

The Confession of 1535

Historical Introduction

The Moravian Church, both ancient and modern, has produced numerous confessions of faith. Generally, though, they have served not as guidance for members of the church, but as explanation to outsiders of what the church teaches. This was certainly the case with the Confession of 1535.

The Moravians had been accused of teaching and practicing all sorts of weird things and in some cases had been persecuted because of this. It was felt that to reduce misunderstandings it might help to lay out clearly what our church really believed and taught and to place this before Ferdinand I, king of the Romans, Bohemia, and Hungary, and Charles V, the Holy Roman emperor. The Lutherans had done this in 1530 with their famous Augsburg Confession. That document gave an impetus and guidance for the production of the Confession of 1535. Basically then, the Confession of 1535 provides our own Moravian slant while agreeing with the Lutherans' Augsburg Confession in the theological substance of our salvation by faith through Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. Martin Luther even wrote a preface to the Confession of 1535 approving its basic content.

The Confession of 1535 did not achieve its goal of winning over King Ferdinand or Emperor Charles, but it does furnish us with a summary of Moravian theology of the time. The Moravian Church was almost totally destroyed in the Thirty Years War, surviving only as a "hidden seed." When the church was renewed in Germany in the 1700s it was thought more prudent to adhere publicly to the legally recognized Augsburg Confession to assert our basic orthodoxy and respectability rather than reintroduce the Confession of 1535. In addition, the Confession was written in a somewhat difficult style and dealt with several things that were more of an issue in the 16th century than centuries later. Moreover, the Confession was too long to be used liturgically in a church service, and Moravians were — and are — more interested in expressing our theology in hymns and liturgies rather than in formal confessions.

That attitude has prevailed until recent years when questions have arisen again about "what do you Moravians really believe and teach." So once

again the Confession of 1535 gives us a valuable resource for giving an answer to such queries.

About This Translation

The Confession of 1535 was first printed in 1538 by Georg Rhaw,¹ the Lutheran printer and composer. It appeared in the universal language of European theologians and scholars of the time, Latin. An English version was not done until the 1950s when Jaroslav Pelikan translated it.² Now 470 years after its first appearance it is timely — some may say it is about time — for the Moravian Church to have its own English translation of the Ancient Unity's principal statement of faith, the Confession of 1535.

This translation of the Confession was done from a facsimile reprint located in *Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf Materialien und Dokumente: Bekenntnisse der Böhmisches Brüder* (Hildesheim, Germany, and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1979, Reihe 1, Band 3). In accordance with current fashion, this translation employs inclusive language. Scripture translations are generally taken from the New Revised Standard Version and the King James Version. Where appropriate, though, a completely new translation of the Scripture was done adhering to the words the Brethren used to emphasize their point.

Since verse numbering was not done until the Reformed Church began it in 1551, the Confession of 1535 identifies Scripture quotations only by chapter at best. Careful textual comparison with the Latin Vulgate has provided the verse references and confirmed many of the identifications originally made by Jaroslav Pelikan.

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October 17, 2005

¹ Rhaw is familiar to members of the Renewed Moravian Church today for the tune 22 A, Rhaw, which is sung with Zinzendorf's hymn, "The Savior's Blood and Righteousness."

² Pelikan's translation has since been published by Yale University Press ("The Bohemian Confession, 1535," *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003, 1:796-833).

**Confession of Faith and Religion
Of the Barons and Nobles
Of the Kingdom of Bohemia
Presented
To the Most Serene and Invincible
King of the Romans, Bohemia, etc.,
At Vienna, Austria,
In the year of our Lord
1535**



Acts 24[:14]

But this I confess to you, that according to the Way,
which they call a heresy,
I worship the God of our ancestors,
believing everything which is written
in the Law and the Prophets.

Preface of Doctor Martin Luther

Although these Brethren, who are active throughout Bohemia and Moravia, have already published their confession and doctrine so successfully and learnedly that they do not need any commendation or preface from me, nevertheless since for many years now they have been ridiculed with the hateful name of “Picards” or heretics and schismatics, it seems that I might be able to do them good by my testimony (if indeed my testimony counts for anything), especially among our people and among all who are eagerly devoted to true piety. For what do I care what the Papists think of me, seeing as they have long been an unprincipled and mentally corrupt bunch of people, who, as Paul says [Titus 3:11] are “sinning and self-condemned.” “I am crucified to them, and they are crucified to me” [Gal. 6:14].

To be sure, when I was a Papist, and a most fervent emulator of the Roman traditions — (for those who are Papists nowadays and write against us are not as serious about it as I was, but are totally cold and do whatever they do out of spite or a desire for gain, and they themselves would be against the Papacy if they could hope for greater riches and glory from us) — anyway, as I say, when I was a Papist I truly hated those “Picards” to death out of my zeal for God and religion, and I wasn’t looking to get any riches or glory out of it. But then, when I happened to come upon some books of John Hus unexpectedly and saw the Scriptures treated so powerfully and purely in them, I was amazed that the Pope and Council had burned such a great man. Terrified, I slammed the book shut suspecting that there must be poison under the honey which might infect my simplicity, so violently did fascination with the name of Pope and Council have control of me.

But when it pleased Him who separated me from my mother’s womb to reveal to me that son of perdition, I fought with flesh and blood in many a disputation with the best men I could find, fearing that the light that was in me might become darkness. I greatly mistrusted myself because of the length and breadth and depth of the pontifical majesty which I believed was guided by the Holy Spirit and incapable of error, until I gradually became more confirmed in my doubts as the Papists spewed with foam like the raging waves of the sea (as Jude [13] says) their confusion against my trifling bickerings and preludes. Then I began to consider the Pope suspect and gradually came to despise him. And

then, as his ever more inadequate defenders put forth books that were vainer than vanity itself, I came to recognize him as the abomination standing in the holy place.

Here my heart began to be joyful, and looking around at all whom the Pope had damned and condemned to hell as heretics, I began to praise them as saints and martyrs, especially those whose pious writings and confessions I could find. Truly I suspected that the rest of them either were not proven guilty or had erred by some other weakness which would be counted as a minor fault if the Papists were just willing to follow St. Paul's advice [Gal. 6:1]: "If any are caught in a fault, then you who are spiritual should instruct them in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourselves so that you are not tempted also." Instead they followed Satan's fury and ruled the sheep of Christ with harshness and power, as Ezekiel [34:4] says, and they have not stopped doing that to this day.

Among these happened to be these same Brethren, whom they [the Papists] call "Picards," but now these did not seem so perverse as they did when I was in my Papist period. I then found among them a unique and great miracle, almost unheard of in the Pope's church, and that is that, leaving aside human doctrine as much as they could, they were meditating on the Law of God day and night, becoming experienced and proficient in the Scriptures, while among the Papists these teachers of ours were neglecting the Scriptures, though they like to boast of the title [Doctor of Holy Scripture]. Some of these Brethren had never actually seen a Holy Bible. Indeed, it could not be otherwise since the languages lay neglected, not just Greek and Hebrew, but Latin too, so that some passages necessarily remained obscure to them. And this weakness stuck to them, since they wanted to avoid the thorns and swamps of the Sophists and monks; they simply abstained from all study of the arts, being forced by poverty to engage in manual labor anyway.

But now they are progressing and becoming more cultured and free, not to say more illustrious and better, so that I can hope they will not be displeasing to all true Christians. We also ought to give the greatest thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to the riches of His glory commanded the light of His word to shine out of darkness to destroy death in us anew and bring life to light. And we ought to congratulate them as well as ourselves that now the barrier of suspicion, which was between us and made us see one another as heretics, has been removed, and we have been brought together into one fold under one Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, who is blessed forever. Amen.

If there are some differences from us in their Confession concerning rites and ceremonies or celibacy, let us remember that every ritual or every observance of the churches has never been, nor could they be, exactly the same. The variations of people, systems, and times do not permit this; only let the doctrine of the faith and morals be preserved. For this ought to be the same, as Paul often warns [1 Cor. 1:10]: "Let all say the same thing" and again [Rom.

15:6]: “that with one mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” For their [the Brethren’s] state and condition do not permit that marriage be as free among them as it is among us. Again, it is enough that it is permitted to anyone, and that it is not taught that it is a sin for anyone, but this is left to each one’s faith and conscience. I therefore commend this Confession of the Brethren to all who are pious in the Lord. In it they will see clearly how unjustly they have been damned and harassed by the Papists up to this point.

