are rejected, we teach that the cause is not to be attributed to God, who created man in his own image for eternal life, not for destruction or eternal damnation; but the blame falls back on ourselves, who stubbornly resist the divine will, and by our sins call the wrath of God and punishments upon ourselves, as is said in Hosea [13:9?]: "Destruction is thine own, O Israel; thy salvation is only in me."

But in the article of predestination we teach that the eternal God, before the foundations of the world had been laid, in his secret counsel foreknew and foresaw all future things in creation, for nothing is ever hidden from him. He, foreknowing and foreseeing everything, created heaven and earth and all creatures, that his glory might be revealed. Having made the whole creation very good, he foreknew and foresaw the fall of angels

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and men, whom nevertheless he had created in his image and endowed with a free will, so that they might incline either to good or to evil. God, foreknowing this freely-willed and lamentable fall, even when no creature had been created, planned the redemption and restoration of the human race, and this according to the good pleasure of his will, which he set forth in himself according to his love and grace. But by this predestination or inevitable decree God imposed no necessity either of salvation or of perdition on any man, but he foreordained a certain definite manner of election, by which God resolved to save the lost human race by grace through the Son, and to free them by his mercy. And he did not will this to be done immediately, but through certain means, that is, through Christ, and indeed through faith which assents to the Word and its promises, so that as many as lay hold of his only-begotten Son in true faith are elect, and shall not perish, but have eternal life. But as many as scorn the Son by their unbelief are condemned, and the wrath of God remains upon them.

Thus we teach concerning the predestination of those who are to be saved, that the election and decree of God are not to be taken in particular, at least not as concerning certain persons, but concerning each and every recipient, as many as acknowledge the Son. This rule, according to which God established this election, must be reverently observed, as is said in John 1[:12]: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, who believe in his name." Nor are we to imagine violent seizures, divine possession, or any compulsion beyond the Word of God in predestination. For outside of the assembly of those who are called, no one is elect, as Paul says in Romans 8[:30]: "Whom he chose, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also sanctified."

But in this doctrine we abhor the opinion of those who teach that the predestination of God is the cause of sins in men, and who press a Stoic necessity in all acts; and who assert an unfairness in God, and that God has inscribed only a certain few into the tablets of fate, and these he draws to himself even though they are unwilling and struggle against him, but rejects the others, even if they flee for refuge to the Son. For such fantasy beyond the Word of God is pernicious and produces doubt and despair in the minds of men who are otherwise faint.

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Article VIII

Concerning the Freedom of the Human Will, or Free Choice

Concerning free choice we embrace this simple and true statement, that there remains in man, even if he is not reborn, such freedom of the will that he can at least command his external members in external discipline or external actions. But this freedom of the will has no place at all in conversion to God and justification. For this spiritual renewal comes from God alone, who rules and leads us through his life-giving Son by his Holy Spirit, as Paul says [Romans 8:9-17]: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, and if sons, then heirs." These things, then, must be especially observed in this article:

First: In this doctrine we oppose the madness of the Stoics, who contend that all events and human actions, good and evil, such as the sins of Judas, Nero, and Caligula, take place by necessity and with the compulsion and effacious will of God. For these statements are most certain: "Our God is just and righteous, without any sin" [Daniel 9:14?]; and again, "You are not a God that desires iniquity" [Psalm 5:4]; "As I live, I do not desire the death of a sinner." [Ezekiel 33:11]

Second: The source of contingency is the freedom of the will in God, the angels, and men; that is, the faculty by which the will is able to choose an action or not choose it, or suspend its choice, or do this or that.

Third: It is certain that there remains freedom of the human will in external actions, in directing movements, as in the actions of artists, and in honorably regulating external behavior.

Fourth: In spiritual actions, in the true knowledge of God, repentance, contrition, the fear of God, faith, prayer, patience, and perserverance, it is certain that the human will cannot of its own powers will or accomplish anything, unless preceded by the Holy Spirit or God himself through the Word and divine inspiration, moving and impelling the will, so that it may assent and obey.

Fifth: After this movement and impulse of the will, imparted by God, the human will is not merely passive, nor is it like a log or a stone, but moved and aided by the Holy Spirit it does not struggle but assents to and obeys God, and is a "co-worker," as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 16 [sic, Romans 16:9, 21?]. When Joseph retains his chastity, modesty, and honor and abstains from the wife of his master [Genesis 39], the will is not simply passive, but moved and helped by God; through the Holy Spirit he assents, fights against temptations, and restrains his external members. When David hears the absolution from Nathan

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[2 Samuel 12:13], “The Lord has taken away thy sin,” the will is not entirely idle, but assents, fights against faithlessness and doubt, and struggles with itself. This statement we judge to be true and pious, consistent with the Word of God and agreeable to piety.

