What We Believe

BY

WALTER McCABEE, D.D.

Outline Studies of Scripture Doctrines

1942

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FOREWORD

These Outline Studies of Christian Doctrines were prepared week by week for use in a class in preparation for church membership. They are now published as a Handbook for use in the church at large. It was found helpful to have the class members write out the Scripture references and the answers to the printed questions in a notebook. They should not be asked to write out more than two references under each head.

Everything that a prospective church member should know is here in outline form. These studies are adaptable to a long or short course as the pastor or teacher may be able to secure. One chapter may require two lessons, or two chapters may be covered in one lesson. These studies should be useful also in Sabbath Schools and in Young People's Societies.

The "Summary of Doctrinal Testimony" published by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland has been an invaluable guide. It is an admirable condensation of the doctrines of the Christian faith. This little book is sent forth with the prayer that it may prove a useful and helpful means for the instruction of the youth of the church.
I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into the grave; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church (the Church Universal), the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the Life Everlasting. Amen.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE BIBLE OUR GUIDE

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and life.

1—Since man's chief end is to glorify God he needs a guide or rule to direct him. Catechism 1 and 2. (Westminster Shorter Catechism)

a. This guide we have in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. These Scriptures or writings are called The Bible from the Greek word Bibliai which means "the books."

b. The Bible then is the ultimate source of authority in matters of faith and life. There are two other claimants to this seat of supreme authority:

Reason, though it has certain inalienable rights, cannot be the ultimate authority. If we say Reason, then to what human being or beings shall we look?

The Church, though it too has certain inalienable rights as an interpreter of truth, cannot be accepted as the final authority. Or if so, what Church?

Both Reason and the Church are dependent on Revelation for the truth which they undertake to interpret or explain.

The Bible alone has the right to that supreme place, for it is the record of God's revealed will, and its purpose is to tell man how to glorify God and live in union with Him.

2—The Bible is made up of two parts, the Old
and New Testaments, or the Old and New Covenants.

The Old centers around the Chosen People Israel, the New around Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

b. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. The original manuscripts are lost but we have very old copies of the same, especially the three great manuscripts, the Vatican, the Sinaitic, and the Alexandrian.

3—These Scriptures were inspired by God in their original writings and so are the Word of God to man. II Pet. 1:21; II Tim. 3:15-17.

b. By “inspired” we mean that holy men of God spoke or wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

b. This inspiration is attested by the testimony of the Church, the nature of the contents, and the witness of the Spirit.

4—The Scriptures principally teach what we are to believe concerning God, and the duty God requires of man. Catechism 3.

a. What we are to believe concerning God is set forth in Questions 4-38 of the Shorter Catechism.

b. The duty that God requires of man, moral and evangelical duty, is set forth in Questions 90-107.

5—The Bible, though containing sixty-six books, written by forty different writers living in different countries and in a period embracing 1600 years, is one book. Marks of this unity:

a. Throughout, the Bible bears witness to one God.

b. It forms one continuous story, the story of mankind in relation to God.

c. From beginning to end the Bible testifies to one Redemption. The scarlet thread of atonement runs throughout. The cross is the center of that unity.

d. The Bible has one great theme, the person and work of Christ. Christ is the key to the unity of the Bible.

e. Predictions concerning the future, which appeared most unlikely when made, are recorded as fulfilled in the Bible.

6—The Bible records two basic Covenants.

a. The Covenant of Works made with man in his estate of innocency. Life was promised on condition of perfect obedience.

b. The Covenant of Grace made for man in his fallen estate. The Covenant of Grace was made with Christ as the second man and in Him with all the elect as His seed. Larger Catechism 31.

7—The Bible sets forth two great Dispensations.

a. The word “dispensation” refers to the different modes of the administration of the Covenant of Grace, that in preparation for the coming of the Anointed One called the Old Testament, and that which records the coming and work of the Anointed One called the New Testament.

b. How the Covenant of Grace was administered under the two dispensations. The Covenant of Grace was administered under the Old Testament by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the passover, and other types and ordinances, which did all foreshadow Christ then to come. Under the New Testament, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the same Covenant of Grace was and still is to be administered in the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the
Lord's Supper. Larger Catechism Questions 34, 35.

QUESTIONS
1. What is man's chief end? What rule or guide has God given to man? What is the meaning of the words "Scriptures" and "Bible"?
2. What are other claimants to the seat of authority in matters of faith and life?
3. What are the two parts of the Bible called? Why?
4. What is meant by saying that the Bible is inspired?
5. What do the Scriptures principally teach?
6. What are the marks of the unity of the Bible?
7. Distinguish between the Covenant of works and the Covenant of grace.
8. How was the Covenant of grace administered under the Old Testament, and how under the New Testament?

CHAPTER TWO
GOD-TRINITY IN UNITY

We believe in one God and that He eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1—God is. Heb. 11:6.
   a. This belief is opposed to Atheism, Agnosticism, and Pantheism. Covenant of 1871, Section two.
   b. Evidences in the universe which confirm this belief.
   The presence of mind indicates an intelligent cause.
   Design in nature indicates a purposive cause.
   Indications of will reveal an efficient cause.
   Conscience with a sense of accountability to a lawgiver indicates a moral cause.

2—God is spirit or personal. Catechism 4.
   a. God is spirit so does not have body, parts, or passions as men have. John 4:29.
   b. The foregoing evidences might form the proof for a personal being as Creator, Governor, and Preserver of all things. But Revelation assures us beyond doubt that He knows, thinks, plans, loves, and acts, therefore is a person. Ex. 3:14; 1 John 4:8, 9, 16.

3—God is but one. There is but one only, the living and true God. Catechism 5. Ex. 20:3; Deu. 4:35; Jer. 10:10, 12.
   a. This is a witness against polytheism and idolatry. Israel was set in the midst of the nations to bear witness to this one great
fundamental truth. Deu. 4:15-19. The witness to the oneness and unity of God is especially needed today.

b. This is a witness against the deification of mortals who have gone to their reward; against living men who dare assume the prerogatives of God; and against the gods of the cults which flourish in our days, Mormonism, Christian Science, and Spiritism. In the first, God is a Super-man; in the second, a principle and not personal; and in the third, a non-mortal God.


a. Trinity in unity. There are three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and these three are one God.

This, though, a mystery and largely incomprehensible by the human mind, is a reality. Many mysteries in nature which we cannot understand but which we accept and use, for example the radio and electricity.