Articles or Topics of the Confession

1. The Holy Scriptures
2. The Catechism
3. Faith of the Holy Trinity
4. Sin and One's Recognition of It [or Its Fruit]
5. Penitence
6. Christ the Lord and Faith in Him
7. Good Works
8. The Holy Catholic Church
9. The Superintendents, or Ministers of the Church
10. The Word of God
11. The Sacraments
12. Baptism
13. The Lord's Supper
14. The Keys of the Church
15. Ceremonies
16. Magistrates, or Secular Powers
17. Worship of the Saints
18. Fasting
19. Celibacy
20. The Time of Grace

Article 1

The Holy Scriptures

First, we all with unanimous consent teach the Holy Scriptures, which are contained in the Bible, and were received by the fathers, and given canonical authority, as unshakably and most certainly true. These Scriptures are to have preference over any other writings, as the sacred is to be preferred over the profane and the divine over the human. They are to be believed absolutely and simply, and indeed the dogmas of truth through which people are instructed and formed through faith for salvation and righteousness are to be sought and derived from them.

Therefore, because they have been handed down, delivered, and inspired by God Himself, mostly through Peter and Paul, and that they may be understood by all, which is a most compelling reason, they are read and recited in our churches in our common native language, especially the Gospels and Epistles, as was the custom in the ancient Church. And therefore lectures and exhortations, as needs and circumstances require, are frequently delivered to the people in public meetings.

However, they also say that the writings of the doctors of the Church, especially the ancient ones, are to be held as true and trustworthy and useful for the instruction of the people, but only as they do not disagree with the holy Scriptures. And they want their own writings to be considered as binding only as far as they are in agreement with the Holy Scriptures. Augustine spoke about this in the preface to his third book on the Holy Trinity [Preface, ¶2; see Internet: www.newadvent.org/fathers/130103.htm]: “Do not be as devoted to my writings as you are to the canonical Scriptures. If you find anything in the Scriptures which you did not believe before, believe it now without hesitation; but in my books, what you did not believe before, unless you now know for sure that it is certain, do not hold it firmly.” And he says elsewhere: “Do not believe my words, nor even those of Ambrose, in the same way you believe the Holy Scriptures.” And this is also said in the ninth distinction of the Decrees [of Canon Law].¹

¹ The Decretals of Pope Gregory IX, c. 1234, a summary of Church law up to that time. Pelikan cites Amelius Friedberg, ed., *Corpus Juris Canonici*, (2nd ed., Leipzig, 1879), I, Part I, ch. viii, col. 17.

Article 2

The Catechism

And so they teach the Catechism [i.e., a summary of the principles of the Christian religion], which is the catholic and orthodox doctrine of the fathers: the Decalogue of God's Commandments; and the apostolic faith [Apostles' Creed], divided into twelve articles and handed down in a Symbol [i.e., formal creedal statement] by the Council of Nicaea, and also confirmed and expounded elsewhere; and finally the Lord's Prayer. They steadfastly affirm that these most holy matters are the good and gracious will of God.

Then they properly teach that these precepts are to be observed in deeds and in the heart, since this is a spiritual law, and all these articles of faith are to be believed without doubt, confessed with the mouth, and borne witness to in works. And they communicate and support these things to people by Scripture according to its plain meaning, and if anything in them is hidden or abstruse they try as much as possible to explain and uncover them from these same Scriptures.

Again they teach that God is to be prayed to and invoked only through the name of Christ, the only mediator. And they teach people to pray not only for themselves, but also for all Christians, wherever they may be on earth, and for all leaders of the Church, and indeed for all who are placed in prominence and authority to rule others.

And most of all [they pray for] Caesar ever Augustus [Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor]. And they implore God for the dignity and success of Your Majesty [Ferdinand I, king of Bohemia] and for all councils [of state] that He may prosper and give success to all things for the benefit of the whole Church for Your Majesty and for Charles, Caesar ever Augustus, and that the empire may be extended as far as possible. And further, they ask God to see fit to give you a merciful heart toward all who are subject to and belong to Your Royal Majesty and who are true followers of God and of His Christ. In sum, in accord with the command of Christ and the Apostles and the example of the primitive Church, they teach that all people should be prayed for, without discrimination as to whether they are friend or foe. And on this account they studiously call the people together in solemn convocations and with all diligence urge them to more fervent prayers.

By this wholesome Christian Catechism they instruct not only grownups but also children, so that immediately from their first years they become familiar with this and get to know true religion and piety. And therefore they have private meetings with them, admonishing the parents of these children to instill this

holy doctrine into them with diligence and to offer pious prayers to God for them and for all other infants who have been consecrated to the Lord Christ.

And they reject whatever is contrary to this pious Christian Catechism, and support this with Scripture as far as the God of all gives them power to do so, and they admonish others to do the same.

Article 3

The Holy Trinity

First of all, they teach by the Scriptures that God is to be known by faith as One in divine substance, but three in persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They teach that there is a distinction on the part of the persons, but as regards true essence and substance there is co-equality and no distinction. This is witnessed to by the Catholic faith, the Synod of Nicaea, and other decrees and articles in agreement with it, and also by the Confession or Symbol of Athanasius.

Hence they teach the supreme power, wisdom, and goodness of this one and the same God, and three excellent works of His which are appropriate to Him alone and to no other: these are creation, redemption, and preservation or sanctification. Moreover, they teach that this one true God, one in divine essence and in one blessed Trinity of persons, is always to be adored and worshipped with the highest reverence, honor, and praise as Lord of all and the highest King who reigns over all. All things depend on Him alone, and from Him all things are to be expected and sought. To Him alone should be shown the greatest subjection, obedience, fear, and faith. And because of this all religious practices should be observed sincerely, and those who do not do this acquire damnation for themselves. As it says in Deuteronomy 6[:13]: “You shall adore the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.” And again [Deut. 6:5]: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind,” that is, with all your powers, internal as well as external.

Article 4

Sin and its Fruit and Recognition of It

On this subject they teach that we should not ignore the sins which we commit first against our neighbors and then against God.

First, people should acknowledge that they are conceived and born in sin, and then that they are sinners by nature from the time they are in the womb, and that after that, breaking the law of God in heart and deed, they are

crushed and burdened by the millstone of sins. As it is written [Ps. 14:2-3; see also Ps. 53:2-3]: "The Lord, when He looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if any were wise, who sought God, He saw that all were rebellious, all were equally corrupt; there was none that did what is right, no, not one." And again [Gen. 6:5]: "God saw that the wickedness of humans was great upon the earth, and that every thought of their heart was preserved in evil continually." And once more [Gen. 8:21]: "The Lord said in His heart, 'The sense and thinking of the human heart is evil from their youth.'" And Paul indeed said [Eph. 2:3]: "We were children of wrath by nature, just like the rest."

Then they teach from the Scriptures that because of their depravity and corruption and because of the sins born from this root, people ought to acknowledge that a well-deserved damnation hangs over them, a formidable judgment of God weighs on them, and that a punishment appropriate to their deeds has been prepared for them in Gehenna. "Indeed," as Paul says [Rom. 6:23], "the wages of sin is death." And the Lord says in the Gospel [Matt. 25:46, 30]: "Those who do evil will depart into eternal punishment, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In addition to this they teach that it is necessary for all to acknowledge and recognize their infirmity and extreme helplessness and the evils into which they have been hurled because of their sins, from which they can in no way save themselves or justify themselves by any works or striving of their own, but that they have no one but Christ alone, by whose faithfulness they can repent and free themselves from sin, Satan, the wrath of God, and eternal death. Nor is there anything in human beings by which one is able to bring help to another. "For all alike are guilty of sin and have come short in the justice of God" [Rom. 3:23]. As He says through the prophet [Isa. 43:26-27]: "Put me in remembrance (human that you are), let us bring it to trial, and say if you have anything to justify yourself; your first father sinned, and your interpreters have been crooked." Your sacrifices and ceremonies have displeased me, nor have I approved the incense from your thurifers, and "you have not satisfied me with the fat of your sacrifices" [Isa. 43:24]. Paul indeed says to the Hebrews [Heb. 10:8]: "You [God] have not desired nor approved sacrifice and offerings and burnt offerings for sin, nor do you require them."

In addition they teach that all the troubles and afflictions by which we are shaken and struck here, are inflicted or sent on people by the most meritorious judgment of God on account of sins. Such troubles and afflictions include heat, cold, hunger, thirst, all the labors, cares, misfortunes, sorrows, weariness, feebleness of all sorts, and finally death itself. As it is written [Gen. 2:17]: "In the day that you eat of it, you will surely die," and [Gen. 3:17-18], "The earth is cursed because of you; in toil you shall eat of it at all times, every day of your life, and it will bring forth thorns and thistles for you."

But yet they teach that all these troublous things should be borne by us patiently, seeing that we have deserved even heavier things. Nevertheless, it is

not through bearing these evils, however many they may be, that anyone may merit eternal life. As the Apostle proclaims [Rom. 8:18]: “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy of being compared to the future glory which will be revealed to us.” These things are, as the prophet says, so that you may know the magnitude of your wickedness and weakness and misery, “and understand how evil and bitter it is to leave your God” [Jer. 2:19]. And burdened and crushed by these evils, may people wake up and be excited to seek the grace and power of God, who is merciful and compassionate and great in pardoning.