Article IX *On the Sacraments*

We say that the doctrine of the sacraments must always be joined and taught with the Word of God. For sacraments are, as Augustine says, visible words, as if to the Word certain testimonies and signs were added which strike our eyes and confirm the true doctrine and faith in our minds. Nor are they merely marks of profession, or merely rites distinguishing the true church from other peoples, but they are in fact signs of grace and the kind of external ceremonies which remind us of the forgiveness of sins and all the benefits of the Son of God, and that these pertain to all of those who make use of these sacraments in true faith.

There are, then, two sacraments of the New Testament, baptism and the Lord's Supper, to which absolution is joined. That the Roman church enumerates more sacraments, we judge to be done improperly and falsely.

Article X *On Baptism*

Baptism is a ceremony instituted by Christ, consisting of immersion and washing in water and the speaking of the words, “I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” which bear witness that the promise of grace truly pertains to the one who is baptized, and that he is received by God, given the Holy Spirit, and accepted to the inheritance of eternal life. Concerning this baptism Peter teaches in the third chapter [1 Peter 3:21] that it is not “the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ;” that is, it is a new covenant instituted between God and the baptized, that God has received them in grace and cleanses them from sin. But the baptized respond with faith, obedience, and the true worship of God. In this action God is active through the Holy Spirit, and a rebirth takes place, as Paul says in Titus 3[:5-6]: “He saved us by the washing of regeneration and re-

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newal in the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly"; again in Galatians 3[:27]: "As many as have been baptized have put on Christ"; John 3[:5]: "Except a man be reborn of water and the Spirit," etc.

We condemn and reject anabaptism as a horrible impiety and insult against the divine Name, which is abused by the Anabaptists when they profane the Name of God and set at naught the invocation of the divine name made in the first baptism. For baptism is not to be repeated, even if it is administered by hypocritical ministers, and those whose morals are corrupt, so long as they retain faithfully and entire the meaning of the words and institution of Christ. For the efficacy of the sacraments does not depend on the worthiness of the person, but upon the authority of the institution of Christ, who works in us through his Word and sacraments, giving the Holy Spirit and bestowing his heavenly gifts.

But we judge otherwise concerning those who are baptized by heretics and Arians who both destroy the faith of the sacraments and overturn the true meaning and form of the words. We abhor also the error or madness of the Anabaptists who exclude and prohibit infants from baptism, foolishly claiming for themselves the Lord's judgment concerning children, to whom nonetheless salvation and the promise of grace equally pertain, and not only to adults, as is expressly said in Matthew 10[sic, 19:14]: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven"; and again in chapter 18[:6]: "It is not the will of my Father that one of these little ones should perish"; John 3[:5]: "Except a man be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." For we believe that infants too are pleasing to God, and that there is in them the capacity for faith, though it is not apparent to our senses. For faith is a singular gift of God, and beyond investigation by human powers.

We reject as well the pernicious error of the Novatians, who deny that those who fall after baptism can again be converted to God. For the words of the Son of God manifestly contradict them, when he says to Peter that he should forgive seventy times seven times. [Matthew 18:21-22]

Article XI

On the Lord's Supper

Concerning the Lord's Supper we firmly believe that, when it is rightly administered, as it was instituted by Christ, Christ is truly present; and [that] when the external symbols--the bread and the wine-- are distributed and received, the true and substantial body and

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blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are distributed and received, to the end that the promise of the forgiveness of sins may be applied to each individual, the faith of those who partake may be strengthened, and the members of the true church of God may be distinguished from the impious.

And we condemn in this article the many abominable idolatries, abuses, and superstitions, with which the Lord's Supper was contaminated by the papists, when they turned the Lord's Supper into a horrible idolatry, and imagined that the consecrated bread was transformed and changed, and mutilated the sacrament by withholding one part from the lay people.

Christ is present in the Supper when it is administered as he instituted it, and present voluntarily because of his institution. Nor is the body of Christ drawn into the bread by the magical power of the words, so that [the body] is forced to remain in the bread when it is locked up or carried about apart from the action and use instituted by the Lord Christ; but in that action--that is, when it is received, eaten, and drunk--Christ is present and active, and communicates his body and blood to the communicants, according to the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 10[-11].

Therefore we must abhor the idolatry of the papists, who carry about the consecrated bread apart from its use and expose it for adoration as God, not otherwise than the Persians and Chaldeans once used to carry the fire of Ahrimazda before their kings in public processions so that it might be adored as God. Nor are the ceremonies, innovations, and other idolatrous abuses of the mass, whereby Christ is offered for the living and the dead, less abominable or less repugnant to the sacrifice of Christ.