Illustrations of diversity in unity: the human body, the flower; man as body, soul, and spirit; the sun as invisible energy, visible ball of fire, and rays which come to earth to give light, heat, and energy.

b. The use of the word person a difficulty but we have no adequate substitute. This is due to the limitations of language. We must insist therefore with the Mohammedans upon the unity of God; with the Pantheists upon the immanence of God, Acts 17:28; and with the Deists upon the immanence of God.

c. The doctrine of the Trinity is basic to the Christian Faith. The whole program of redemption and of life in Christ depends on that truth as the underlying reality.

5. God eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

a. The names in the order given is the order in which they are presented historically in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament the primary emphasis is upon the Father; in the Gospels upon the Son; and in the Epistles upon the Holy Spirit. Memorize the Apostle's Creed, and note what is said of each of the three persons.

b. We come to this belief by a study of the many passages relating to each person in turn. We find that each in turn is presented as having all the attributes and doing the works of God. Yet we hold fast to the unity and oneness of God. Larger Catechism 11.

God is presented as the eternal Father, the fountain of life, light, and love. 1 Chr. 29:10; Is. 64:8; 1 Pet. 1:17: as the eternal Son who became flesh and tabernacled among us, John 1:14; Phil. 2:6-11; and, as the eternal Spirit, Heb. 9:14, John 16:26.

6. God is to be worshiped by all His creatures. Psalm 148; Isaiah 44; John 4:22-26.

QUESTIONS

1. What evidence might be offered for the statement "God is"?


3. Against what does the witness to the truth that there is but one God testify?

4. How many persons in the Godhead? Catechism 6. Show that this does not mean three gods, and that the mystery of trinity in unity is not greater than many mysteries in nature.

5. What is the Scripture evidence for believing that God eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
CHAPTER THREE
THE IMAGE OF GOD

We believe that man was created perfect, male and female, in the image of God; endowed with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; and, with the law of God written in their hearts.

1—Man’s Origin and Nature.

a. The question of man’s origin and nature is basic to an understanding of redemption through Christ. There are only two available sources: the Word of God and the speculations of men. For the believer in Christ the Word of God is the sole source of authority.

b. According to the speculations of men, man was not created upright by an act of God but was evolved through countless ages by impersonal forces resident within the life cell. This is the evolutionary hypothesis. God, apparently, had little if anything to do with that age-long process.

c. According to the Bible man was created perfect in the image of God. He was created, not evolved. (Gen. I and II; Catechism 10.) On his physical side he has a community of nature with the higher animals. On his spiritual side he has a community of nature with God. On his spiritual side man was created in the image of God. This likeness was in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with power or authority over the lower creation. He differs from the higher animals then in two important respects: First, in his capacity for law. (Morris.) This is his intuitive ability to distinguish between right and wrong; the ability which he possesses of weighing actions. Second, in his capacity for spiritual life. (Morris.) This is the intuitive ability to know God immediately and directly and to have the whole inner life inbreathe with the life of God.

d. Man was created free or a free agent. It was however freedom within strictly defined limits. This freedom was accompanied with responsibility and accountability.

e. Man was created double, male and female, and this first pair formed the fountain head of the human race. For good or ill they stood in a representative capacity. The race stood or fell by the First Adam. A new race is being created by the Second Adam.

2—Man is God’s greatest work. Psalm 8:5, “Thou hast made him but little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honor.” (R. V.)

a. His chief end therefore is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Q. 1. I Cor. 6:20.

b. He was made to live in union with God. The intended life of union with God may be described as “personal fellowship which is holiness of character” and, “cooperative activity which is righteousness of conduct” (Campbell Morgan).

c. Man however has not glorified God as intended. Rom. 3:23; Catechism 13.

3—Rival philosophies which arise when the Bible account of the origin and nature of man is rejected. In our day two great rival philosophies:
a. Marxism. This was embraced by the Bolshevists in Russia. Its Bible is the “Manifesto of Karl Marx.” This is based on the denial of man’s spiritual nature, consequently of the reality of the existence of God. It is atheistic. It is also based on the “economic interpretation of history.” Since man has no spiritual nature the primary motivation of mankind is the struggle for the control of the raw materials of earth.

b. Cosmopolitanism.

Q U E S T I O N S
1. What is man’s origin and real nature?
2. What is meant by being created in the image of God?
3. How does man differ from the animals?
4. In what two respects was He created to live in union with God?
5. What is man’s chief end? Catechism 1.
6. What two theories, in opposition to the Bible and natural theology, have found some acceptance in the world today?
7. How was man first tempted?
8. Why was man tempted? Catechism 1.
9. What is the ultimate result of every sin? Catechism 1.
10. How was sin brought into the world? (Rom. 5:12).
15. What is the gospel? Catechism 1.
17. What is sin? Catechism 1.
20. What is the ultimate end of sin? Catechism 1.

   a. Sin sets up self as an independent center, thus placing the sinner in the position of a rebel against God. (Rom. 5:12).
   b. Sin creates a split between God and man (Rom. 5:12).
   c. Sin brings death upon itself and his posterity (Rom. 5:12).
   d. Sinna brings sin in thought, word, and deed (Rom. 5:12).
   e. Sin is a denial of the existence of God’s sovereignty and rule (Rom. 5:12).

20—What is sin? Catechism 14.
   a. Sin is not an entity which has an independent existence, yet it is a reality just as love, goodness, justice, and righteousness are realities.
   b. Sin is doing what God forbids, or not being and doing what God requires. It is an attitude of the soul issuing in disobedience. It is unbelief. It is turning to one’s own way instead of God’s way (Is. 53:6). Its beginning and growth are described in James 1:13-15. All unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17).

21—Effects of sin. Catechism Questions 17, 18, 19.
   a. Sin sets up self as an independent center, thus placing the sinner in the position of a rebel against God. (Rom. 5:12).
   b. Sin creates a split between God and man (Rom. 5:12).
   c. Sin brings death upon itself and his posterity (Rom. 5:12).
   d. Sin brings sin in thought, word, and deed (Rom. 5:12).
   e. Sin is a denial of the existence of God’s sovereignty and rule (Rom. 5:12).

   a. Sin sets up self as an independent center, thus placing the sinner in the position of a
rebel, making him guilty and liable to punish-
ment.

b. Sin defaces and mars the image of God
imprinted on the soul of man. Like poison
in the blood stream it corrupts and pollutes
the imagination, the understanding, the af-
fections, the conscience, and the will. By
sin man is “distanced from God, made ig-
norant of God, and unlike God.” (Campbell
Morgan)
c. Death both physical and spiritual is the re-
result of sin. Rom. 6:23, The wages of sin is
death. See also James 1:15. Spiritual
death is eternal separation from the pre-

cence of God.