Article 5

Penitence

On this they teach that penitence is born out of a recognition of sin and divine wrath. This first, through the Law of God, strikes anguish and terror in the conscience. This means that when sins are made known within a person by the word of God and the mind is restored to itself by a bad conscience, [that person] is made restless and exceedingly sorrowful, and is almost brought to despair. The heart is anxious, broken in pieces and quaking, so that a person is able to do absolutely nothing to raise oneself or to find consolation, but is totally afflicted, dejected in spirit, and trembling and crushed by monstrous horror at the sight of the wrath of God. As David says about himself [Ps. 38:3, 6]: “For there is no health in my flesh, because of your indignation; there is no peace in my bones because of my sin. I am miserable and bent over, and I go about mourning all the day.” Meanwhile, they teach that those who are trembling with fear and terror should not despair, but that they should return with their whole heart to God and receive mercy by faith in Christ, which is also a part of penitence. They lament that they have sinned and have no righteousness in themselves. Nevertheless they should implore grace and clemency, that He may have mercy on them and forgive their sins because of Christ and His merit, who for our sake was made to be sin and a curse that He might make satisfaction for our sins to the righteousness of God [2 Cor. 5:21; see also Gal. 3:13].

And the divine promises are to be inculcated upon those who are so affected. “In the day of trouble call upon me; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me” [Ps. 50:15]. And they teach that this form of penitence, since it is necessary, is to be maintained through all of life and time. They also teach that those who have been revived in this way should, as Isaiah writes [Isa. 1:16-17]: “Cease to do evil, and learn to do good.” Again, John, the precursor of the Lord, says the same [Luke 3:8]: “Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.” Repentance consists mainly in putting to death the old self, and setting aside its acts and

desires, and putting on a new self, which is created according to God (Colossians 3 [see also Eph. 4:22-24]).

In addition they teach that penitents should go to a priest and confess their sins to God Himself before him. Nevertheless, we do not demand or require an enumeration of sins [before the priest]. From the priest they should seek advice on how to avoid sin and ask absolution from him through the Keys of the Church, that they might obtain the remission of sins through this kind of ministry, which was instituted thus by Christ.

Again, people are taught to make great use of absolution and to believe without doubting that what is promised through the keys will truly happen, since it is the voice of Christ and His express command. John 20[:22-23]: “Receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive the sins of any. . . .” They should know that by the use and ministry of the keys, by the authority of the words of Christ, all their sins are pardoned for them.

They also teach those who have been absolved, that is, those for whom their sins have been remitted through Christ, to be grateful for the grace of God, which is accepted in Christ, and not to receive it in vain or to fall back into sin again. This is based on the text [John 5:14]: “Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing happen to you.” And again [Heb. 10:26-27]: “If we sin willingly after we have accepted the knowledge of truth, no sacrifice is left for sin but only the expectation of judgment and the fury of fire.”

Again they teach that the foundation and all the power of penitence rest in the merit of the death of Christ. Luke 24[:46-47]: “Thus it was proper for Christ to suffer and rise again on the third day, that repentance and remission of sins should be proclaimed in His name among all people.” And again [Mark 1:15]: “Repent and believe the Gospel.”

They also teach if anyone neglects to repent in God’s name while still alive, such a one is condemned to a terrible destruction, according to the word of Christ [Luke 13:3]: “I say to you, unless you repent, you will all perish.”

Article 6

Christ the Lord and Faith in Him

First of all, they teach that one should have a sure and firm faith about Christ the Lord, namely that He is by nature true God and at the same time is a human being, through whom all things were made in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. John, calling Him the eternal Word, explains that God is light, and that the only-begotten Son dwells in the bosom of the Father, full of grace and truth [John 1:1, 4, 18, 14]. He says the same in the fifth chapter of his first epistle [1 John 5:20]: “He is the true God and eternal life.” And they teach in like manner concerning the works He did for our salvation:

His incarnation and birth, His suffering, death, and burial, His resurrection and ascension into heaven, and His sitting at the right hand of the Father, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. Also, as the secrets of Scripture have it, good works proceed and come forth in us for salvation through the word and sacraments.

They teach further that Christ is no longer present on earth in the physical mode perceptible to the senses in which He once lived and moved on earth as a mortal and was willing to undergo torture and be nailed to the tree, suffer death, and then rise gloriously through the hard stone and pass through the closed door, nor will He be until the end of the world. He is, however, in this mode in heaven, where alone with the Father every tongue is to confess Him and all are to worship them. And the article of faith [Apostles' Creed] clearly testifies to this: "He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead." And Paul says in [1] Thessalonians 4[16]: "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout and with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God." Peter says the same in Acts [3:21]: "Whom the heaven is to receive until the time of the restitution of all things." And in the last chapter of Mark it says [Mark 16:19]: "And then the Lord, after He had spoken with them, was received into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God," and the angels who were standing by said to them [Acts 1:11]: "This Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come again in the same way as you have seen Him going into heaven."

Still, they also teach that Christ Himself, true God and true human, is also truly with us on earth, but in a mode and manner of existence different from before, indeed invisible to the senses, but nevertheless truly and necessary for our salvation. In this mode He works in us, and we in Him, and He is present in us through the Holy Spirit and His gifts, whom He promised to send to His Church in place of His visible essence, and through whom He remains in His power, grace, goodness, and truth, by which those who believe in Him are saved, until the end of the age. John 16[7]: "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go away, I will send Him to you." And again [John 14:16-18]: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter (other than me) that He may remain with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it does not see Him or know Him; but you know Him, for He dwells among you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you," namely through this Spirit of truth.

And this sense of Scripture is by no means recently made up or fabricated, for even in the ancient Church it was taught to the people and was constantly held, as it says in the second distinction, chapter one, of the Decretals. And there are the words of Augustine: "The Lord has been taken up until the world is finished." But nevertheless, this is the truth of the Lord to us,

that the body in which He rose again must be in one place, but His truth is spread abroad in every place. Therefore they teach that Christ the Lord is present in the Church, in the ministry of the word and sacraments, in His other mode of existence, which we call "invisible." Everyone ought to receive Him in this way by faith, believing that through this invisible presence He dwells with them, that is, through the Spirit of truth, concerning whom He said [John 14:17]: "He will be in you," and again [John 14:18]: "I will come to you."

Further, they teach that through Christ, by faith in Christ, people are freely justified, saved, and given remission of sins through mercy, without any human work or merit. They teach that His blood and death alone suffice for the abolition and expiation of all the sins of everyone. Peter agrees with this in Acts [4:12]: "There is salvation in no one else than in the one Lord Jesus, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved." And again [Acts 10:43]: "To Him all the prophets bear witness, that whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins in His name." And Paul in writing to the Hebrews says [Heb. 1:3]: "He purged our sins through Himself." And again [Eph. 1:7]: "Through whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins." And John says [1 John 2:1-2]: "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Again Paul [Heb. 10:10]: "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, made once for all." And a little further on he says [Heb. 10:14]: "By this one offering are perfected forever those who are sanctified."

They teach in addition that all people are to come to Christ alone for grace and the remission of their sins, for salvation, and for whatever else they implore through all the time of their lives. Hebrews 4[14]: "Having therefore a great High Priest, who has gone through the heavens, Jesus Christ the Son of God, let us hold fast to our profession" (that is, of faith in Christ), and he adds [Heb. 4:16]: "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help us in time of need." And Christ Himself cries out [John 7:37]: "If any are thirsty, let them come and drink." "Whoever comes to me will not hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst" [John 6:35].

Again they teach that all confidence and hope should be placed in Him alone, and all care cast on Him. And they add to this, that because of Him and His merit alone God is pleased and gracious to love us, to look upon us, to have us as His children; and that there is eternal life in Him which all who believe in Him may possess. As it says in John 6[47]: "Whoever believes in me has eternal life." And again [John 6:40]: "This is the will of Him who sent me, that all who see the Son and believe in Him will have life eternal, and I will raise them up on the last day."

Again they teach that none are able to have this faith by their own powers, desire, or will, for it is a gift of God, who works it in people through the

Holy Spirit where and when it seems good to Him, so that people might receive for salvation whatever is administered to them through the external word and sacraments instituted by Christ.

Concerning this, John the Baptist says to the Lord [John 3:27]: “One cannot have anything unless it is given from heaven.” And Christ Himself says [John 6:44]: “No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me.” And a little further on [John 6:65]: “Unless it has been given to them by my Father,” that is, through the Holy Spirit.