We condemn also the errors of the Anabaptists and Sacramentarians, who deny the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Supper, and imagine that the bread and wine are merely bare symbols of the absent body and blood of Christ. They transform the words of the Son of God into figures of speech, and thereby produce another meaning, foreign to the words of Christ. But we judge that these words of the Son of God must be received simply and in their proper sense, just as they sound, and that Christ is truthful and almighty, and both wills and is able to be present everywhere, wherever he has bound himself by his Word. And although human reason, just as in the other articles of faith, rages and is offended by the absurdity, nevertheless it is more sure to give faith to such a manifest word of Christ than to make up something new according to human reason.

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Article XII

On the Power of the Keys and Absolution

Both public and private absolution are retained in our churches, in which men are not pressed to make an enumeration of sins, which is impossible and superstitious; rather, there is a general acknowledgment and confession of sins by each individual, and consolation from the Word of God is sought from a minister of the church and the announcement of the forgiveness of sins in the name of Christ, who says [John 20:23; Matthew 16:19], "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This form of absolution has precedent in the church. For thus Christ absolved the woman in the house of the leper, and thus the paralytic; thus Paul commanded that the incestuous man should be absolved; thus Nathan absolved David.

But this private confession and absolution as it is employed in our churches is very useful, for it is conducive to consolation, discipline, and good order. For in this way the forgiveness of sins is applied to the individual; the ignorant are diligently instructed in doctrine before they are admitted to the sacraments; the ministers of the church in pious conversation examine the progress of each in the catechism; and men are freely exhorted to repentance and emendation of life, lest they should approach unworthily. Many scruples of conscience are removed in the private examination accompanying the absolution by this pious and singular institution of the ministry. But we do not approve the auricular murmuring of the papists, which is idolatry. For it lays down a road to superstitious satisfaction, weakens faith, and leads minds to despair, since the enumeration of all sins which is urged there is impossible. For who understands his offenses?

Article XIII

On Repentance

The doctrine of repentance must always be retained in the church, for it is necessary in conversion and the Son of God himself commends it to us in Luke 24[:47], summarizing the Gospel when he says, "Go and preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in my name"; and again [Luke 13:3, 5], "Unless you repent, you shall likewise perish." Thus John the Baptist cries out [Matthew 3:8, Luke 3:8], "Repent and bear fruit worthy of repentance." But by repentance we do not understand the particular satisfactions by which the remission of sins is sought through certain foolish and and superstitious human obser-

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vances, by which the merit of the Son of God is manifestly derogated. Rather, we call repentance the whole conversion to God, which consists of terror from the recognition of sin and the wrath of God, and the restoration of faith, which is accompanied by the new obedience. For repentance includes these three things: contrition, faith, and the new obedience.

Contrition is terror with true sorrow and recognition of the wrath of God against sin. Faith is believing in the Gospel, assenting to the promise of grace, and firmly trusting that one's sins are truly forgiven by God for the sake of Christ, freely, and not because of our merits.

The new obedience in conversion is nothing other than fighting the good fight and maintaining faith and a good conscience, as Paul says [1 Timothy 1:18-19]. And although this obedience is imperfect in this life, nevertheless having made a start in those who are reborn, it pleases God because of shining faith in Christ the Mediator.

Article XIV

On Prayer and Invocation

It is necessary that the doctrine concerning the true invocation of God should be maintained uncorrupted in the church. For prayer is the preeminent worship of God, which Satan endeavors to sully with horrible idolatry. Therefore we must devote ourselves to prayer with greater vigilance, and observe the manner of prayer set forth in the Word of God, concerning which Christ says [John 15:16,16:23], "Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name, he shall grant you." Our mind must be certain what God it invokes in prayer, and hold to the firm consolation of the promises, lest what Christ reprehends in the Jews [sic] should apply to us: "You worship what you know not," John 4[:22].

Also the prayer of Christians in the church is to be distinguished from that of the Jews, Turks, and the heathen, who are ignorant of the nature of God and his will. For repentance, contrition, and faith are required for all true prayer, so that we may approach God with sure trust in the Mediator, for God has promised that he will give whatever we ask in the name of his Son.

This is the worship truly proper to God; it must by no means be rendered to the saints, nor are we to seek other mediators than Christ. Nor does any creature deserve worship, much less statues and idols. To do this is a horrible idolatry, which God will not suffer to go unpunished, for he says [Isaiah 42:8], "My glory I will not give to another."

