Our
Confession of Sin

"Come, and let us return unto the Lord"

THE REPORT OF SYNOD'S COMMITTEE TO DRAFT A
CONFESSION OF SIN FOR OUR CHURCH
AND OF
SYNOD'S COMMISSION TO REVISE AND
PUBLISH SAME.

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA
260 Ninth Street — Pittsburgh, Pa.
Synod’s Authorization

The Report of Synod’s Committee to Draft a
Confession of Sin for Our Church

It was provided by the 1936 Synod that the Draft of a Confession of Sin, when adopted by Synod, “be placed in convenient lines within this time of every member, be prepared and published in members’ synods, and through all presbyterial Young People’s Conferences this year, in the Synodical next year, as well as the Young People’s Synodical meeting; and that one unit in study and prayer concerning the place of covenant keeping in our life as Christians, and as a church.

1. As we are approaching the Tercentenary anniversary of one of our Church Covenants, it is agreed that the time between now and next Synod be recognized in all our Churches and Ministries as “Covenant Loyalty Year”; that in addition to the foregoing studies presbyteries be urged to hold at least one conference on this subject; that each congregation, and wherever neighboring congregations can unite, hold “Covenant Loyalty Conferences”; that this subject be given prominence in all presbyterial Young People’s Conferences this year, in the Synodical next year, as well as the Young People’s Synodical meeting; and that every unit in study and prayer concerning the place of covenant keeping in our life as Christians, and as a church.

2. To secure as much unity as possible in our spiritual experiences during the coming year, the last Sabbath of April be suggested as Universal Communion Sabbath in our congregations and mission fields; and at the usual Sabbath afternoon meeting at next Synod the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper be observed, the daily devotional exercises leading up to that as preparatory.

T. M. Slater
O. F. Thompson
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Synod’s Commission To Revise and Publish the Confession of Sin and to Arrange for the Forthcoming of the Covenant Loyalty Program and Synod Commission.

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Our Confession of Sin

“Come, and let us return unto the Lord”

O Thou that dwellest in the Heavens, Eternal and Blessed God: We, Thy Children, ministers, elders, deacons, and members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, rejoice in Thee as our Covenant God and in all Thou hast done to make and preserve us as a covenant people.

GOD’S GREAT SALVATION

On the ground of Thine own promises, Father, we have known and believed the love Thou didst have for us even when we were Thine foes desiring eternal pardon—a love that was from eternity, boundless, eternal, and utterly sacrificial, which at Calvary spared no cost in our behalf, and is the same now as it was then.

We praise Thee that the Gospel whereby we are saved in the power of God unto the salvation of all who believe; that its twofold objective is a Redeemed Manhood and a Redeemed Social Order, and that Thine appointed means of fully establishing Thy Kingdom on earth.

We rejoice that the personal and social benefits of Christ’s Kingdom are not limited to His visible presence, but that He withdrew from our eyes that He might come into our hearts through the ministry of the Comforter. We are likewise glad that the Incarnate Word is now with us in the written Word; that receiving His words we receive Christ, and abiding in them we abide in Him. The words are Spirit and life; we know that through them, as in living seed, the very life of Christ is implanted in believing, regenerate, sanctified, empower, and glorify them.

And again, Father, it humbles us to remember that in believing, obeying, and teaching others to observe the truths of Thy Holy Word which vivifies and abides forever, ourselves fulfill, or fail to fulfill, the conditions under which we experience the fulfillment of Christ’s promise to be with us forever.

We rejoice that these promises are not void, neither are they limited in their application, so that all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be together with Him in the glory of His Kingdom forever.

Our Church Heritage

In addition to what we have in common with other Christians we thank Thee, Father, for the great heritage bequeathed upon us as a Church, whose organization we are allowed to live and serve with Christ in His work of Kingdom building forever. We thank Thee that we may be a part of this heritage, a living one, even unto the end of the world.