They go on in their teaching to say that people are justified before God only by faith or confidence in Jesus Christ, without any efforts, merits, or works of their own. As Paul says [Rom. 4:5]: “Further, to those who do not work, but believe in Him who justifies the ungodly, their faith is counted for righteousness.” Again [Rom. 3:21-22]: “Now indeed, without the Law, the righteousness of God is manifested, as the Law and the Prophets bear witness. And this righteousness is through faith in Jesus Christ, etc.” And elsewhere [Acts 13:39]: “Everyone who believes is justified through Him.” And this Sixth Article is regarded among us all as the main one by far, since it is the sum of all Christianity and piety. Therefore our people teach and expound it with all diligence and zeal and try to infuse it into all.

Article 7

Good Works

They add to this that those who are justified solely by the grace of God and by faith in Christ should do the good works which God commands and walk worthily in them according to their calling in life in whatever kind, status, or age of life may be theirs. Thus indeed the Lord in Matthew said [Matt. 28:20]: “Teach them to observe all things which I have commanded you.” In truth, since there is much concerning this throughout the Scriptures, we refrain from saying more about it.

And indeed they teach what is the main reason and by what advice good works are to be done. This is not so that humans may think that they can justify themselves and get salvation and the remission of sins as a consequence of their efforts. For the Lord Himself said [Luke 17:10]: “When you have done all the things which are commanded to you, say ‘we are worthless servants.’” Again Paul says [Rom. 3:20; see also Gal. 2:16]: “In His sight no one will be justified in the flesh by the works of the Law.” And David says [Ps. 143:2]: “Lord, do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living will be justified in your sight.”

But they teach that good works are to be done so that through them one’s faith may be proven. For good works are a sure testimony, sign, and

indication of the living faith which lies within, and they are its fruits, through which a good tree is distinguished from a bad one, as it says in Matthew 7[:17-20]. Another reason for doing good works is so that people may make their calling firm and sure, and serve in it without sin. As Peter has it in the first chapter of his second Epistle [2 Pet. 1:10]: "Brothers, work to make your calling and election sure." And again [2 Pet. 1:4-5]: "Give all diligence to this, and be free from the corruption that is in the world through lust, and support faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge. . . ." There follows [2 Pet. 1:8]: "For if these things are in you and are increasing among you, they will keep you from being indifferent or useless in the knowledge of Jesus Christ."

For this reason they teach that good works ought to be done so that an entry might be abundantly supplied into the eternal Kingdom, and thus a more ample mercy might be given by God, as it says in 2 Peter 1[:10]: "For if you do these things, you will never stumble, for in this way. . . ."

They teach that this is to be done especially through works of mercy and charity to one's neighbor, in giving alms, in the care of the sick, in instruction of others, and other things of this sort which have the promise of grace and reward. As it says in Luke 6[:36, 38, 37]: "Be merciful, as your Father also is merciful; give, and it will be given to you; forgive, and you will be forgiven." And in another place [Luke 12:33]: "Sell what you possess and give alms; prepare for yourselves purses which do not grow old, an unfailing treasure in heaven." And again [Luke 14:13-14]: "When you make a feast, invite the poor and crippled, etc. And you will be blessed because they are not able to repay you; but you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just." And in Matthew 25[:34-35, 45]: "Come, blessed ones of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty. . . . Amen, I say to you, what you have done to one of these the least of my brethren, you have done it to me." Therefore, works done in faith are pleasing to God, and have their reward in this life and in that which is to come.

They also teach that all good works are to be performed only in the name of Christ to the glory of God, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10[:31] and Colossians 3[:17]: "Whatever you do in word and deed, do all in the name of Jesus." And the Lord Himself says [John 15:5]: "Without me you can do nothing," that is, nothing pleasing to God and helpful for your salvation.

For the rest, they teach that we should know the difference between works instituted by humans and works which are commanded by God, and why each should be done and maintained. If indeed works have been commanded by God, they are never to be omitted on account of human traditions. For the Lord severely rebukes those who act differently [Matt. 15:3, 9]: "Why do you transgress the commandments of God because of your traditions . . . and in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as if they were doctrines." Therefore they diligently warn that works instituted by humans are not to be done in the same way as those which God has established and commanded.

Again they teach that faith and charity, which is love to God and to one's neighbor, are the source of all virtue and good works. In 1 Timothy 1[:5] it says: "The end of the commandment is charity done out of a pure heart and good conscience, and by a faith not pretended," for "without faith," as the Epistle to the Hebrews [11:6] has it, "it is not possible to do what is pleasing to God," and "without charity" nothing is of any use (1 Corinthians 13).

They further teach that there is no one who fully does the works commanded by God, and that there is no one who does not sin, however diligently one may labor in good works and in the Law of God. As it is written [Eccles. 7:20]: "There is no one on earth who does good and does not sin." In Jesus Christ, therefore, everyone should seek in faith the perfection of the Law and life and righteousness and salvation from His merit and grace. For those who have taken hold of Christ and have taken refuge and turned to Him who fulfilled the Law for everyone who believes, all their sins are washed away through His blood so that transgressions of the Law cannot condemn the believer. Thus the Apostle says in Romans 8[:1]: "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." Therefore, Christ is the satisfaction for all believers, and as Paul has it [1 Cor. 1:30]: "[He became for us] wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

Article 8

The Holy Catholic [i.e., Universal] Church

They teach first that Christ the Lord, by His merit, grace, and truth, is the Head and Foundation Stone of the Church, on Whom it is built up through the Holy Spirit by word and sacrament, as Christ says to Peter [Matt. 16:18]: "And upon this rock (that is, myself) I will build my Church." And Paul in 1 Corinthians 3[:11] says: "No other foundation can anyone lay except that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ." And in another place he writes the same [Eph. 1:22-23]: "He Himself is Head of His body the Church, who fills all in all."

They further teach that one ought to believe and confess the holy catholic Church which in its present state is made up of all Christians, wherever they live on earth and in whatever places they may be dispersed, all of whom have been gathered into one faith in Christ and in the Holy Trinity by the word of the holy Gospel from all nations, peoples, tribes, and tongues, of every class, age, and station. As it is written by John in the Apocalypse [Rev. 7:9]: "After this I looked, and, behold, a great crowd, which no one was able to number, etc." And the Lord said [Matt. 18:20]: "Where two or three (in whatever nation or people) are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them." For

wherever Christ is preached and accepted, wherever His word and sacraments are present, and are administered and received according to His order and will, there is the holy Christian Church, and there is Christian society, and there is the people of God, whatever their number may be. But where Christ is absent, and His word is rejected, there neither the true Church nor a people pleasing to God can exist.

They teach in addition that whoever in this Church maintains the unity of the Spirit of Christ should also embrace all of its members in love and devote and consecrate oneself completely to it and its work. Each member should not introduce sects or incite seditions, but rather live in it in the bond of peace and in agreement with all, since such a person is a true member of the Church. Paul speaks about this in Ephesians [4:1-3]: "I beg you to walk worthy of the call by which you have been called, in all humility and gentleness, with all mildness of spirit, bearing with one another in love, seeking to promote the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace, etc." And again [Rom. 15:2]: "Let every one of us please our neighbor in good in order to build them up," and "let nothing be done through strife or conceit" [Phil. 2:3], and "beware of division" [Phil. 3:2].

Concerning their own congregation [denomination], they hold and teach that it, like the others, however large or small it may be, is not the Holy Universal Church, but is a part and member of it, as the Corinthians were, of whom the Apostle writes in 1 Corinthians 12[:27]: "You are the body of Christ, and individually members of it."

They also teach that order should be maintained in the Church, so that none seek just what is to their own advantage, or think arrogantly of themselves, but rather that all should think of each other, and seek not their own things, but should mutually be subject to one another for the sake of Christ and their salvation. And this subjection is to be of the sort Peter and others spoke of, and which has been passed down in the laws and ancient canons of the Church. This is what we practice to the highest degree.

Besides this, they teach that those who are manifestly impious, impenitent, and obstinate, that is, those who will not hear the admonition of the Church, should be corrected by the censure and punishment which is generally called anathema or excommunication. And this should be administered without partiality to all whose impiety is publicly known and who, being addicted to the grossest sins, still persist in them even though they have often been admonished about this.

And these conspicuous and open sinners who refuse to repent, of whatever status or condition, ecclesiastical or secular, should be excluded from the fellowship of the Church, not by human force, but by the word and interdiction of the Lord who ordered this to be done. Matthew 18[:15-17]: "If a member of the Church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If this member will not hear you, then take with you one or two others; and if this person still will not hear, then tell the Church; and if this

person will not hear even the Church, then such a person is to be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector.” Paul says the same [2 Thess. 3:6]: “We command you, Brethren, in the Name of Jesus Christ that you separate yourself from any member who behaves with disorder, and not according to the tradition which you received from us.” And elsewhere he says [1 Cor. 5:13]: “Drive that wicked person away from you.”