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Article XV *On Marriage*

Concerning marriage we teach the pious and Christian [doctrine] that it is a most holy ordinance, divinely instituted, the indissoluble and legitimate union of one man and woman; and [that] by this association, God wishes to propagate, preserve, and piously bring up the human race, so that from it he may gather a church pleasing to himself. And he wishes also that this way of life should be holy, so that wayward lusts may be avoided. For God delights in chaste and pious marriage, and in the marital affections he sets forth for us, as it were in an image, his love for his Son and for us; and in his manifold blessings he shows his mercy and goodness toward pious husbands and wives, as Psalm 128 says. This holy way of life is opposed by all sorts of wayward and inordinate lusts, which are the flames of the devils, the impure spirits. These lusts God pursues with hatred, and he punishes them even in this life with horrible penalties, as the examples of the Sodomites and Benjamites make clear. After this life, God will judge fornicators and adulterers, as Paul says.

This divinely sanctioned order is also opposed by the wicked prohibition of marriages, which Paul calls a doctrine of demons. For it plainly contradicts the decree of God in which he says [Genesis 2:18], "It is not good for the man to be alone." But the popes prohibited marriages to ecclesiastical persons, gravely wounding the consciences of many with such an impossible yoke, and at the same time encouraged horrible lusts and impure blindnesses, which God abhors and detests.

But marriage is kept in our churches as the closest of bonds. We do not promiscuously allow illegitimate unions of persons, but marriage is forbidden to certain relations, both of consanguinity and of affinity, with respect to which marriage is prohibited to the fourth degree. Nor are marriages to be rashly dissolved in the manner of the Jews or Turks, but there are sure rules in the Word of God for permitting divorce, whereby adultery and wicked desertions are manifestly condemned, and the innocent parties are conceded the liberty of contracting [another] marriage. And furthermore we urge the magistrates, as ministers of God, to restrain with the sword those who would be so rash as to violate marriage, lest unbounded license flourish among men.

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Article XVI *On Civil Magistracies*

Concerning civil authority and magistrates we teach according to the Word of God that they are honorable divine ordinances, established for the good of man--for the protection of the good and the punishment of the wicked. Because of the command of God this ordinance is to be faithfully obeyed by subjects in all legitimate matters which are not opposed to the will of God.

And we teach that the duty of a pious magistrate is first of all to be a minister of God, as Paul testifies, and a defender of the divine Law, especially of the first table, so that diligent care may be given to the true Christian religion, in order that the true knowledge of God, doctrine, faith, and prayer may be spread among the subjects. For the preservation of these things there is need of churches and schools and their teachers, which the pious magistrates must defend and nourish, as Isaiah 49 says.

The Christian magistrate must also remove manifest scandals from the church, such as idolatry and impious doctrines, repugnant to the Word of God, and horrible blasphemies against God, according to the example of the pious princes Hezekiah, Josiah, and the like, who not only endeavored to spread the true and sound doctrine among their subjects, but also overturned and removed the scandalous and perverse teachings; and also like Constantine the Great, who with much effort endeavored to suppress and abolish the Arian heresy, which was raging like a plague in the East.

The second duty of the pious magistrate is to defend the second table [of the Law]: to preserve honorable discipline among his subjects; to maintain peace, justice, and human society; to defend judicial decisions, laws, and order; and to inflict punishments on evildoers and those who obstinately disrupt social life and peace. Nor is there any doubt but that God is truly present to such pious magistrates with his Spirit and grace, and grants such men a happy and peaceful term of government, and indeed also prosperity and a happy end.

We abhor Cyclopean insolence, disobedience, tumults, and all seditions of wicked subjects against legitimate magistrates. And we condemn the mad onrush of the Anabaptist fanatics who seek to abolish magistrates, laws, and judgments, and disturb social life and order.

And in our churches we daily pour forth to God our prayers and petitions for the magistrates according to the precept of St. Paul, that God may establish and preserve pious princes and magistrates, and guide them by the Holy Spirit, that they may be salutary

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fathers of the country, who throw the gates open to Christ, and above all that they may themselves be co-heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Article XVII *On the Church*

We firmly believe according to the Apostles' Creed that there is one true holy and catholic Church, whose head is Christ, who redeemed her with his precious blood and who by his own voice eternally gathers within the human race an assembly pleasing to himself. This [Church] he loves, governs with his Holy Spirit, sanctifies for eternal life, and marvelously defends in this world against the raging of Satan, the cruelty of the world, and the tyranny of the wicked; and he will preserve this assembly unto the end of the age.

