

## Chief Articles of Faith

### Article I: Of God.

1] Our Churches, with common consent, do teach that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence and concerning the Three Persons, is true and to be believed without any doubting; 2] that is to say, there is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and 3] yet there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the term "person" 4] they use as the Fathers have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself.

5] They condemn all heresies which have sprung up against this article, as the Manichaeans, who assumed two principles, one Good and the other Evil: also the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and all such. 6] They condemn also the Samosatenes, old and new, who, contending that there is but one Person, sophistically and impiously argue that the Word and the Holy Ghost are not distinct Persons, but that "Word" signifies a spoken word, and "Spirit" signifies motion created in things.

### Article II: Of Original Sin.

1] Also they teach that since the fall of Adam all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with 2] concupiscence; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Ghost.

3] They condemn the Pelagians and others who deny that original depravity is sin, and who, to obscure the glory of Christ's merit and benefits, argue that man can be justified before God by his own strength and reason.

### Article III: Of the Son of God.

1] Also they teach that the Word, that is, the Son of God, did assume the human nature in 2] the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably enjoined in one Person, one Christ, true God and true man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and 3] buried, that He might reconcile the Father unto us, and be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.

4] He also descended into hell, and truly rose again the third day; afterward He ascended into heaven that He might sit on the right hand of the Father, and forever reign and have dominion over all creatures, and sanctify 5] them that believe in Him, by sending the Holy Ghost into their hearts, to rule, comfort, and quicken them, and to defend them against the devil and the power of sin.

6] The same Christ shall openly come again to judge the quick and the dead, etc., according to the Apostles' Creed.

#### Article IV: Of Justification.

1] Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for 2] Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. 3] This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4.

#### Article V: Of the Ministry.

1] That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, 2] the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith; where and when it pleases God, in them that hear 3] the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake.

4] They condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works.

#### Article VI: Of New Obedience.

1] Also they teach that this faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is necessary to do good works commanded by God, because of God's will, but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification 2] before God. For remission of sins and justification is apprehended by faith, as also the voice of Christ attests: When ye shall have done all these things, say: We are unprofitable servants. Luke 17:10. The same is also taught by 3] the Fathers. For Ambrose says: It is ordained of God that he who believes in Christ is saved, freely receiving remission of sins, without works, by faith alone.

#### Article VII: Of the Church.

1] Also they teach that one holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.

2] And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and 3] the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. 4] As Paul says: One faith, one Baptism, one God and Father

of all, etc. Eph. 4:5-6.

#### Article VIII: What the Church Is.

1] Although the Church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers, nevertheless, since in this life many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled therewith, it is lawful to use Sacraments administered by evil men, according to the saying of Christ: The Scribes and 2] the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, etc. Matt. 23:2. Both the Sacraments and Word are effectual by reason of the institution and commandment of Christ, notwithstanding they be administered by evil men.

3] They condemn the Donatists, and such like, who denied it to be lawful to use the ministry of evil men in the Church, and who thought the ministry of evil men to be unprofitable and of none effect.

#### Article IX: Of Baptism.

1] Of Baptism they teach that it is necessary 2] to salvation, and that through Baptism is offered the grace of God, and that children are to be baptized who, being offered to God through Baptism are received into God's grace.

3] They condemn the Anabaptists, who reject the baptism of children, and say that children are saved without Baptism.

#### Article X: Of the Lord's Supper.

1] Of the Supper of the Lord they teach that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed 2] to those who eat the Supper of the Lord; and they reject those that teach otherwise.

#### Article XI: Of Confession.

1] Of Confession they teach that Private Absolution ought to be retained in the churches, although in confession 2] an enumeration of all sins is not necessary. For it is impossible according to the Psalm: Who can understand his errors? Ps. 19:12.

#### Article XII: Of Repentance.

1] Of Repentance they teach that for those who have fallen after Baptism there is remission of sins whenever they are converted 2] and that the Church ought to impart absolution to those thus returning to repentance. Now, repentance consists properly of these 3] two parts: One is contrition, that is, 4] terrors smiting the

conscience through the knowledge of sin; the other is faith, which is born of 5] the Gospel, or of absolution, and believes that for Christ's sake, sins are forgiven, comforts 6] the conscience, and delivers it from terrors. Then good works are bound to follow, which are the fruits of repentance.

7] They condemn the Anabaptists, who deny that those once justified can lose the Holy Ghost. Also those who contend that some may attain to such 8] perfection in this life that they cannot sin.

9] The Novatians also are condemned, who would not absolve such as had fallen after Baptism, though they returned to repentance.

10] They also are rejected who do not teach that remission of sins comes through faith but command us to merit grace through satisfactions of our own.

#### Article XIII: Of the Use of the Sacraments.

1] Of the Use of the Sacraments they teach that the Sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God 2] toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them. Wherefore we must so use the Sacraments that faith be added to believe the promises which are offered and set forth through the Sacraments.