In addition to this they teach that there have always been, and will be to the last day, hypocrites and impious persons in the Church who do evil in secret and cannot easily be accused or excommunicated. Concerning these the Lord says that in the last day “the angels will separate them out of the midst of the just and send them into a furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” [Matt. 13:41-42].

For the rest, they teach that Antichrist, the wicked one, is seated in the temple of God, that is, the Church. The prophets, as well as Christ and the Apostles spoke of this, warning all the faithful to beware of him and his errors, and not to allow themselves to be led astray from the truth [Dan. 9:27, 12:11; Matt. 24:15; 1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:3].

They posit a twofold malice and deception in Antichrist. First, false doctrine contrary to the meaning and mind of Christ and the entire Scripture. The Apostle says of this [2 Tim. 4:3-4]: “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but in accord with their own desires they will heap up teachers for themselves; having itching ears they will turn their ears away from truth and turn to fables.” The other malice and deception of Antichrist is the abomination of his way of life, which is full of every kind of sin. Concerning this, Paul says in 2 Timothy 3[:2]: “Know this too; that in the last days perilous times will come. There will be people who love only themselves, avaricious, boasters, prideful, blasphemers, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, etc.” Christ Himself says in Matthew 24[:10-13]: “Then many shall be offended, and they will betray one another, and hate one another; and many false prophets will arise and lead many astray; and because iniquity abounds, the love of many will grow cold. But whoever perseveres unto the end will be saved.” And in another place [Matt. 18:7]: “Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks, etc.” And [Matt. 11:6] “blessed are those who are not offended by me.”

Article 9

Ecclesiastical Order:

Superintendents or Ministers of the Church

They teach that ministers of the Church, to whom the administration of the word and sacraments is entrusted, ought to be properly installed, according to the order of the Lord and the Apostles. To engage in this

office, let pious and faithful ones be called from among the people, ones who are full of faith and blameless, having the gifts necessary for this ministry. First of all, let them be honest in their way of life, and when they have been approved, and not before, after prayer has been offered by the Seniors [i.e., bishops], let them be confirmed in this office through the laying on of hands in the presence of the people. Hebrews 5[:1]: "Every high priest is taken from among mortals. . . ." And Paul, writing to Titus [1:6-9] and Timothy, also hands down the form and model of this ordination [2 Tim. 2:1-2]: "And you, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And those things which you have heard from me before many witnesses, commit to faithful persons who are suited for this so that they may be able to teach others also."

Therefore among us none are indeed permitted to function in the office of a priest unless, as is proper, they are called and installed according to these precepts. And they teach that the public evidence of those who have been set aside for the ministry of the Church is to care diligently for the souls of those entrusted to them, and to minister to them the word and sacraments of the Gospel faithfully according to Christ's command, and to present themselves as a good example for all, and to pray to God for them, asking that they be freed from sins and errors. And they may find out from the Scripture what His will is for all. In 1 Peter 5[:2] it says: "Feed the flock of Christ which is in your charge, exercising oversight not under compulsion but willingly, not for sordid gain, but with a willing spirit." And Paul says [2 Tim. 4:5]: "Be vigilant in all things; endure afflictions; do the work of an evangelist; carry out your ministry fully." Again [1 Tim. 4:12-16]: "Be an example for believers in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the reading [of Scripture], to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the imposition of hands, by the authority of the priests. Put these things into practice; devote yourself to them that your progress in all may be made manifest. Pay close attention to yourself and to your doctrine; persist in these things, for if you do this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."

They teach also that those who exercise ecclesiastical administrative office should hold to that doctrine in the Church which departs in nothing from the sacred canons, and should unanimously profess this in one spirit. 2 Timothy 1[:13] says: "Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me with the faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, etc." And again [1 Tim. 1:3]: "Instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine."

They further teach about those who are in charge in the Church that they (either through themselves or through others) should not force anyone to faith by punishment, nor seize control in the Church, nor exercise dominion over faith. Matthew 20[:25-26]: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great have power over them. It shall not be so among you, but whoever among you wishes to be great, etc." And Peter [1 Pet.

5:3]: “Not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” And again Paul [2 Cor. 1:24]: “Not domineering over you in faith, but being helpers of your joy in the Lord.”

And those who have devoted themselves to the ministry of the Church, in accord with what Paul prescribed for Timothy and Titus, ought to bear patiently with those who are evil and adversaries of the truth, so that they might convince them with the testimonies of the Scriptures and gain them for Christ.

They also teach that priests should not occupy themselves in secular affairs, and especially that they should be free of the married state so that they can be more fit and ready to serve the needs of their neighbors and the Church. Indeed, marriage brings many things with it which hinder many so that they respond less well to their vocation. Consequently our people think that unmarried people are more suitable and convenient for the ministry of the Church, provided of course that God has given them this particular gift.

It is not that they think priests would be sinning if they should contract a marriage if necessity calls for it or if there are other good reasons for doing so. For Paul openly teaches that a “husband of one wife” [1 Tim. 3:2] should be selected to hold office in the Church.

Nor do they take this to extremes, for they would prefer an honest and legitimate marriage to the very impure celibacy of some who live in blatant depravity and give themselves to lust and fornication. In acknowledgment of this Paul says [1 Cor. 7:9]: “It is better to marry than to burn,” for on account of acts of shameful lust of this sort, which are so foul and abominable and which many engage in, not only priests but anyone else without exception ought to be excluded from the communion of the Church.

And indeed they teach the entire people and populace ought to be subject to and obey those who exercise oversight in the Church. They should honor them and be directed by them in those things which have to do with their salvation. Luke 10[16]: “Whoever hears you, hears me”; and [Matt. 10:40]: “Whoever receives you, receives me.” And the Apostle [Heb. 13:17]: “Obey those who are placed over you and yield to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls.” And again [1 Tim. 5:17]: “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of a double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”

Thus they also teach that they should be provided for and supplied with the necessities of life. As Paul says [1 Cor. 9:14]: “The Lord ordained that those who proclaim the Gospel should get their living from the Gospel.”

They also teach that those who are able and are not occupied in great labor in the interests of their people, or impeded in some other way, should provide food for themselves with [the labor of] their own hands, lest they become a burden and become lazy and unfaithful, for sloth too is a fault, and thus they may become a burden to the Church. In this they are following the example of Paul in Acts 20[35]: “You ought to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, for He himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

But among us if any of the order of priests fall into any crime or error, or are neglectful of their office, they are first admonished in a fatherly fashion, then are fraternally rebuked; and then if they are stubborn and continue to despise the admonitions of their Brethren and of the whole church, then they are first deprived of all ministry and function in the Church, and then are excluded from the communion of this church as useless servants, rotten members, dry branches, and salt which has lost its savor. As the Lord says concerning this [Matt. 5:13]: “It is good for nothing except to be cast out.” And Paul in 1 Timothy, chapter 5[:20]: “Rebuke sinners (namely, priests) in the presence of all, so that the rest may have fear.”

They also teach that in regard to such erring, schismatic, villainous, and impenitent priests who have been excommunicated by the authority of the Church, the people should conduct themselves as Scripture prescribes [Matt. 7:15-16]: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but within they are raging wolves, and by their fruits you will know them.” And Paul says in Romans 16[:17-18]: “I beseech you, Brethren, to look carefully at those who cause dissensions and offenses contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and avoid them, for those who are of this sort do not serve Jesus Christ, etc.”

Article 10

The Word of God

Then they teach that the preaching of the word of God or the Gospel is a ministry instituted and commanded by Christ. In the last chapter of Matthew [actually Mark 16:15] it says: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” And again Peter says in Acts 10[:42]: “The Lord commanded us to preach.”

And this administration of the word is held to be most important of all among us, since it is seen as the thing which contributes more to salvation and is more necessary than the sacraments themselves. As Paul says [1 Cor. 1:17]: “Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.” To be sure, this is first and foremost, for it is by the Gospel and the preaching of it, with the Holy Spirit working within a person, that faith is acquired. Then a decision can be made about the meaning and will of Christ and about the sacraments and other things which lead to salvation.

They also teach that the distinction between Law and Gospel is to be maintained. The former, indeed, is the administration of death, while the latter is the administration of life and glory through Christ. As 2 Corinthians 3[:6] says: “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” And John 6[:63]: “The words that I speak to you are spirit and life.”