But we teach that the true and visible church in this life is the assembly of men, dispersed throughout the whole world, which embraces the Gospel of Christ and rightly uses the sacraments, and renders due obedience to the ministry, through which the Son of God works with his own voice and Spirit, and gives new birth and eternal life to many. And nevertheless there are mixed with this assembly many hypocrites, not reborn, who stubbornly reject the true doctrine. Nor do we bind the church to one certain place, but it is catholic, that is, scattered throughout the world and through different peoples, agreeing with true faith in the doctrine and the invocation of the Son of God. Nor do we imagine such a church as do the Donatists and Anabaptists, in which everyone is perfect, pure, and holy, but mixed with these there are many fools, hypocrites, and dead members, just as Christ manifestly teaches in many parables, as of the field and the seeds, the net in the sea, etc. But though this assembly of men, which is the true church of God in this life, is subject by the singular counsel and will of God to the cross and many calamities, and is burdened with more trials than the multitude of the wicked, nevertheless this is the church which God truly loves and cares for as his own, and which by the cross he conforms to the likeness of his Son--by the exercise of faith, prayer, patience, constancy, and the other virtues. In this way also he uproots sins and prepares his church for a more blessed life, where God will adorn her as a beloved spouse with heavenly glory and unending happiness. Meanwhile the Lord is truly present to his church in these trials, with ready help, protection, guidance, and comfort.

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Article XVIII

On the Ministry of the Church and the Efficacy of the Word of God

Out of the human race God gathers to himself an everlasting church, and communicates his blessings to her through two means: through the Word which he has handed down, which he wishes to sound forth in the voice of the ministry, and through the sacraments which he has instituted, so that it may be clearly said [Romans 10:17], "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God;" and [Romans 1:16], "the Gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe." Nor does God communicate himself and his gifts immediately, to men who resist, who will neither hear and embrace the Word of God nor make use of the sacraments when they are able. For God works through these external means in the ministry of the Gospel, and for this reason he continually gives and sends to his church salutary teachers, whom he uses as instruments, as Paul teaches in Ephesians 4:8: "Ascending he gave gifts to men."

Therefore we condemn those who imagine divine raptures and declare that God communicates with men immediately, and not through the Word, and that the Word and the sacraments are merely external exercises for men.

And in our churches the office of the ministers of the church is held in the highest honor, not out of respect for persons, but because of the command and ordinance of God, as Christ says in Luke 10[:16]: "He that hears you, hears me, and he that despises you, despises me." Nor do we permit any heretic to take up the public ministry, after the fashion of the enthusiasts and Anabaptists, or to assume a call Simonaically; but suitable persons are admitted to the government of the church after their faith, doctrine, and life have been proved. And there is added to the election the public rite of ordination in the presence of the church, whereby those who have been called and chosen for the ministry of the church may be proven, examined, and installed according to definite system and practice, and at the same time be commended to the church, and dedicated to the ministry of the church through the laying on of hands with the blessing of God and public prayers, that they may rightly teach the doctrine of the Gospel, administer the sacraments, and be faithful co-workers with God in building up the church of Christ.

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Article XIV *On Adiaphoria*

Adiaphora are, properly speaking, ceremonies or works which God has neither prescribed nor prohibited, but left free for the church to employ according to the circumstances of places, times, or persons, for the edification of the church and for the sake of discipline and good order. Examples include prescribed readings in the churches, prescribed chants and prayers for [different] times, holidays for the instruction of the unlearned, pious songs, ceremonies for burials, the joining of couples in marriage, fitting dress, etc.

But we by no means include under the name of adiaphora those things which are of themselves impious and divinely prohibited, such as the magical consecrations of oils, water, plants, extreme unction, the papistic confirmation, masses without communicants, monastic vows, [and] the worship and invocation of the saints. These things, which are manifestly impious and repugnant to the gospel, no one can receive or approve in good conscience and without danger to faith, as we judge.

Nor indeed do we reckon among true and useful adiaphora those ridiculous gestures and ceremonies which display heathen vanity and expose our religion to ridicule, obscure the doctrine, give strength to superstition, and are in no way conducive to discipline and good order, such as the ridiculous gesticulations in the mass, the processions around the cemetery, the carrying about of statues and relics of the saints, and similar traditions of men. To burden the churches with these trifles is neither pious nor tolerable. And indeed not even with true and useful adiaphora is any necessity or compulsion to be established, but they are to be preserved out of Christian freedom; nor is the peace of the churches to be torn apart because of them. But ceremonies in the church should be fitting, not contrary to the Word of God, nor should they be added in great profusion, for they easily pass over into superstition among the unaccustomed people.

The ceremonies hitherto observed in the Saxon churches are to be left in the same condition; and if at some time anything in the rites of certain places has been changed--so that the use of candles and ornaments has been given up among some, while there is agreement in everything else, and these things were not removed with impious intention--we judge that they are not to be forcibly restored, lest this should give rise to scandals and contentions. Nevertheless, in the future let no one assume authority to change things out of his own head, without the judgment and consent of a synod. Meanwhile, let the churches which do not use candles and ornaments not condemn those who do otherwise, or bring opprobrium upon them, or vice versa, but let there be Christian forbearance in

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these external matters. For it is not in these indifferent matters that the true unity of the church of Christ consists, but in the foundation of doctrine and in true faith. But insofar as it is possible, care is to be taken that the churches of one kingdom and of the same people are conformed to each other [both] in true doctrine and in the use of ceremonies, for this is most profitable for the sake of example and good order.