4—Sin is universal. All human beings possess an
inherently sinful nature and are therefore sin-
ers in thought, word and deed.

a. Sin is universal because of the unity of the
human race with a common origin. This
too is the testimony of the Bible. Rom. 5:
10, 23, There is none righteous; no not one...
for all have sinned and fall short of the
glory of God.

c. Sin is universal in that it extends to the
thoughts, words, and deeds of every in-
dividual (Mark 7:19-28).

NOTE: Bible Christians believe that “all
human beings possess an inherently sin-
fal nature,” i.e. that every child born into
the world is born with a bias toward evil,
therefore must be “born again” by the
Spirit of God in order to see or enter the
kingdom of God. So called “liberal Chris-
tians” believe that men are born innately
good so need only education and the right
kind of surroundings.

5—Because of the perverted image of God in the
soul, man creates false deities. According to

Campbell Morgan all false deities may be
summed up under three names, Baal, Moloch,
and Mammon.

a. Baal. “The worship of Baal was essential-
ly the deification of nature, and the wor-
ship of the reproductive faculty.”
itself in all cruelty, its chief expression be-
ing the sacrifice of little children. This is
the prostitution of the emotional nature.”
c. Mammon. “The worship of Mammon is the
rendering to wealth, for the sake of its
power, of all that man ought to render to
God.” See any good Bible Dictionary for the
meaning of these terms.

QUESTIONS
1. How did sin enter the world?
3. What are the effects of sin?
4. In what respects is sin universal?
5. Why does every one need to be born again?
(See Note under 4).
6. What false deities does sinful man create?
CHAPTER FIVE
GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND PROVIDENCE

We believe that God is absolute sovereign; that he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; that He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass; and that He preserves and governs all His creatures and all their actions.

1—God is absolutely sovereign.

a. God is the judge: he putteth down one, and lifteth up another. Ps. 75:7 "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." Rom. 9:15

b. Sovereign means supreme in power, independent of and unlimited by any other. Isa. 45:7, "I form the light and, create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I am the Lord that doeth all these things . . . Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker."

2—God worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Eph. 1:11; Dan. 4:35, "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" Read also Rom. 9:17, 18 and Catechism 7.

3—God in His good pleasure hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. Rom. 8:28, 30; John 6:44; Rom. 9:18-24; Ps. 33:11

a. The doctrine of foreordination, while a reality, is easily perverted into fatalism, and we are not fatalists. God's foreordination and man's responsibility are both true, and both must be accepted. God will not allow His purpose of redemption to be defeated.

b. God's sovereignty is the source of the believer's confidence and strength. "If God be for us who can be against us?" Rom. 8:29-34

4—God's superintending Providence is universal.

Catechism 11

a. Providence means to foresee and make ready for everything that comes to pass. Nothing is too big to be beyond His power, and nothing too small to be beneath His notice. Isa. 40:12, "Who comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales." Matt. 10:29, 30, 31, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father."

b. God's providence is most holy as well as most mighty. He makes "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." Rom. 8:28.

5—A special act of providence in the case of man.

Catechism 12

a. God made a covenant with man. Life was promised on condition of perfect obedience. This was called the Covenant of Works because conditioned on man's efforts.

b. Man was placed in surroundings exactly adapted to his needs. Genesis II. He was given freedom, assigned duties, and entrusted with responsibilities. The tree of life was to have been a source of strength in walking in union with God. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the red light warning of danger and of death.

c. This special act of God's providence endowed man with the power of choice, or
freedom of will. Confession of Faith, Chapter IX. Before he sinned man had freedom and power to will and to do what is good and pleasing to God. But by his sin man lost his ability to will and do what is good and pleasing to God.

Questions
1. What is meant by saying that God is sovereign?
3. What is meant by foreordination?
4. What is God's providence and how far does it extend?
5. What special act of providence in the case of man?

Chapter Six
Christ Our Saviour

We believe that God in His mercy provided a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, to deliver His people from the guilt, power, and state of sin, and to restore them to the place of fellowship.

1—This Saviour was provided under a second covenant called the Covenant of Grace. Catechism 20.
   a. The Covenant of Grace was made with Christ as the Second Man, and in Him with all the elect as His seed.
   b. The only Mediator of this covenant is the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who became man. Catechism 21. John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:6, 7. Our Saviour therefore is both God and man, one person with two distinct natures.

2—How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?
   b. Mary, His mother, gave Him His true human nature. Begotten by the Holy Spirit, His human nature was sinless. Heb. 7:26.

3—Why was it necessary that He be God, man and God-and-man, in one person? Larger Catechism Questions 38, 39, 40.
   a. It was necessary that He be God in order to make His work and sufferings effective for His people. Acts 2:24; Rom. 1:4.
b. It was necessary that He be man in order to render full obedience to God in man's nature, and to be able to sympathize with His people in their temptations and afflictions. Heb. 2:14; 4:15.

c. It was necessary that He be both God and man in one person in order that His reconciling work be acceptable both to God and His people.

4—Why was it necessary that He be sinless? Because, being sinful, He could not be a bondsman and a deliverer for others, but would Himself be under condemnation.

5—This our Saviour is called the Lord Jesus Christ.

a. He is called Jesus because He saves His people from their sins. Matt. 1:12.

b. He is called Christ or The Christ, because He was anointed with the Holy Spirit for His work of redemption. Messiah is the Hebrew word, and Christ the Greek word for the Awaited One. Luke 4:18, 21; Acts 3:22.

c. He is called Lord because He is the One who has the supreme right to rule over His people. Matt. 28:18.

6—The Purpose of His Coming.

a. To reveal to us by His Word and Spirit the will of God for our salvation. He is therefore a Prophet, a Teacher, a Revealer. Catechism 24. John 1:18.

b. To offer Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God. He is therefore a Priest, an Intercessor, a Reconciler. Catechism 25. Heb. 9:14, 28.

c. To reign over His people and lead them on to victory over sin and Satan. Catechism 26. Acts 5:31. He is therefore a King, Lord and Master, Ruler.

7—Summary of terms setting forth His saving mission. Note: One is saved simply by accepting Christ as His divine Saviour doing His will, not by understanding a list of definitions, yet the definitions are important too.

a. The incarnation. This means the eternal Son of God taking to Himself true human nature.

b. The atonement. This means the reconciliation of parties alienated, the satisfying of divine justice, and the vindication of an outraged moral order. God could not forgive the sinner unless the penalty for sin were paid. Christ became our substitute and the stroke due to us fell on Him.

c. The resurrection of Christ. This was the triumphant conclusion of His great work of redemption. His atoning death was given meaning and power by His resurrection. 1 Cor. 15:14, 20, 22.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was the Saviour provided under the Covenant of Grace?