They grant that none can come to true faith unless they hear the word of God, in accord with the saying of Paul [Rom. 10:17]: “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of God.” And again [Rom. 10:14]: “How are they to believe in Him, of whom they have not heard?” Therefore our people zealously make every effort that the word of the Gospel, unmixed with human tradition, is taught and preached in the church. Accordingly, they read the Gospels themselves, along with the other Scriptures, in the language of the people in their temples, and then and not before do they interpret these to the people. And they have festivals and appointed days according to the old custom on which all come together to listen.

Article 11

The Sacraments

First of all they teach that the sacraments instituted by Christ are necessary for salvation, and that by their benefits the faithful are made participants and share in the merits of Christ. However, if one deliberately has contempt for them or does not have a proper esteem for them or makes use of them in any manner other than is the will and command of Christ, they say that this person sins greatly against the author of the sacraments, that is, Christ.

But if it should happen that one truly desires to take part in them according to the mind and commandment of Christ, but is nevertheless impeded by something, by being imprisoned, sickness, or is a captive taken away to other nations, or is oppressed by enemies of the faith, etc., to such a degree that this person is not able to fulfill the vow for salvation, those who are in such a situation if they purely and with integrity believe the Gospel, then without doubt they are saved solely through faith in Christ.

They then teach that the sacraments through themselves, or as is sometimes said *ex opere operato*, do not bestow on those who are not first provided with a good intention and have been brought to life within by the Holy Spirit, any grace or justifying faith which makes the human mind in all things yielding, trusting, and compliant to God. Indeed, faith must come first (we are talking about adults here), and this makes a person alive through the Holy Spirit, and injects good intentions into the heart. Indeed, without faith there is no salvation or justification, nor do the sacraments do any good.

Clear testimonies of this fact stand open to us in the Scriptures, especially in the case of Judas Iscariot, who received the sacraments from Christ Himself yet took the part of the priests and those who cried out against Christ. We find the same in Ananias and Sapphira his wife, who were bathed with the washing of baptism by the Apostles and, as may be legitimately believed,

partook of the Lord's Supper as well [Acts 5:1-11]. Nevertheless they remained in the bonds of malice and evil and lied to the Holy Spirit, and the sacraments did not remove this evil from them nor give them the faith which makes alive, the faith which gives a secure and tranquil conscience, and a heart which listens to God. Similarly, circumcision and the sacrifices of the Law did not confer that faith which both justifies and makes alive.

Paul agrees with this way of thinking in writing to the Romans, chapter 4, using Abraham as an example of one who had justification through faith even before he was circumcised. And he says elsewhere concerning the people of Israel that they were similarly baptized, ate of the same spiritual food and drank of the same spiritual drink [1 Cor. 10:2-4]. Nevertheless, God did not approve of many of them, and they were left behind in the desert.

To be sure, if anyone comes to the sacraments unworthily, this person is not made worthy or clean by them, but calls down greater sin and damnation on oneself. Paul demonstrates this clearly [1 Cor. 11:27]: "Whoever eats this bread or drinks from the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, etc." And again [1 Cor. 11:29]: "They eat and drink judgment on themselves, not discerning the Body of the Lord."

For the rest, our people teach that the sacraments, out of their institution by Christ, always retain their effect, that is, of testifying to and confirming present grace and salvation to those who are worthy, but sin and condemnation to the unworthy, whether they are administered by good [ministers] or by unworthy and evil hypocrites and persons who are secretly impious. And this is true until hypocrites of this sort are revealed by their offenses and crimes and can be accused according to the custom and rite of the Church. And if they remain obstinate and are expelled from the communion of the Church, sacraments administered by them, if they are administered according to the intent and institution of Christ, still have to be accepted. For the sacraments are efficacious not because of the one who administers them, no matter what sort of person this is, nor on account of the one who receives them, but because of the ordination and command of Christ.

Article 12

Baptism

They also teach that baptism is a saving ministration instituted by Christ and added to the Gospel through which He Himself purifies, cleanses, and sanctifies His Church in His death and blood. As Paul says [Eph. 5:25-26]: "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water through the word." And the people of our church alone in the Kingdom of Bohemia and the March of Moravia defend

this faith concerning baptism with these Scriptures against those who believe and write that baptism cleans off only the dirt of the body, but does nothing in the soul for salvation.

Again they teach that children are to be baptized for salvation and consecrated to Christ according to His word [Matt. 19:14]: "Let the children come to me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the Kingdom of God." And our people, supported by these words of the Lord, baptize children in the name of the Holy Trinity. Indeed the statement is a general one [Matt. 28:19]: "Teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Nor do they baptize them again later on, nor do they rebaptize at all.

At one time they used to rebaptize those who asked to be transferred from other churches to our own, and such persons found no objection to this custom of rebaptizing. But when the Romans decreed armed warfare against the Bohemians in the cause of faith and religion, and when the leaders of both sides opposed one another with the Scriptures, and both charged the other with errors, and after they had thrown violent insults at one another, it was decided [by the Brethren] that they would cut themselves off first from the priesthood, then from the sacraments, and then entirely from all of Christendom. Then in places others began to repeat the baptisms of others and there was great hatred for those who persisted, since the majority of our profession, who were already cut off from them, had their own congregations and administered the sacraments, and wishing to add to their churches, they rebaptized. And they had many noteworthy reasons and passages to cite in support of this, not only from this time, but also from quotations provided by many ancient [writers] of great authority, piety, and erudition. Foremost among these was blessed Cyprian the martyr of Christ, but there were also not a few others, who on this issue defended the bishops who all rebaptized in Africa, since the Scriptures proved (as they thought) that those baptized by heretics should be rebaptized.

This way of rebaptizing continued in our church as long as more certain knowledge about this matter did not come forth. But afterward, by the blessing of God, with the progress of time the light of truth shone more clearly upon us, and when they had investigated the Scripture more diligently, and aided by the work of certain learned persons, they concluded that rebaptism is not properly a work of the church. Therefore they put it to a vote whether to continue or do away with this, and it was the unanimous consensus that repetition of baptism among us is now revoked. Nevertheless some priests of the so-called Bohemian [Utraquist] and Roman parties do as before, and still rebaptize our [children], although the parents frequently are unwilling and object to it.

And some of these first dissolve the marriages of our people and then join them together again and force [our] people to do this. But in spite of the wrong this does us, not wishing to recompense evil with evil, we leave the judgment in this to God and to all good people.

Our people also teach that whoever has received baptism and through this has been buried by Christ into His death is now to walk in newness of life [Rom. 6:4], etc. But truly, if one does not acquire from the preaching of the Gospel a sure and certain trust in God followed by love toward all those who have been grafted into Christ through the washing of regeneration, and if people do not walk worthy of their calling, diligently striving to be pleasing to God, and if they do not place all hope of salvation in Him alone, such people testify that they have received in vain both the grace of baptism and the Name of the most holy Trinity which was invoked upon them. Scripture threatens that God will one day punish this severely.

Article 13

The Lord's Supper

They teach that the Lord's Supper or Sacrament of the Eucharist is a ministry instituted by Christ, then by the Apostles, and that through them by His grace and goodness it is offered to the whole Church for the general use and salvation of all. How this came to be is testified to by the Evangelists and by the Apostle, whose words are echoed by the whole Church [1 Cor. 11:23]: "I received from the Lord and have passed on to you how the Lord Jesus, in the night He was betrayed, took bread, etc." Further on, he says [1 Cor. 11:33]: "Therefore, Brethren, when you come together to eat (that is, the Supper), wait for one another."

And it is to be believed in the heart and confessed with the mouth that the bread of the Lord's Supper is the true body of Christ, which was given for us. And the chalice is His true blood which was poured out for us for the remission of sins, as Christ the Lord explicitly says [Matt. 26:26, 28; Mark 14:22, 24; Luke 22:19-20]: "This is my body; this is my blood, etc."

They also teach that no one should add to, mix in with, or take away anything of one's own from these words of Christ, by which He Himself proclaimed the bread His body and the wine His blood poured out, but should simply believe these words of Christ, inclining neither to the right nor to the left.

While the simple and real sense of these words was being opposed by some in the Kingdom of Bohemia and the March of Moravia, and while in the meantime those who were supposed to watch over and claim this from the Scriptures were remaining silent, our people went ahead and demonstrated from the Scriptures how these words are to be taken in simplicity by the faithful. And because of this they are sustaining [i.e., bearing the weight of] the false accusations, taunts, mockery, disparagement, and open abuse of many.

There are two sorts of adversaries who throw the name of heretic at our people. Some do not believe their confession, which they offer candidly and

sincerely, nor their doctrine, which in no way accords with that of these detractors but does not differ from Scripture in any respect. These say that our people really feel differently within from what they [we] express in their [our] words, and even more, that they [we] are blasphemers on the sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord. But this is just an old false accusation of the priests by which they try to spoil our good name among the common people. But our people have already refuted this and are still prepared to refute it, and they have shown by the undoubted faith and most solid arguments of many of them that they have never been, are not now, and God willing will never be what their adversaries have made them out to be.