Article XX

On the Immortality of the Soul

We believe this article with firm faith, according to the Word of God: that the souls of the pious, separated from their bodies by death, remain in existence and are immortal, live in peace in the hand of God, and do not perish along with the bodies, or lie in perpetual sleep; rather, they truly live, and in the resurrection of the dead they will truly be joined anew with their resurrected bodies. This doctrine stirs up faith with hope in the future and in the promises of good things in the Word of the Lord, provides a certain hope and consolation concerning the life to come and its blessings, and is consistent with the divine Word, in which the Holy Spirit has desired to fortify us against the doubts of the Epicureans, wicked men who dare to assert that souls perish along with the body. For Holy Scripture teaches that the souls of men are immortal, as Christ expressly says in Matthew 10[:28]: “Fear not them which are able to kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” In Luke 16[:19-31] it is said that Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham and the rich man in hell; in Luke 23[:43] Christ says to the thief: “Today thou wilt be with me in paradise.” Thus in Matthew 22[:32] Christ, refuting the wicked Saducees, says that God is a God of the living, and he is the God of Abraham. Therefore it is necessary that Abraham is living according to that part of him which is immortal. Wisdom 3[:1]: “The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God”; Revelation 14:13: “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.” And the apostle Peter says that Christ preached to the spirits in prison [1 Peter 3:18-20]. Thus Paul also says in Philippians 1[:23]: “I desire to depart and be with Christ;” and again 2 Corinthians 5[:4]: “We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed, that mortality might be swallowed up by life;” and likewise many manifest testimonies of the immortality of souls, to which all pious Christians in the church of God give assent with true faith. This doctrine has also been confirmed with sure signs, as when Enoch and Elijah were taken up into heaven in the sight of others. And the

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Son of God himself, whose soul did not see corruption, bore sure witness to the same by his resurrection, and confirmed with his own voice that souls made in the image of God are immortal and do not perish along with the body.

And we too embrace this doctrine, and in firm agreement with the Word of God, we will endeavor to pass it on to our posterity. Therefore the Epicurean swine are to be abhorred and anathematized for denying this salutary doctrine--for our age has seen such new Epicureans arise in this country, who with Cynic impudence dare to spread whatever profane and impious opinions they have gathered from elsewhere, and do so with impunity, without opposition from pious magistrates. In this way they seek because of the novelty of their doctrine to seize glory and a name for themselves. They may easily draw astray the simple multitude into their foolish self-admiration, for the multitude always rejoices in unusual and foreign things and shuns what is useful. But pious magistrates should restrain such perverse heretics, wayward and froward Epicureans, and drive them far from the flock of Christ and the communion of the faithful, lest they should infect the minds of the weak with their perverse opinions, weaken their faith, and at the same time instill evil behavior in the youth, who are otherwise prone to do evil.

Article XXI

On the Last Judgment and Eternal Life

These last articles are as it were the haven of human life, to which everything is directed: that as faithful servants of God and watchful virgins, we might firmly believe until the end of the world in the final and glorious coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who will come as a strict and righteous judge with ineffable majesty, power, and glory on the clouds of heaven, visibly and accompanied by infinite hosts of holy angels. At his blessed coming the Lord will raise all the dead, who will come forth to life from their tombs and the dust of the earth, and all men will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The Son of God will exercise righteous judgment upon them and will judge the living and the dead, the pious and the impious, and will render a most righteous and weighty verdict on each one. The impious will hear the horrible sound of the judgment: that they are damned and cast away eternally, with most severe punishments to body and soul, which will have no end, for they are eternal fellows of the damned and the devils, in unquenchable fire, subjected to eternal punishments. But the pious and elect will hear the cheerful and consoling voice of the Son of God declaring that they are given the inheritance of

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eternal life, and in that unspeakable joy and blessedness, they will see and hold welcome converse with God, the angels, and all the saints, where they will live without end in everlasting righteousness, wisdom, holiness, and joy; far from all evil, sorrow, and calamity; beholding, knowing, and rejoicing in God face to face, who will then be all in all, world without end. Amen.