Our Purifying Hope

But there are discrepancies between our creed and our conduct, our privileges as Christians and as Covenanters, and our faithfulness. The most incomplete statement of what these privileges are is enough to convict us that in response to Thy measurable love, our Father, we have not loved Thee with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, nor our neighbor as ourselves; but have been lovers of our own selves, of pleasures, and of the world. Neither have we valued as we should our great spiritual heritage, nor rejoiced in our outward circumstances, whatever they may have been, as God-given opportunities for shewing forth the praise of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

On the contrary, as the most prevalent sin of the unbelieving world during the past few years has been worldliness, ungodliness, and a lack of spiritual impertinent, and unchastened rebellion under the mighty name of Liberty, we may see that they may be lurking in our hearts. Some of us may have
small denunciation, whose testimony calls us to the support of unprofitable truths, and in these days of arid, barren politics, reminds us of the need of an honest, unpolarized attitude of mind toward our toils. In too many cases we have been filled with this kind of self-righteousness, and we have seen too many persons, with the desire to please God, to do what seems to be the good light of faith. In bearing what we think is the burden and head of the day, we have been too often carried away by the ambition to see how well we work, and how we can touch only in our activities, in which we are willing to stake everything, or have the courage of soldiers who turn the battle to the gate? Surely, we have no such other sin, Luke-warmness, wherever it exists, is a symptom of something fundamentally wrong in our relation to God. In many other shortcomings, failures, and wrong things in ourselves, and our life as a Church; we have, Father, only what the poorest and most sinful may bring—the sacrifice of broken and contrite hearts. We therefore must see where Thou dost rest us in the promise that, "If we confess our sins, Thou art faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

CHRIST IN OUR COVENANT

Never before in this generation have we as a Church come before Thee with these words. Not since our forefathers united in a public confession of sin, in connection with their solemn covenanting service in 1871, have we availed ourselves of the privilege of coming to Thee, to seek forgiveness, though, we have needed cleansing and restoring every day; but we have not come to Thee with our concerns of unfaithfulness to that same Covenant of whose blessings and obligations we are heirs. Our restoration to Thee, with or without our consciousness, as for the sins of which we are guilty, has been more or less in our own hands, and not through the ministrations of the Spirit in grace.

We therefore pray for the Holy Spirit to convict us of everything for which we need forgiveness. Give us, Father, renewed assurance of our redemption, a sense of our weakness and unworthiness, and mercy to our beholders. In Thine own faithfulness, let our windows be shown to us, that we may separately understand Thy merciful and holy ways.
We are grieved, Father, that we have not kept as we should our covenant vows to study and seek a better understanding of our Church creed; that the people have too long neglected the truths by neglecting doctrinal preaching, and been careless about instructing our youth in the truth of our Church. We pray, O God of Truth, that Thou wilt keep us back from silencing the advocacy of Christ, and from forfeiting and losing part of the spiritual inheritance of which we are now stewards.

PURITY OF WORSHIP

Fourth, we confess, Father, our innate proneness to support delusions in a materialistic age when in Thy worship so much reliance is placed on architecture, music, rituals, vestments, rhetoric, etc., as so attractive to other worldly attractions, and so little upon the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, that we almost universal disregard of the Bible law of worship that "Whatsoever is not commanded is forbidden," many things are now being introduced into the services of the sanctuary merely to please the senses. The present generation has witnessed in almost all Protestant churches a marked tendency toward ritualism, with the observance of special "days" and "seasons" other than the Sabbath. In some churches that once stood for purity of worship, the Psalms of the Bible have been displaced for numerous printed hymnals, instruments that have no appointment in New Testament worship.

We lament these conditions because we know Thy holy law of worship is good and just, and that the Bible is the only authoritative book that is not forbidden to rest upon the utter false assumption that either God is indifferent about the form and substance of worship or else the presumptuous claims of mere men to have equal knowledge with God, and the gift of continuous inspiration solely belongs to the apostolic church that has led in these corruptions. The fact that the ministry and executive organs of our denominations apostatize, that this present era of will-worship in Protestant churches coincides with a decline in doctrinal knowledge, and a low state of spirituality everywhere, demonstrates the vitality relation between worship and all other elements of religion, and is giving added proof of the principle that "When the smallest doctrine of the holy truth is mutilated, it is sure to avenge itself upon the whole system." We confess and mourn, Father, that some in the ministry and executive organs of our church seem either to misunderstand or lack sympathy with Thy requirement in this matter, but in circumstances wherein God's word is corrupted, to conform to practices of others. We would not be indifferent to the evil practice that a man who is under sentence was punished in Old Testament times, even to the extent of death for certain individuals and capitally, yet people today charge churches to neglect the salutary warnings in the less spectacular, but not less real, evidences of our fellowship in our common times toward the breach of the Second Commandment. We know every consideration warns us that in worship we are not to be guided by what pleases self, or is popular with the world, but the declared will of Him whom we worship, the One who has justified us by His truth and obedience, and to whom obedience is better than sacrifice; who still again, as a related to us, with His worship and His worshipers, who today seeks for those who worship Him in spirit and truth, of which we content to give that which costs us nothing.