But what good person would believe these adversaries about anything at all? And we, when we have looked deeply into the doctrine and religion of the Brethren, have found nothing of the things of which they are accused, but rather that these charges are frauds and artifices perpetrated by evil persons [against them]. Indeed, it is obvious to all that the Brethren have very frequently written against the enemies of truth and the sacraments.

On the other hand, some who are fanatic in spirit and do not remain in the words of Christ attack with great hatred our defense of this confession. These detractors deny that the bread and cup of the Supper, which with Paul we call the Lord's, are the true Body and Blood of Christ. They constantly heap loud reproaches on our people, as they have done from the beginning. Because of this faith and confession concerning the Lord's Supper, they call the Brethren the dregs of popery marked with the sign of the beast, idolaters, antichrists, even the harlot of whom John prophesies in the Apocalypse, and if they can come up with a worse name they use that too. And they do not cease to accuse them with this sort of curses and blasphemies. But our people, for the sake of the Gospel, which commands us to pray even for our enemies, suffer all this patiently.

They teach in addition that in the administration of this sacrament nothing is to be done other than what is made plain and commanded by these most clear words of Christ [Matt. 26:26-28], "who in giving the bread to His disciples said: 'take, eat, this is my body.' And having taken the cup, He gave thanks and said: 'This is my blood of the New Covenant which is poured out for many for the remission of sins.'" And thus they teach in accord with this command of the Lord that His Body and Blood should be received by all without distinction in both kinds as was instituted and ordained by Christ Himself and as the primitive Church made use of this sacrament in its entirety. But if any have the audacity to do something against this institution of Christ, they sin against Christ, who is the author of this sacrament, and are acting against His will expressed in the words of Scripture.

Further, they teach that this sacrament is to be received with purity of soul, reverence, and faith, and especially with self-examination, which is necessary and most useful for people and is most gratifying to Christ. As Paul taught in the ancient Church [1 Cor. 11:28-29]: "Test your own selves, and thus

eat the bread and drink from the cup, for all who eat or drink unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body, eat and drink judgment upon themselves." And elsewhere [2 Cor. 13:5]: "Test yourselves, whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves, for do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you are among the reprobate?" Those who have not first gone deep into themselves and considered with what faith and spirit they are coming to this sacrament insult the sacrament and have contempt for this entire ordinance of Christ. Therefore those who are over us in the church admit none to this sacrament until they have examined themselves as much as lies in them and behave reverently toward this sacrament.

When the Communion of this sacred supper is to be celebrated, in accord with the custom of the ancient Church, there is a sermon to the congregation about Christ and His death, about grace and salvation through faith which is won by the intervention of His blood offered for all, and about the great blessings which He Himself works in believers through faith in His death and blood. Then, while all the rest of the people offer prayers, the ministers, repeating in truth the words of the Lord's Supper, urge the people to believe in the presence of the Body of Christ. They then distribute [the elements] as the people fall on their knees. While this is going on the people make expressions of gratitude recollecting in hymns and spiritual songs [Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19] the

blessings of God and eagerly preparing themselves that they may do

this in accord with the word of Christ to do it in com-

memoration of Him. As Paul interprets this [1

Cor. 11:26]: "As often as you eat this

bread and drink from

this cup you

proclaim the

Lord's death,

until He

comes."²

Article 14

The Power of the Church (or of the Keys)

On this they teach that one should believe that the keys were given to the Church by Christ, concerning which He said to Peter for all [Matt. 16:19]: "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." These, however, are a ministry of Christ given to the Church and to its ministers which

² The printer, Georg Rhaw, typeset this paragraph in the shape of a chalice, narrowing toward the bottom, with the title to Article 14 forming the base of the chalice. This is the only paragraph of the document to receive special treatment.

continues to the present day, nor will it come to an end before the end of the world.

The function and authority of this ministry, by the command and office of Christ, as the divine writings attest, is to correct and bind evil doers and impenitent sinners in the Church and to close the Kingdom of Heaven to them, that is, to exclude them from Christ and activity and participation in the Church. On the other hand, its purpose is to absolve the truly penitent, to restore them to tranquility of conscience, and to cultivate in them sure hope of salvation and faith, and thus to open to them the Kingdom of Heaven and to build them up and strengthen them against all the temptations and assaults, terrors and deceptions of the enemy. Of course, they [the ministers] are to do this not by their own power and will, but as dispensers of the mysteries of God with authority as ministers and servants of Christ and of His word and sacraments.

In committing this task and office to them the Lord says in John 20[:21-23]: “Receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” And this use and authority of the keys was also declared in that case of incest in Corinth, for Paul himself by the injunction of the Lord, excommunicated that person from the Church, and handed the one who admitted this sin over to Satan [1 Cor. 5:1-5]. But again, when this person was restored to his right mind by the blessing of God, he absolved him and received him back into the communion of the Church and sacraments. By this pact he opened the Kingdom of Heaven to him.

They also teach that the keys of the Lord, or rather the administration and power of those keys, is given and handed over first to the leaders and ministers of the Church, then to any Christian congregation, no matter how few members are in it, as the Lord’s words clearly testify [Matt. 18:18, 20]: “Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them.”

Following this, they teach that whenever there is need, all who make use of these keys through the priest of the church to which they belong should believe that their sins are forgiven by the keys just as certainly as if they were receiving absolution from the physically present Lord Himself. For the priests are exercising the office of the Lord, and have this authority committed to them, just as He says in John [20:23]: “If you forgive the sins of any, etc.” And again [Luke 10:16]: “Whoever hears you, hears me.” And once more [Matt. 10:40]: “Whoever receives you, receives me”; and [Luke 10:16]: “whoever rejects you, rejects me.”

They warn also that those who are in the ministry of the Church should use these keys precisely according to the ordination and will of Christ, as this is revealed in His word, and not as they themselves might wish according to the inclination of their own wills, lest the prophecy be fulfilled in them which says [Mal. 2:1-2]: “And now this commandment is for you, O priests. If you will not

listen, if you will not lay it on your heart to give glory to my name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send the curse on you, and I will curse your blessings; indeed, I have already cursed them, etc.”

Article 15

Human Traditions

They teach that human traditions, rites, and customs that are not opposed to piety should be retained among all the people. It is in this way that the Apostle [1 Cor. 14:40] warns that “all things (in the church, that is) should be done decently and in order.” In another place he says [2 Thess. 2:15]: “Stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or through our letter.”

But they also teach that traditions, rites, or ceremonies of this sort which obscure the glory of Christ or His grace and lead astray and hold back the people from truth and faith, and those which are made equal to or even superior to divine precepts, as if one who transgresses against these is relinquishing the pure usage of the word of God — these are to be avoided and rejected. In Mark 7[:6-8] the Lord severely censures the Scribes and Pharisees, who observed such traditions: “Isaiah indeed prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written [Isa. 29:13]: ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as divine doctrines.’ For having disregarded the precept of God, you hold to traditions set up by humans.”

And Paul wants people to be on their guard against this sort of tradition, as he says in Colossians 2[:8]: “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ.” The Canons of the Church also teach this in Distinction 8,³ especially in chapter 2, which is entitled “Custom.” There we read: “We praise custom, but only that which is known to assert nothing contrary to the Catholic faith.” For this reason our people teach that only those rites and traditions are to be observed which promote and nourish faith, the worship and service of God, and other good things among the faithful, things which bring about and retain peace and concord among the people, and set up some good order and harmony. It does not matter who the authors of these things are, a synod, a pope, a bishop, or anybody else. No one ought to be offended at such traditions and observe them less just because of who their authors are, so long as they themselves have nothing troublesome in them.

³ Pelikan writes this as Distinction 9 and cites Friedberg, Part I, dist. xi, ch. 6, col. 25.

But one should beware in the highest degree that these things do not distract us from more serious and important matters. In everything, divine things should be preferred to human ones. It is to the divine things that the mind is to be directed, not caught up in things that lead to impiety. For Christ spoke angrily to the leaders of the Jews who put their traditions before divine commands [Matt. 23:23]: “You have neglected the weightier matters of the Law: justice and mercy and faith; it is these you should have done without omitting the others.” Indeed, many ancient rites of the Church are retained among us today, such as certain fasts and fixed and movable festivals on which the people assemble to take part in sacred services. We also retain the prayers of Matins and Vespers, the Lord’s Day, and the festival days of Christ: Nativity, Passion, Resurrection, etc. We especially celebrate the memory of the saints such as the most blessed Virgin, the Apostles, and others, but especially those of whom the Scripture makes mention.