Article XXII

On the Life and Morals of the Ministers of the Church

The divine dignity of this office demonstrates of itself what integrity of life is required in the ministers of the church. For although erudition and true doctrine are especially looked for and required in them, yet with these piety and holiness of life and morals should be joined. For it often happens to ministers who teach correctly but meanwhile live perverse and scandalous lives that what they build up with one hand they tear down with the other, and labor without fruit. Therefore, insofar as possible, both sound doctrine and a blameless life should shine forth in the pious ministers, as St. Paul abundantly teaches in 1 Timothy 3 concerning the life and morals of ministers of the gospel. For they must be blameless, not causers of scandal, not given to crimes and vices, not sullyng the holy ministry with a shameful life; but let them be pious, chaste husbands, sober, modest, and serious; teachable, mild, and generous; and peaceable and humble, as true disciples of Christ, the light and salt of the world, Matthew 5[:13-16].

Also in their clothing and manner let them be restrained, so that by their modest dress they may be distinguished in their occupation [ordine] from other men; and let them not wear military uniforms in a vainglorious way, but even by their suitable external appearance let them demonstrate physical modesty, humility, and piety. Nor let them be children of this world, given over to temptations and pleasures, but let them be diligent and sedulous in teaching, vigilant over the churches, and let them consider that God will require the souls of all at their hand.

Their special office is to keep diligent watch; to instruct the people in the doctrine and the Word of God; to lead back the erring to the path; to overcome the contradicters; to administer the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, with reverence; to console the uninstructed privately in absolution, and instruct them in the catechism; to visit the sick; to do everything in the church decently and in order for edification; to conduct public prayers, sermons, and admonitions devoutly and at the appropriate time; to keep their

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houses and children well; to shine forth above others in virtue and piety, and to be an example for the faithful; and finally to bear adversity patiently, and to overcome the malice of Satan and the tyranny of the world by faith, prayer, and constancy, and in the end to look for rewards and a crown of glory from God in life everlasting.

Article XXIII

On Excommunication

We approve and observe in our churches that excommunication which is based upon the Word of God: the final and highest penalty, by which a man who has on the basis of sure evidence been convicted by the sentence of the church of impious teaching or manifest wickedness of life is given over to the divine wrath, excluded from public duties and the use of the sacraments, and entirely cast out of the church as a severed and useless member. And this excommunication is not a civil penalty, like that of the civil magistrate who has the right to use the sword, but it is a spiritual penalty, established by God, so that the church might regularly punish stubborn and manifest sinners, the unemendable, and blasphemers, according to the Word of God--not so that men might be lost, but so that by this discipline many might be drawn back to repentance and healed, and their spirits saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, as is said in 1 Corinthians 5[:5].

But excommunication must not be pronounced rashly by the ministers of the church, not out of private feelings, not out of rancor, hatred, or private vengeance; but in the case of those who are gravely in error the scandal is to be removed from the church in this way: The persons to be excommunicated should first be diligently admonished, to see whether they may be returned to the path and healed. Then they are to stand the church's judgment and be accused before the chapter of clergy, and before those whose business it is to judge concerning doctrine and spiritual controversies. If they shall then stubbornly persist in errors and blasphemies, and will not accept the judgment and pious admonitions of the church, then let them at last be struck with anathema and condemned by the minister in public. Thus Paul in 1 Corinthians 5[:35] excommunicated the incestuous man: "I have judged in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that when you are gathered together with my spirit and the power of our Lord Jesus Christ you are to deliver the incestuous man unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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Article XXIV

On the Visitation of the Churches

Annual visitations of each of the churches have been instituted among us by definite arrangement, not without great profit and utility. For not only are consensus and conformity of doctrine and the government of the church in this way preserved by definite laws, but these public inspections are very conducive to avoiding errors, confusions, and innovations; uprooting wicked practices and the evil behavior of men; preserving discipline and order; and helping to remove scandals.

Certain appropriate persons are designated to conduct the visitations of the churches in each of the sees and chapters at fixed times of the year-- not only men from the ecclesiastical estate and the number of the pastors, but also men from the civil order who carry out their work faithfully, so that they may endeavor to put into effect among the subjects those things which the pastors propose to be observed or abolished according to the Word of God, bringing punishments to bear according to their authority. In this way what is good and necessary is preserved in its true use, but those things which are evil or flawed are emended according to common agreement, by the Word of God and by penalties. A fixed method is diligently observed in the visitations of the individual churches, whereby not only are the parishoners examined as to how they believe and live, but also the pastors, whether they may also be culpable; and both are admonished of their duty to live piously, to avoid scandals and vices, and to subject the disobedient to public punishments.

We will prescribe the same form of visitation with the articles to be presented to the people in each chapter, and fruitfully observe this discipline at fixed times annually.