2. How did the eternal Son of God become man?

3. Why was it necessary that the Redeemer be God, man, and God-and-man, in one person?

4. What is the meaning of the words “Jesus,” “Christ,” and “Lord”?

5. What was the purpose of His coming?

6. What is meant by the terms “incarnation,” “atonement,” and “resurrection of Christ”?
Questions
1. Show that the Holy Spirit is a person.
2. Show that the Holy Spirit is a Divine person.
3. Distinguish between the work of the Son and the work of the Holy Spirit.
5. What is the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers? Sections 5, 6, 7.

Chapter Eight
Faith in Jesus Christ

We believe that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and that all who have faith in Him have forgiveness of sins and everlasting righteousness, solely through the merits of Jesus Christ on the ground of His shed blood.

1—Saving faith is accepting Jesus Christ as our Saviour from sin, and trusting Him day by day for keeping and guidance. This faith is accompanied by:

a. Conviction. This is the work of God's Spirit. The sinner thereby is brought to a sense of his guilt before God, and of his inability to save himself, John 16:8.

b. Repentance. Catechism 87. Repentance is a change of mind and of attitude. The sinner convicted of sin begins to hate what once he loved. Repentance and faith are inseparable, two aspects of one thing. If the face is turned toward the cross the sinner has turned his back on the world, the flesh, and the devil! Ezek. 36:31; Acts 5:31, 32.

c. Conversion. Matt. 18:3; Acts 2:38: This is the conscious commitment of life to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

2—Saving Faith is the gift of God: Eph. 2:8, 9.

a. This faith is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Catechism 81. The Spirit enlightens the mind in the knowledge of Christ, renewes the will, and persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ. This is Regeneration.
b. Saving faith then is not mere assent to certain statements about God and Christ and sin. It is also trust and the committing of one's life to God in Christ.
c. The principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for salvation. Catechism 86. Jesus Christ is God's offer to man, and faith is the acceptance of that offer.

3—The Nature and Object of Saving Faith:

a. The nature of faith illustrated. It is the eye by which we see and understand what God in Christ has done for us. It is the hand by which we receive God's gift. It is the sustaining cord by which we are connected with the source of light and power. It is in exercise when we look away from self to the living Christ "who was delivered for our offences and raised for our justification." Rom. 4:25.
b. God in Christ is the object of faith. It is the object of faith that counts. It is the engine that is the source of power, not the coupling, though the coupling is both important and necessary. Faith then is only an instrument, but a God-appointed and a God-given instrument.

4—The Benefits which come to us through Saving Faith.


We receive the forgiveness of sins, and are accepted as righteous in God's sight, not because of our faith and repentance, and not because God decides to wipe the slate clean, but only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

(1) How does it come that Christ has a righteousness to spare? See answer of Greatheart to Christians. (Bunyan)

(2) Imputation means to place to the account of. Our sins are placed to the account of Christ and His righteousness to our account. Is that just? This transaction is based on the covenant union between Christ and His people.
b. Adoption. Catechism 84.
Thus receiving Christ by faith we become children of God. John 1:12; 1 John 3:1, 2.
c. Sanctification. Catechism 35.
The work of renewal is begun in our hearts and continued throughout life though with many ups and downs: Eph. 4:23, 24; Col. 1:10, 11; Rom. 6:4, 6, 14.
Through faith in Christ we may have assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Spirit.
Through faith we are brought into spiritual union with Christ and thus become fruitful.

QUESTIONS
1. What is saving faith and by what is it accompanied?
2. What is the source of saving faith and what are its principal acts?
3. Give illustrations of faith and state its true object.
4. What are the benefits that come through saving faith?
5. Explain what is meant by justification through faith alone?
“And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Rev. 22:17.

b. Every hearer is put under solemn obligation to accept Christ as his Saviour. The door is open to “whosoever will.”

QUESTIONS
1. Who will be saved and who will not be lost?
2. What is meant by the “perseverance of the saints,” and to what is it due?
3. May one know that he is saved? On what ground?
4. To whom is the gospel to be offered? On what is this founded?
5. What is every hearer under obligation to do?

CHAPTER TEN
THE LAST THINGS

We believe that it is appointed unto all men once to die; that after death the souls of the redeemed do immediately pass into glory, and the souls of the unredeemed into the abode of the lost. We believe in the Second Coming of Christ, in the Resurrection of the dead, in the final Judgment, and in the Life Everlasting.

1—Death is the lot of all both great and small. It is certain, inescapable, and universal.
   a. Death is the result and penalty of sin. Rom. 5:12; 6:23. The sting of death is sin but the atoning death of Christ has robbed death of its sting for every believer: 1 Cor. 15:55-57.
   b. Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body. Spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God. Though separated from the body the soul does not lose consciousness existence. The souls of believers enter at once into a state of unending happiness. The souls of the wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Larger Catechism 86. Matt. 25:46; Luke 16:23, 24; 23:43; Jude 6, 7.

2—The Second Coming of Christ.
   b. He will come again at the last day in great power, and in the full manifestation of His own glory, and of His Father’s, with all His
holy angels, and with the trumpet of God. Larger Catechism 56.

The "last day" will mark the end of the present age of grace and the inauguration of the kingdom of glory. The work of the redemption in its entirety will then have been completed. 1 Cor. 15:24-28. There will be therefore only one Second Coming, not two or three as some teach.

c. The purpose of the Second Coming is to judge the world in righteousness. "He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." Acts 17:31.

3—The Resurrection of the Dead.

a. At the "last day" there will be a general resurrection of the dead. "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." John 5:28, 29.

"There shall be a resurrection of the dead both of the just and unjust." Acts 24:15.

b. The bodies of the just shall be raised in power, spiritual, and incorruptible, and made like unto Christ's resurrection body; while the bodies of the wicked shall be raised up in dishonor. 1 Cor. 15:51-53; Dan. 12:2.

4—The Final Judgment.

a. This is the Day of Account, when "every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Rom. 14:12.

"God shall bring every work into judgment whether it be good or whether it be evil." Eccl. 12:14. See also II Cor. 5:10.

b. It is a sifting process by which the wheat is separated from the chaff.