THE SEPARATED LIFE

Fifth, in addition to the things already mentioned, Father, we have other delinquencies in covenant faith.

Our witness to the Bible standard of Sabbath-keeping and piety in the home has not always been consistent. Distinctive principles, manifest in doctrine and in practice, and subtle forms of secularism which in our time are destroying the sacredness of Thy holy day, especially as respects unnecessary visiting, traveling, secular reading and study, and the use of agencies that induce Sabbath enmity on the other. We allow worldly interests to make us abbreviate or neglect daily personal devotions, dispensing with family worship, weaken faithfulness in attending all the appointed sanctuary services and withdraw from our children the fellowship and influences necessary for true purity of worship.

As to worldly pleasures and recreations, such as the dance, the card-table, and immoral shows, our practice is too liberal. The affluence to defile body, soul, and heart with tobacco, liquor, evil literature, gambling, hurtful companionship, and amusements, has often, if not generally, resisted by the purifying fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

In an age when Satan has so organized legislation that it invades many otherwise worthy organizations, existing in the name of social fellowship, rights of labor, insurance, patriotism, education, and even religion, our testimony against the sins and dangers of sectarianism has often been compromised or silenced.

And in supporting that testimony whereby our Church is best known and identified, our Fathers took hold in defense of what they affectionately called "The Cross-Enforcement of Distinctive Principles," but what we hold in difference from them, on account of which we have a separate denominational life, and to which our Covenant especially commits us.

THE ONLY CURE

We also know, Father, that for this situation there is no self-cure, neither will any human remedy. Pastoral expenses give us no salvation. We have been taught that "Bread and Wine!" and "Peace be with you!" are of no avail; but the cross is the one cure that will bring peace to our conscience, nor will any means that we can devise ever bring this peace.

HIGH-PRIESTLY DISCIPLESHIP

Sixth, as sinners who have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and who in their own right merit nothing but hell, we are exhorted to continue steadfast in our fellowship, as members of the body of Christ, family of God, and members of each other and of the world. We are exhorted to endure the penalties of Bible obedience. Yet as Christians, Fathers, who have been privileged to all the way with Christ, and whose consecration, discipleship, and readiness to have our life lived where He would have it lived, employed, as He would have it employed, and finished where He would have it finished—the holding of these frontier positions of the Christian faith, and advancing at these salient points where we try to carry the battle-line forward, seem to require more of the soldier-spirit than some of us in this generation seem to have.

Because our witness involves the giving up of some things that appeal to human nature, and which the world and many Christians indulge; because our desert arouses the antagonism of some whose good will we are sorry to lose; because holding our positions these days puts any one in the minority, requires tests of obedience which are blamed for hindering our numerical growth, and presents difficulties for our ministers when occupying other pulpits, and by the same tests imposes hardships on all who live out the lower front of Christ's cross-sacrifice, inter-denominational fellowship difficult, and some phase of our testimony is so often the final issue on which many leave our fellowship—we cannot conceal from ourselves or from Thee, Father, that the weariness of Christ's followers, and the evidences of the Gospel, which we sometimes complain; the self-pity, discontent, dissatisfaction, and bitterness which any one may feel about our Church; and the unwilling Cross-bearing with which we so often follow Christ, is very seldom on account of the general principles of Christianity, but what we call our "Distinctive Principles"; because of what we hold in differences with other Christians, but what we hold in difference from them, on account of which we have a separate denominational life, and to which our Covenant specially commits us.

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...SYNGOD'S COMMISSION.