Article XXV

On Burials

The burial of the dead, as is fitting for Christians, is carried out among us in an honorable and devout way, and funerals are decently conducted before a large assembly of men, with pious songs and the public reading of certain consolations from Holy Scripture. In some places there are also funeral sermons concerning the resurrection of our bodies and the sure hope of the life to come. The burial grounds are religiously kept as the resting places of the pious. Nor are blasphemous men who have died in manifest error or horrible sins

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with final impenitence allowed to be buried in these places. For as such men severed themselves from the church in life, so they are separated from the graves of the bodies of the pious in death, as an example to terrify secure and godless men.

Article XXVI

On the Keeping of Feast-Days

The observation of feast-days is retained in our churches, not because of vain superstition, or for the exercise of impious idolatry or the invocation of the saints; for these kinds of worship are manifestly impious and contrary to the command and glory of God. Nor are feast-days distinguished by shameful or useless leisure, perverse gluttony, or indulgence, or other vices--for we vehemently deplore this abuse and sharply denounce it among the people, and diligently exhort the civil magistrates also according to the Word of God to abolish these vices. But we observe the feast-days for the edification of the church of God, so that at these times we may invite the people in greater numbers to the assemblies of the faithful--to hear the Word of God, pray, and receive the sacraments, and also so that they may each become familiar with the history of the spread of the true church, how God spread the doctrine of his Gospel through his chosen instruments (holy men, prophets, apostles, evangelists, and martyrs) and marvelously preserved his church even through the cross and the shedding of blood. Finally, in the histories of the saints the church sets forth examples of the virtues which are commended to the pious, such as true doctrine, confession, faith, love, hope, constancy, patience, and the others. Thus the feast-days in our churches serve for teaching and order, lest unbounded barbarity should arise among us, without any distinction whatsoever of times and feasts, seeing that God himself, in order that the memory of his blessings to his people might be preserved, demanded that certain festivals should be observed, on which he wished that there should be assemblies of the faithful.

Article XXVII

On the Regulation of the Schools

Schools also have been established among us with singular diligence, flourishing in liberal studies, in all cities, towns, and parishes, as useful seedbeds of the church and the state,

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over which well-suited and modest teachers and directors are set and supported by public stipends to instruct the youth correctly. They instill the souls of the youth with the liberal arts along with the cultivation of virtues and an honorable character. They exercise them in the study of languages (Greek and Latin), so that they may be able to read and expound the writings of the most outstanding authors, and they instruct the adolescents in every kind of learning, but especially in piety, and imbue the youth from the most tender years with the catechism, the foundation of true religion, and the precepts of Christian faith. Thus a great treasure flows forth to all men from this scholarly discipline and pious instruction of the youth. For well-established schools are like public factories of learning, prudence, virtue, and discipline, in which suitable men are formed and educated, who may finally be useful both for service to the church and for the government of the state on account of their learning and literary culture, the works of these men being frequently as necessary to our common life as our daily bread. For what would everything else be without learning and literary culture but what Gorgias says in Plato: The great multitude of necessary things--wealth, buildings, weapons, machinery--would be, without learning and study of the liberal arts, nothing but a corpse and a useless weight, lacking all soul.

Conclusion

These are the outstanding points concerning which, by the gift of God, a great concord has been established in the Saxon churches of Transylvania among the teachers and ministers of God, who with unanimous consensus and one voice firmly proclaim and teach the same pure doctrine, agreeable to the writings of the prophets and apostles. With God's help they shall also henceforth endeavor to pass on this acknowledged truth, which has thus far been professed according to the Word of God, to future generations.

As to the rest, we are ready to make a fuller declaration concerning these or other parts of the doctrine, whenever it may be necessary and our confession shall be required. For we are prepared to give an account of our faith and confession according to the Word of God before God and men.

And we pray to the everlasting God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, along with his coeternal Son and the Holy Spirit, with ardent sighs and petitions, that in these regions bordering the Turks, he may gather for himself a true and holy church and an eternal heritage, strengthen her by the voice of his Gospel, and rule her by his Holy Spirit; that he may also defend his church, redeemed with the precious blood of his Son, against

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the malice and rage of the devil and the efforts, snares, and blasphemies of all impious adversaries; and that he not permit the light of his heavenly doctrine and this pious concord to be extinguished among us, but that in his ineffable goodness he may bestow on his church a tranquil dwelling place in these lands, so that there may always be among us an assembly of teachers and hearers--acknowledging, invoking, and worshipping the true God.

And we pray to Almighty God through his only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that he might govern the mind of our most illustrious prince and most merciful lord by the Holy Spirit, and stir him to the love of truth and the true religion, [as well as] to the defense of the holy church and the expulsion of all errors by which the Name of God is blasphemed. May he be granted a happy life, a prosperous reign, and peace and tranquility in all the country, that we may praise and worship the true God to all eternity in pure faith, ardent prayer, and constant confession. Amen.

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