At the day of judgment the wicked shall be set on Christ's left hand, and upon clear evidence and full conviction of their own consciences, shall have the fearful but just sentence of condemnation pronounced against them. Matt. 25:41, 42. Larger Catechism 89.

At the day of judgment, the righteous being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on His right hand, and there openly acknowledged and acquitted . . . and fully and forever freed from all sin and misery. Matt. 25:33, 34, 46. Larger Catechism 90.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the four last things mentioned?
2. Why is death universal?
3. What becomes of the souls departed?
4. When will the Second Coming of Christ be, and what is the purpose of His coming?
5. What is meant by the general resurrection of the dead and when will it be?
6. What takes place at the final judgment?
CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

We believe that in all things we should live a life of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ as our Master; taking the Ten Commandments, and the example and teachings of Jesus as our rule of righteousness; and, love to God and man as the dominating principle of life.

1.—This means that Jesus Christ is to be the Master and Guide of our life in the home, in the school, in business, in social relationships, and in civil and political affairs.

a. We are under obligation to confess Christ in all these areas of life: Matt. 10:32, 33.

b. This may prove costly: I Peter 2:11-16; 3:13-17.

2.—This calls for practice of the Christian graces.

a. FAITH. This is daily trust in God. Sinful worry and anxious care are the denial of trusting faith: Matt. 6:25-34.

b. HOPE. Hope is the expectation of good to come. Christian hope is based on the promise of God’s Word. Despair is the opposite of hope. Moods of despondency and depression tend to destroy hope: Rom. 8:18-25.

c. LOVE. This grace is not a sentimental affection for others, but a desire that others should have the same fair treatment that I ask for myself. Because God so loved us we are bound to love one another; and, even to love our enemies; I John 3:18-16; 4:7,11; Rom. 18:8-10.

3.—This calls for the practice of some homely virtues.

a. TRUTHFULNESS. No lie is of the truth. The old nature is fruitful of lies. The new nature does not lie. The true Christian does not indulge in “white lies” and “grey lies.” I John 2:21; John 8:44; Acts 5:1-11. Can I be depended on to tell the truth no matter what the cost?

b. HONESTY. This means being trustworthy in money matters, in examinations, in work and in business. The Christian does not cheat. He is not dishonest. He does not steal. I Cor. 6:11-12; II Cor. 8:30, 31.

c. PURITY. This has a broad application but often has specific reference to sex relations. Sex desire is perfectly normal. It is in its perversion that the Seventh Commandment is violated: Matt. 5:27, 28; I Cor. 6:15-20. “As a servant of the higher purposes in life it is a wonderful servant, giving drive and beauty to the rest of life. As a master—it is hell!” (Jones)

d. UNSELFISHNESS. Either self is on the throne of my heart or Christ is. Either self or Christ has the ultimate say in my life. Which is it? I Tim. 6:6-10; II Tim. 4:9, 10; Phil. 2:4, 5. “What am I living for—myself, my own position, money, place, power? Myself or others?” (Jones)

4.—Taking Christ as Master it becomes our duty to witness against public evils.

a. The Traffic in Intoxicating Liquors.

The use of alcoholic beverages is injurious to the life and witness of the Christian. The law of love leads Christ’s disciples to abstain from their use: I Cor. 8:13; Eph. 5:18; Prov. 20:1, 23; 23:29-35; Rom. 14:13.

Church membership is refused to those engaged in the manufacture or sale of alcoholic beverages: Habakkuk 2:15.
b. The Vice of Gambling.
This is a widespread and popular evil which ruins the moral character and is destructive of the spiritual life. It is an attempt to get something for nothing, to gain through a neighbor's loss. It is quite unworthy of one who loves his neighbor as himself. This rules out all forms of betting, lotteries, and sweepstakes.

c. Secret Oath-bound Societies.
Here we have the evil of secrecy, and of unlawful oaths in many secret lodges, and of false worship in others: I Thess. 5:5; Matt. 15; John 3:20, 21. The Christian swears away his freedom and manhood when he binds himself by dreadful oaths ever to conceal and never reveal what he may learn in the lodge. The oath cannot be lawfully administered in these secret organizations, and oftentimes it is of such a nature that a true disciple of Christ could not take it under any circumstances.

5—Taking the example and teaching of Jesus as our rule of righteousness we will indulge only in those amusements and recreations of which Christ can approve.
These then will be clean and uplifting, not irreverent or indecent, and not tending to create a distaste for the things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report: Phil. 4:8. Companionships affect for good or ill the Christian life: I Cor. 15:33.

6—The Christian life can be maintained only by the constant feeding of the inner springs of life.
a. This calls for the prayer-habit. Without prayer the spiritual life becomes formal and powerless: Luke 11:1-13; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2.
b. For this it is necessary to feed on the Word: Col. 3:16; John 15:7; I Peter 2:2; II Tim. 3:16; Ps. 119:11.

QUESTIONS
1. In what areas is the Christian life to be lived?
2. Why are Faith, Hope, and Love necessary to the Christian life?
3. Name four homely virtues and show why they are necessary to Christian character.
4. Against what public evils must we bear witness? Why?
5. What principle is to guide the Christian in his amusements and recreations?
6. How is the quality of the Christian life to be maintained?
CHAPTER TWELVE

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

We believe that the Church is the Body of Christ, brought into being by the Holy Spirit; that it consists of all who accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, together with their children; that its organization is determined by Christ its Head; and, that its terms of fellowship should be only what the Scriptures enjoin.

1—The Church Defined.

a. It is the Body of Christ brought into being by the Holy Spirit: Eph. 1:23; 4:12. It is an organism formed by an inner principle of life rather than by external authority: Eph. 2:18. Christ therefore is the only King and Head of the Church, and He alone has authority to determine its life and witness: Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18.
b. It was brought into being by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost: Acts 2:1-4, 41, 47. Its life was sustained and constantly renewed by the indwelling Spirit: Acts 2:41-47; 4:31-37.
c. It is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone: Eph. 2:20-22.
d. It consists of all who accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, together with their children: Acts 2:38-41; Matt. 19:14. The Church is one among all nations. We should pray and labor therefore for the visible oneness of the Church of God, in our own land and throughout the world, on the basis of truth and of Scriptural order: I Cor. 12:12, 13; Psa. 122:6-8; Eph. 4:3-6.