3] They therefore condemn those who teach that the Sacraments justify by the outward act, and who do not teach that, in the use of the Sacraments, faith which believes that sins are forgiven, is required.

#### Article XIV: Of Ecclesiastical Order.

Of Ecclesiastical Order they teach that no one should publicly teach in the Church or administer the Sacraments unless he be regularly called.

#### Article XV: Of Ecclesiastical Usages.

1] Of Usages in the Church they teach that those ought to be observed which may be observed without sin, and which are profitable unto tranquillity and good order in the Church, as particular holy days, festivals, and the like.

2] Nevertheless, concerning such things men are admonished that consciences are not to be burdened, as though such observance was necessary to salvation.

3] They are admonished also that human traditions instituted to propitiate God, to merit grace, and to make satisfaction for sins, are opposed to the Gospel and the doctrine of faith. Wherefore vows and traditions concerning meats and 4] days, etc., instituted to merit grace and to make satisfaction for sins, are useless and

contrary to the Gospel.

#### Article XVI: Of Civil Affairs.

1] Of Civil Affairs they teach that lawful civil ordinances are good works of God, and that 2] it is right for Christians to bear civil office, to sit as judges, to judge matters by the Imperial and other existing laws, to award just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property, to make oath when required by the magistrates, to marry a wife, to be given in marriage.

3] They condemn the Anabaptists who forbid these civil offices to Christians.

4] They condemn also those who do not place evangelical perfection in the fear of God and in faith, but in forsaking civil offices, for 5] the Gospel teaches an eternal righteousness of the heart. Meanwhile, it does not destroy the State or the family, but very much requires that they be preserved as ordinances of God, and that charity be practiced in such 6] ordinances. Therefore, Christians are necessarily bound to obey their own magistrates 7] and laws save only when commanded to sin; for then they ought to obey God rather than men. Acts 5:29.

#### Article XVII: Of Christ's Return to Judgment.

1] Also they teach that at the Consummation of the World Christ will appear for judgment, and 2] will raise up all the dead; He will give to the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, 3] but ungodly men and the devils He will condemn to be tormented without end.

4] They condemn the Anabaptists, who think that there will be an end to the punishments of condemned men and devils.

5] They condemn also others who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed.

#### Article XVIII: Of Free Will.

1] Of Free Will they teach that man's will has some liberty to choose civil righteousness, and to work 2] things subject to reason. But it has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness; since the natural man 3] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2:14; but this righteousness is wrought in the heart when the Holy Ghost is received 4] through the Word. These things are said in as many words by Augustine in his Hypognosticon, Book III: We grant that all men have a free will, free, inasmuch as it has the judgment of reason; not that it is thereby capable, without God, either to begin, or, at least, to complete aught in things pertaining to God, but only in works of this life,

whether good 5] or evil. "Good" I call those works which spring from the good in nature, such as, willing to labor in the field, to eat and drink, to have a friend, to clothe oneself, to build a house, to marry a wife, to raise cattle, to learn diverse useful arts, or whatsoever good 6] pertains to this life. For all of these things are not without dependence on the providence of God; yea, of Him and through Him they are and have their being. "Evil" 7] I call such works as willing to worship an idol, to commit murder, etc. 8] They condemn the Pelagians and others, who teach that without the Holy Ghost, by the power of nature alone, we are able to love God above all things; also to do the commandments of God as touching "the substance of the act." For, although nature is able in a manner to do the outward work, 9] (for it is able to keep the hands from theft and murder,) yet it cannot produce the inward motions, such as the fear of God, trust in God, chastity, patience, etc.

#### Article XIX: Of the Cause of Sin.

Of the Cause of Sin they teach that, although God does create and preserve nature, yet the cause of sin is the will of the wicked, that is, of the devil and ungodly men; which will, unaided of God, turns itself from God, as Christ says John 8:44: When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own.

#### Article XX: Of Good Works.

1] Our teachers are falsely accused of forbidding Good Works. 2] For their published writings on the Ten Commandments, and others of like import, bear witness that they have taught to good purpose concerning all estates and duties of life, as to what estates of life and what works in every calling be pleasing to God. 3] Concerning these things preachers heretofore taught but little, and urged only childish and needless works, as particular holy-days, particular fasts, brotherhoods, pilgrimages, services in honor of saints, the use of rosaries, monasticism, and such like. 4] Since our adversaries have been admonished of these things, they are now unlearning them, and do not preach these unprofitable works as heretofore. 5] Besides, they begin to mention faith, of which there was heretofore marvelous silence. 6] They teach that we are justified not by works only, but they conjoin faith and works, and say that we are justified by faith and works. 7] This doctrine is more tolerable than the former one, and can afford more consolation than their old doctrine.