2—The Government of the Church.

a. Its government is determined by Christ its Head. Government is necessary to organization, and organization is necessary in order to obey the commands of Christ given to His disciples in their collective capacity. For example: “This do in remembrance of me,” and “Go ye into all the world.” I Cor. 11:23-25; Matt. 28:18-20. The guiding principle for its organization is the will of Christ as revealed in His Word: Isa. 9:6; Heb. 8:5.
b. The Government of the Church, as revealed in the New Testament, is Presbyterian or representative government. Those set to rule are chosen by the members themselves. This means government by elders, or by Presbyters, which elders were also called bishops or overseers: Acts 14:23; 20:17, 18, 28; I Tim. 3:1, 2. Some of the elders thus chosen to rule are called teaching elders, or ministers, but all have equal authority and are solemnly ordained to office: I Tim. 5:17, 19; 4:14. The term of office may be for life or for a limited period.
c. Deacons, or Managers, are office-bearers chosen by the congregation to care for its temporal and financial interests. This is an administrative office. Its members may be both men and women. The term of office may be for a limited time or for life.

3—The Courts of the Church.

a. Presbyterian Order provides for a graduation of Courts: congregational sessions, presbyteries, and synods, in regular subordination the one to the other.
SESSION. This is the governing body of the local congregation, composed of elders chosen by the congregation, and accountable to the Presbytery. The elected minister is Moderator of the Session.

PRESBYTERY. This is composed of an elder and minister from each congregation in a definite geographical area. The Presbytery is responsible for the supervision of the congregations under its care. There may be many presbyteries which are accountable to the next higher court.

SYNOD. This is composed of a minister and an elder from each of the congregations in all of the Presbyteries. This is the highest ruling body in the Covenanter Church.

b. Benefits of the Presbyterian Order: It preserves the rights of the people, provides for representative government, secures equality among those who rule, and permits appeal from one court to another.

4. Terms of Fellowship in the Church.

a. Terms of fellowship are necessary:
   To exhibit a system of sound principles concerning the way of salvation, the Christian life, the Christian Church, and the Christian witness, etc. Amos 3:3; Col. 2:2.
   To maintain the ordinances of worship in their purity: Acts 2:42.
   To promote holiness of life, and prepare the saints for heaven: Col. 1:12.

b. Terms of fellowship should require only what the Scriptures enjoin, and should reject no Scriptural truth; yet the distinction between essentials and non-essentials is a just and proper one. The only thing essential to salvation is to be in Christ: Rom. 8:1. But full obedience to Christ requires us to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded us: Matt. 28:19, 20.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the Church and of what does it consist?
2. What is the guiding principle for the organization of the Church?
3. What is the form of government set forth in the Scriptures, and what are its officers?
4. What are the various Courts of the Church, and what is the authority of each?
5. Why are terms of fellowship necessary, and what should they require?
CHAPTER THIRTEEN
THE WORSHIP OF GOD

We believe that the worship of the one living and true God is a universal obligation; that His worship must be according to His own appointment; that He has designated one day in seven for rest and worship; and, that giving as the Lord has prescribed as is an integral part of the worship and service of God.

1—Worship is commanded.
Luke 4:8; 1 Thess. 5:17; Heb. 10:25; Col. 3:16.

a. The principal parts of public worship are praise, prayer, the offering, the reading and preaching the word of God. This is the united worship of the congregation in public assembly. This calls for reverence which should be cultivated carefully. The minister voices the adoration and confession of the congregation in prayer, and speaks as the ambassador of God in reading and preaching the Word of God. Singing God's praise is a part of public worship, in which the whole congregation should join.

b. Worship is also private, family and social.

Private. "Enter into thine inner chamber and... pray." Matt. 6:6.

Family. This is worship by the family as a unit. This is the recognition that the family as such belongs to God: Josh. 24:15; Job. 1:5.

Social. This is worship in more informal gatherings, assembled for prayer and Bible study.

2—The Way in which we are to worship is that which God has appointed in His Word. Catechism 50, 51.

a. This means that we must have a "Thus saith the Lord" for what we use in His worship. Worship is to be given to God alone, and not to angels, saints, or any other creature. He is not to be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men: Deut. 12:32; Matt. 4:9, 10. True worship then is a matter of the heart and voice, in spirit and in truth: John 4:24.

b. We are commanded to use the Psalms in worship, but we have no command to use instruments of music in the New Testament Church. Instruments of music formed a part of the typical and ceremonial worship of the temple, which was fulfilled and abolished by the coming of Christ. The Book of Psalms was provided by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as the book of praise best adapted to the worship of God in all ages. They adequately express the holiness and majesty of God, and sound the depths of the human heart and of human experience.

3—God has appointed one day in seven for rest and worship. Catechism 57-61.

a. The day so appointed is the first day of the week ever since the resurrection of Christ. This is properly called the Lord's Day, or the Christian Sabbath. This embodies the essence of the Fourth Commandment, and expresses the freedom of love rather than that of legal requirements: John 20:19-27; Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10.

b. Purpose of the Day:
To keep in constant remembrance the resurrection of our Lord. Our attitude to—
wards the Day expresses our attitude toward His resurrection. To keep in remembrance the two great benefits, Creation and Redemption. Catechism 59. By it we acknowledge God's lordship over all of our time. It prevents toil becoming a curse, and leaves men free to worship. To cultivate the spiritual life, and to engage in a ministry to the souls and bodies of men.

4—Giving as the Lord has prospered us is an integral part of the worship and service of God: I Cor. 16:2.

a. The offering is a part of worship, and is a symbol of the dedication of the body and of all material possessions to the Lord and His service: Rom. 12:1, 2.

b. Our giving to the Lord's work should be proportionate giving. The proportion can scarcely be less than under the Mosaic Law. The tithe then, or one-tenth of net income should be set apart as the Lord's portion, to be administered as in His sight. This is an acknowledgment of the Lord's ownership, and of our stewardship of material possessions.

Questions
1. What are the principal parts of worship, and what the different groups that worship?
2. What is the way in which we are to worship, and what songs are to be used in praise?
3. What day, by divine command, is set apart for worship, and what is the especial purpose of the Day?
4. Why is giving a part of the worship and service of God?
5. What is the proportion of income to be set apart and how administered?
These two sacraments fulfill and replace the two sacraments of the Old Testament, Circumcision and the Passover. Baptism, like Circumcision, is an initial rite to be observed but once, or to be administered to the same person but once. The Lord’s Supper, like the Passover, is a memorial feast to be observed repeatedly. Larger Catechism 176.

2.—The Sacrament of Baptism.

a. Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament wherein Christ has appointed the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to be a sign and seal of our union with Christ, of our cleansing from sin’s guilt and stain, and of our commitment to Him. Matt. 28:19; Catechism 94.