8] Forasmuch, therefore, as the doctrine concerning faith, which ought to be the chief one in the Church, has lain so long unknown, as all must needs grant that there was the deepest silence in their sermons concerning the righteousness of faith, while only the doctrine of works was treated in the churches, our teachers have instructed the churches concerning faith as follows:—

9] First, that our works cannot reconcile God or merit forgiveness of sins, grace, and justification, but that we obtain this only by faith when we believe that we are received into favor for Christ's sake, who alone has been set forth the Mediator and Propitiation, 1 Tim. 2:5, in order that the Father may be reconciled through Him. 10] Whoever, therefore, trusts that by works he merits grace, despises the merit and grace of Christ, and seeks a way to God without Christ, by human strength, although Christ has said of Himself: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. John 14:6.

11] This doctrine concerning faith is everywhere treated by Paul, Eph. 2:8: By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of your selves; it is the gift of God, not of works, etc.

12] And lest any one should craftily say that a new interpretation of Paul has been devised by us, this entire matter is supported by the testimonies of the Fathers. For 13] Augustine, in many volumes, defends grace and the righteousness of faith, over against the merits of works. 14] And Ambrose, in his *De Vocatione Gentium*, and elsewhere, teaches to like effect. For in his *De Vocatione Gentium* he says as follows: Redemption by the blood of Christ would become of little value, neither would the preeminence of man's works be superseded by the mercy of God, if justification, which is wrought through grace, were due to the merits going before, so as to be, not the free gift of a donor, but the reward due to the laborer.

15] But, although this doctrine is despised by the inexperienced, nevertheless God-fearing and anxious consciences find by experience that it brings the greatest consolation, because consciences cannot be set at rest through any works, but only by faith, when they take the sure ground that for Christ's sake they have a reconciled God. As Paul teaches Rom. 5:1: 16] Being justified by faith, we have peace with God. 17] This whole doctrine is to be referred to that conflict of the terrified conscience, neither can it be understood apart from that conflict. Therefore 18] inexperienced and profane men judge ill concerning this matter, who dream that Christian righteousness is nothing but civil and philosophical righteousness.

19] Heretofore consciences were plagued with the doctrine of works, they did not hear the consolation from the Gospel. 20] Some persons were driven by conscience into the desert, into monasteries hoping there to merit grace by a monastic life. 21] Some also devised other works whereby to merit grace and make satisfaction for sins. 22] Hence there was very great need to treat of, and renew, this doctrine of faith in Christ, to the end that anxious consciences should not be without consolation but that they might know that grace and forgiveness of sins and justification are apprehended by faith in Christ.

23] Men are also admonished that here the term "faith" does not signify merely the knowledge of the history, such as is in the ungodly and in the devil, but signifies a faith which believes, not merely the history, but also the effect of the history—namely, this article: the forgiveness of sins, to wit, that we have grace, righteousness, and forgiveness of sins through Christ.

24] Now he that knows that he has a Father gracious to him through Christ, truly knows God; he knows also that God cares for him, and calls upon God; in a word, he is not 25] without God, as the heathen. For devils and the ungodly are not able to believe this article: the forgiveness of sins. Hence, they hate God as an enemy, call not upon Him, 26] and expect no good from Him. Augustine also admonishes his readers concerning the word "faith," and teaches that the term "faith" is accepted in the Scriptures not for knowledge such as is in the ungodly but for confidence which consoles and encourages the terrified mind.

27] Furthermore, it is taught on our part that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God. 28] It is only by faith that forgiveness of sins is apprehended, and that, for nothing. 29] And because through faith the Holy Ghost is received, hearts are renewed and endowed with new affections, so as to be able to bring forth good works. 30] For Ambrose says:

Faith is the mother of a good will and right doing. 31] For man's powers without the Holy Ghost are full of ungodly affections, and are too weak to do works which are good in God's sight. 32] Besides, they are in the power of the devil who impels men to divers sins, 33] to ungodly opinions, to open crimes. This we may see in the philosophers, who, although they endeavored to live an honest life could not succeed, 34] but were defiled with many open crimes. Such is the feebleness of man when he is without faith and without the Holy Ghost, and governs himself only by human strength.

35] Hence it may be readily seen that this doctrine is not to be charged with prohibiting good works, but rather the more to be commended, because it shows how we are enabled to do good works. 36] For without faith human nature can in no wise do the works of the First or of the Second Commandment. 37] Without faith it does not call upon God, nor expect anything from God, nor bear the cross, but seeks, and trusts in, man's help. 38] And thus, when there is no faith and trust in God all manner of lusts and human devices rule in the heart. 39] Wherefore Christ said, John 15:5: Without Me ye can do nothing; 40] and the Church sings:

Lacking Thy divine favor,

There is nothing found in man,

Naught in him is harmless.