The element used is water, a symbol of the blood of Christ which cleanses from the guilt of sin, and of the blood of Christ which purifies the soul: I John 1:7; John 15:3.

The sacrament is therefore a sign of the believer’s regeneration by the blood and the Word applied by the Holy Spirit: John 3:5; Titus 3:5. It is a solemn commitment to the Triune God, Father, Son and Spirit; and a remembrance of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

b. Baptism is to be administered to adults on profession of their faith in Christ and obedience to Him, and to the infants of believing parents. Infants are baptized on the basis of the faith of the parent or parents, and the vows which they take for the child. Acts 10:47; Matt. 10:14; Catechism 95.

c. Baptism may be by sprinkling, pouring or dipping. Since the element used, water, is a sign of a spiritual reality, the significance of the sacrament does not depend upon the amount used. It is to be into the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, the Triune God: Matt. 28:19.

It is usually to be administered in the Church, in the presence of the congregation, by a minister of Christ lawfully called thereto.

3.—The Lord’s Supper.

a. The Lord’s Supper is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein by giving and receiving bread and the cup according to the appointment of Christ, His death is shown forth: Luke 22:10, 20; Catechism 96.

It is then to be a memorial feast appointed by Christ for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death. It is to be observed as regular intervals by the congregation assembled for public worship, and administered only by a lawful minister of the Word.

b. The Sacramental Elements.

The elements to be used are bread and the cup. The “cup” stands for that which it contains, the fruit of the vine. Whether this was fermented wine is a matter of dispute: I Cor. 11:23-26; Mark 14:22, 23, 25.

The bread and the cup are symbols of Christ’s body and blood.

c. The Sacramental Acts.

These are six in number, four by the minister and two by the communicants.

“Took bread.” “This is my body.” Mark 14:22; John 1:14.

This means that the eternal Son of God became flesh, i.e. took to Himself true human nature. It does not mean that the bread turned into flesh and blood in His hand.
“And blessed.” Mark 14:22.
This signifies the solemn dedication of Jesus to His mission as the Christ in His public baptism in the Jordan, and the Father’s blessing: Matt. 3:17. The blessing does not change the nature of the elements.

“And brake.” Mark 14:22.
This signifies the sufferings and death of the Anointed One. He died as our substitute. His death was an atonement for the sins of His people.

“And gave.”
He gave the bread and gave the cup. He thus offers Himself in His sufferings and death to be our Saviour. Our salvation therefore is all of grace. We are saved by grace.
The disciples “take” or receive the bread and the cup. This indicates the faith and obedience of His disciples. They accept what God in Christ has done for them. They stand right with God through their faith alone.
The disciples “eat” and “drink” the fruit of the vine. This means that they receive and feed upon Christ and all the benefits of His death. Christ’s mind becomes their mind, and His spirit their spirit. Phil. 2:5; Gal. 2:20.
Christ then is present, not in the bread or in the cup, but in the heart of the believer.

The Sacramental Observation.
The manner of its observance is plainly recorded in the New Testament. The spirit of its observance expresses itself in self-examination, preparation of mind and heart, and in high anticipation of blessing: 1 Cor. 11:27-31; II Cor. 13:5.

4. The sacraments become channels of grace only by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in the hearts of His people: I Cor. 3:17; 6:11.

Questions
1. What is a sacrament and what two things are necessary to a sacrament?
3. What is baptism and what is its meaning?
4. To whom is baptism to be administered and how?
5. What is the Lord’s Supper?
6. What are the elements used and what do they represent?
7. What preparation is necessary to its observance?
CHAPTER FIFTEEN

MARRIAGE AND THE HOME

We believe that marriage is an honorable estate instituted by God in the beginning of human history; that the family is the true unit of society and essential to its stability; and, that the Christian home is vital to the well being of the Church.

1.—Marriage, instituted by the Creator, is honorable in all. Heb. 13:4; Matt. 19:3-6.
   a. It is lawful therefore for all sorts of people who are able with judgment to give their consent. Gen. 24:77, 88.
   b. Marriage is not a sacrament, nor peculiar to the Church of Christ, so it is right that the civil government make laws to regulate marriage.
   c. Marriage is of a public nature and must always be performed before a competent number of witnesses.

Marriage was ordained for the mutual good of husband and wife; for the continuance of society; for the increase and building up of the church; and to promote purity. Gen. 2:18; 1:28; Mal. 2:11; I Cor. 7:2.

b. Marriage is a solemn covenant between one man and one woman, in which they vow to live together in loyalty to each other until parted by death. Christians should marry only in the Lord. That is, a Christian should not marry an unbeliever. I Cor. 7:39; II Cor. 6:14.

The marriage of Christians should be solemnized by a lawful minister. Scripture enjoins the husband to love his wife even as Christ loved the church, and the wife to respect her husband in the Lord. Eph. 5:22-33.

Marriage is indissoluble except for the cause of adultery or irretrievable desertion. Divorce is a last desperate resort permitted only for the foregoing reasons. Ex. 20:14; Matt. 19:9; I Cor. 7:10.

2.—The Family is the true unit of society and essential to its stability.

a. The family is the unit or cell which makes society organic. The family is made up of parents and children: father, mother, child or children. Parents are responsible for their children until they come to years of maturity. In mature children are depend-ent on their parents and owe obedience to them. Human society is strong and vigorous when the marriage bond is held in honor, and when parents and children are bound together by mutual love and respect.

b. The family is a healthy unit of society only when based on the Fifth and Seventh Commandments. See Catechism Questions 63-66 and 70-72.

3.—The Christian Home is vital to the well being of the Church.

a. By and large the strength of the Church is dependent on its homes. The spiritual life of the church on the whole will not rise higher than the quality of spiritual life in its homes. The home then must be Christian if the Church is to have power. On the other hand the Church has a responsibility for cultivating and developing Christian homes.

b. A Christian home is one which is committed to the worship and service of God in
Here parents teach their children that they are Christ's and owe Him the love of their hearts and the service of their lives. They train them to trust and obey the Lord, and teach them the way of truth and goodness. Here children obey and honor their parents as in the Lord, and parents do not provoke their children to do wrong. Eph. 6:1-4. Here too is the family altar or family worship. This is the regular worship of God by the family, parents and children together. A minimum requirement is the reading aloud of a portion of the Word and some member of the family leading in prayer.

Questions:
1. What is marriage; for whom lawful; by whom instituted; for what purpose; and with whom should Christians marry?
2. What is the importance of the family to society, and of the Fifth and Seventh Commandments to the family?
3. Why is the Christian home vital to the well-being of the Church?
4. What is a Christian home?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
CIVIL GOVERNMENT AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Ruler of nations; that nations and rulers owe obedience to Him as the King of kings; that civil government, in addition to the Family and the Church, is a divine institution for bringing in the Kingdom of God; and, that nations professing the Christian religion should enter into covenant relations with God in Christ.

1—The Lord Jesus Christ is the Ruler of nations.
   a. To Him has been committed all authority in heaven and on earth. Matt. 22:18; Jas. 5:22, 23; Phil. 2:9-11.
   b. Christ actually rules as King of nations by punishing those who violate His law, and by rewarding those who obey Him as their Ruler. Ps. 2:1-6, 8; 9:17; Rev. 2:27; Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 2:12.
   c. Some day all nations shall acknowledge and obey Christ as their Ruler. Ps. 72:8, 11, 17; Dan. 7:13, 14, 27.

2—Nations and rulers owe obedience to Him as King of kings.
   a. Inasmuch as their authority is derived from God through Christ, the only Mediator, they are bound to acknowledge the source of their authority, and rule according to the revealed will of God. Deut. 17:12-20.
   This acknowledgment should be made in the Constitution, the fundamental law of the land.
   b. In every nation that professes the Christian...
religion it is the duty of civil rulers, including presidents, kings, governors, legislators and voters to honor the King of kings by shaping the laws and life of the nation according to the principles of the Word of God for nations.

2—Civil government, in addition to the family and the Church, is a divine institution for bringing in the Kingdom of God.

a. Civil government in its nature is an ordinance of God, and as such is to be obeyed. Rom. 13:1, 2; I Pet. 2:13, 14.

Civil government in actual operation is composed of men, imperfect at the best, and sometimes bad, and so may be perverted to evil ends.

Civil rulers, in the ordinance of God, are to be ministers of God. They are set for the punishment of evil doers, and for the protection of those who do right. Rom. 13:4, 4; I Pet. 2:13, 14.

Citizens or subjects owe obedience to their rulers in all things lawful, for conscience sake. Rom. 13:5; 6.

This obedience however is limited by the law of God. If rulers become the protectors of evil doers and a terror to the good, then Christians must obey God rather than men. Acts 5:29.

b. The kingdom of God is the great end for which the three divine institutions exist. So civil government as a divine institution has one great purpose, to bring in the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God is God’s all inclusive program, in Christ, for the world. It is the rule of God in the hearts of men, and a divine order into which men must enter. It is both to be received and entered. Luke 18:17; John 3:5.

The Manifesto of the Kingdom is found in Matthew chapters V, VI, VII.

The qualifications of its citizens are set forth in Matt. 5:1-16.

Many of the parables of Jesus illustrate phases of the Kingdom. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, Thy kingdom come. Catechism 102.

The qualities of the kingdom to be emphasized are righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. Rom. 14:17, 18.

4—Nations professing the Christian religion should enter into covenant relations with God.


a. This exalts the will of God to the place of supremacy in the life of the nation.

This, however, does not involve a union of Church and State. Each is independent in its own sphere, but both owe obedience to the King of nations and the Head of the Church.

b. The Christian as a citizen is called upon to dissent from and to refuse to incorporate with a constitution of government which denies our Lord’s claim to the obedience of the body politic. See Covenant of 1871, Section III.

QUESTIONS

1. Show that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Ruler of nations.

2. Why should nations acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings, and what should this acknowledgment be made?

3. What is civil government and what are the duties of civil rulers?
4. Are there any limits to the obedience we owe to civil rulers? If so, what?
5. What is the Kingdom of God, and what is the great purpose of civil government?
6. Why should a nation professing the Christian religion enter into covenant with God?
7. What is "political dissent," and when does it become necessary?

SUMMARY
1. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and life.
2. We believe in one God and that He eternally exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe that man was created perfect, male and female, in the image of God; endowed with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; and, with the law of God written on their hearts.
4. We believe that man sinned and brought death upon himself and his posterity; that all human beings have an inherently sinful nature, and are therefore sinners in thought, word, and deed; and in order to be restored to fellowship with God must be born again by the Spirit of God.
5. We believe that God is absolutely sovereign; that He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, that He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass; and that He preserves and governs all His creatures and all their actions.
6. We believe that God in His mercy provided a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, to deliver His people from the guilt, power, and stain of sin, and to restore them to the place of fellowship.
7. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, proceeding from the Father and the Son; and, that He is the divine agent for bringing men into saving relations with God in Christ.
8. We believe that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," and that all who
faith in Him have forgiveness of sins and everlasting righteousness, solely through the merits of Jesus Christ on the grounds of His shed blood.

9. We believe that all those whom God has chosen unto life will be called by His Word and Spirit out of the state of sin and death unto salvation by Jesus Christ; that none of those whom God has chosen will be lost; that true believers may attain to the assurance of their salvation; and that God commands all men to repent and believe on His Son.

10. We believe that it is appointed unto all men once to die; that after death the souls of believers do immediately pass into glory, and the souls of the unredeemed into the abode of the lost; we believe in the Second Coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the life everlasting.

11. We believe that in all things we should live a life of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ as our Master; taking the Ten Commandments and the example and teachings of Jesus as our rule of righteousness.

12. We believe that the Church is the body of Christ brought into being by the Holy Spirit; that it consists of all who accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, together with their children; that its organization is determined by Christ its Head; and that its terms of fellowship should be only what the Scriptures enjoin.

13. We believe that the worship of the one living and true God is a universal obligation; that His worship must be according to His own appointment; that He has designated one day in seven for rest and worship; and, that giving as the Lord has prospered as is an integral part of the worship and service of God.

14. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed sacraments to be observed by His Church; that these sacraments are two, and two only, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; and, that they become channels of grace only by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in the hearts of His people.

15. We believe that marriage is an honorable estate instituted by God in the beginning of human history; that the family is the true unit of society and essential to its stability; and, that the Christian home is vital to the well being of the Church.

16. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Ruler of nations; that nations and rulers owe obedience to Him as the King of kings; that civil government, in addition to the Family and the Church, is a divine institution for bringing in the Kingdom of God; and, that nations professing the Christian religion should enter into covenant relations with God in Christ.
Certificate of Membership

This is to certify that

has publicly confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and has been received into the full membership of the

Reformed Presbyterian Church

or

on this ______ day of ________ in the
year of our Lord 19____

Pastor