All this is done among us for the sake of the divine word and worship. However, our people do not observe the rites and customs of all, for this is not possible, and it is not necessary that the same rites and ceremonies should be preserved everywhere in all churches. They are not against any pious rite, nor is their mind averse to them, and though some of these do not seem to be equally necessary, they do not think that they should be rejected as long as they do not stand in the way of piety or take anything away from faith, which alone justifies and makes blessed.

They teach at the same time that the Church is not to be weighed down with traditions as was formerly the case under [the law of] Moses. The Apostles themselves opposed doing this, as when some were urging obedience to the Law, Peter said in Acts [15:10]: “Why do you tempt God by putting a yoke on the necks of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” And Paul says in another place [Gal. 5:1]: “See that you do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”

Christ also threatened severely those who were burdening the people with a great number of traditions, saying [Luke 11:46]: “Woe to you lawyers! For you load people with burdens which cannot be borne.”

Concerning this they teach that human traditions ought not to be taken as inviolable and eternal laws. Indeed, just as they are kept for certain sure and just reasons, so when other reasons and matters arise and needs are different, they can be violated without sin. Indeed the Apostles transgressed against the traditions of the elders when they ate bread with unwashed hands, or again when they did not fast with the rest, but both times they were without sin since they had been excused by Christ. And again in the primitive Church, the Apostles, gathered together as one with the other saints, led by the Holy Spirit, decreed that the faithful should abstain from meat offered to idols, and from blood, and from things that had been strangled [Acts 15:29, 21:25]. But

afterward when the reasons for which this had been decreed had disappeared, the command also disappeared [1 Cor. 8:1-13].

Finally, they teach that people should not take offense, nor condemn, hate, and persecute one another in turn over ceremonies, customs, and rites which are seen to differ in various churches, but do not interfere with or harm piety. Nor should one alienate oneself or withdraw from the unity of the Church by causing sects and seditions, since things in the Church have never been exactly the same, nor are they now. The Decrees of the Fathers openly show this also in Distinction 12, chapter entitled “It Knows”: “The Holy Roman Church knows that it does not interfere with the salvation of believers if there are differences of custom in different times and places, so long as these are not against the Canons.” It suffices for peace of conscience in the Church if all of Christ’s faithful are provided with the one Spirit; that is, if they agree in doctrine and faith. For indeed, “if one does not have the Spirit of Christ,” as the Apostle says [Rom. 8:9], “this one is not His,” whatever rites, ceremonies, or traditions such a person may observe.

Therefore those who are members of the one Body of Christ ought to cherish, help, and bear with one another in love, without which, as Paul says [1 Cor. 13], nothing can be done for anyone’s salvation.

Article 16

Secular Power

Concerning this, it is taught among us according to the Scriptures that the higher power, or secular office, is ordained by God so that the people may be guided in those things which are political and temporal. The saying of Paul is illustrative of this [Rom. 13:1]: “For there is no authority except from God, and those authorities which exist are from God.”

They teach also that those who are in authority and perform a public office, whatever rank they may hold, should know that they are not doing their own work, but that of God, and that such a person ought to remember that God is the highest Lord and King of them and of others as well, and it is to God that in the last day they will have to render an account of what has been entrusted to them. And this maxim is expressed in many words by Philo⁴ and others as well, and they warn that magistrates should repeatedly recall this statement in the Psalter [Ps. 2:10-12]: “And now, kings, be wise; be instructed all you who judge the earth. Serve the Lord in fear, and exult in Him with trembling. Lay hold of His instruction and kiss the Son (that is, Christ the King of all and the highest

⁴ A Jewish philosopher, contemporary with Jesus of Nazareth, who was widely quoted in the 16th century.

Judge),⁵ with feeling lest the Lord grow angry, and you perish on the way, since His anger is kindled quickly. Blessed are all who have complete trust in Him.”

In addition, they teach that those who exercise public office ought to be benefactors of the people. As the Lord Himself says [Luke 22:25]: “Those who have authority over others are called benefactors.” The role and duties of magistrates are these: to proclaim the law equally to all; to maintain and secure peace and public tranquility for the benefit of all without favoritism for any persons; to exact punishments on wicked persons and evil-doers who disturb that peace and tranquility; and to protect all others from their power and unjust injury. For it is certain that office holders are to serve God and do His work, since they are called “gods” [Ps. 82:6] and therefore they ought to strive to do His will. And Paul also calls the magistrates ministers of God and says that they are put in this position for the punishment of those who do evil and for the praise of those who do good [Rom. 13:1-7].

They also teach that it is commanded by the word of God that all people are to be subject to the higher powers in all things; that is, in all things which are not contrary to God and His word: first, indeed, to your Royal Majesty, and then to those others who are constituted in eminence and office, whether they be good or unworthy and evil. And they are to show honor and respect to all who are put into high positions by rank and office, and fulfill all obligations to which they are bound by census or taxes.

But regarding those things which concern souls and faith and salvation, they teach that only God and His ministers are to be heard, as Christ Himself says [Matt. 22:21]: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

If, however, anyone wishes to force them to do those things which fight against and oppose God and His word, which remain eternally, they teach that they should make use of the example of the Apostles who answered the rulers in Jerusalem [Acts 5:29]: “We must obey God rather than humans.”

There also exist instructions of the Fathers on this, and Distinction 2, chapter 3, (by blessed Jerome) says: “If a lord orders those things which are not contrary or adverse to the Holy Scriptures, let the servant be subject to that lord. But if he orders things contrary to that, let one obey the Lord of one’s spirit rather than the lord of one’s body.” And further on it says: “If what a commander orders is good, you should follow his will; but if it is bad, you ought to obey God rather than humans.”

⁵ This is an old but common reading of Psalm 2:12. The meaning of the Hebrew original is uncertain.

Article 17

The Worship of the Saints

First, they teach that since humans were created, not one of them has existed, nor exists now, nor ever will exist in the future, who by that one's own powers, merits, strivings, and works is holy or just. As Moses writes [Exod. 34:7]: "None are innocent before you in themselves." And blessed Job says [Job 15:14-16]: "What are mortals, that they should be spotless, and who born of woman appears just? Behold, among His saints none is unchangeable; even the heavens are not clean in His sight. How much more corrupt is one who drinks iniquity like water?" We are convinced by the Scriptures that each and every one of us is a sinner by nature and from our first origin. Psalm 13⁶ says: "All have gone astray, and are all alike made corrupt, etc."

For whatever of good is in the saints is to be considered as received from the bounty and grace of God, for the fact that the saints are pleasing to God happens entirely without merit, but because of the divine will. For God out of His sheer and inerrant grace and in the riches of His goodness called from eternity to the enjoyment of glory with Christ those whom he wished and chose, i.e., those who have redemption, justification, and the remission of sins and the favor of God through the blood of Christ. By His grace, they have been adopted as children of God [Gal. 3:26, 4:5], made holy, cleansed from every stain, and endowed with good works and virtues as children of light, sealed by the Spirit of God, and after they had held the faith, which is the foundation of salvation, firm to the end of their lives they were received into heaven where God crowns His good gifts in them.

They teach also that some saints have been given above others special graces, gifts, and virtues for the benefit of the entire Church by God, who divides all things among all as He sees will be best. As it says in Ephesians 4[:11-12]: "He gave some to be Apostles, some to be prophets, others to be evangelists, and others to be pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," which is the Church. Their memory remains in the Scriptures, and their works and fruits in the Church, to this very day. Apart from this, however, they teach that one ought to believe and confess about the most blessed Virgin, the Mother of our Lord, as the Scriptures have it, that she was born of the royal line, from the house and family of David, and was chosen by God before the ages, and as the angel said to her, that she is blessed among women [Luke 1:28], full of grace and of the Spirit of God, and was

⁶ Psalm 13 in the Latin Vulgate used by this confession but Psalm 14:3 in English Protestant texts.

sanctified that she might become the mother of the Savior, who although He was the Son of God, nevertheless took on our flesh in her womb.

This woman was a virgin before she gave birth, and a virgin after she gave birth, she who called herself “the handmaiden of the Lord” [Luke 1:38], However, she is no less redeemed by the blood and gracious merit of her Son’s blood, and made an heir of eternal blessedness, a temple or dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and granted extraordinary gifts, virtues, and graces. Indeed, God did great things for her above the rest, and therefore our churches celebrate with honor her festival days to the praise and glory of God. Again, they compose pious hymns about her, and sing them both in private and in public in our places of worship, and in these they praise God and urge all to imitate her faith and virtues and the other works of her life, and commemorate the labors which she underwent for the sake of the Lord. They take care to emulate her as an example of the best life because of her strengths, and her words are by no means to be forgotten. With the whole Church they acclaim her as the most blessed of the saints, for as is seen, the Scriptures do not refrain from doing this.

In addition they teach that the honor and worship due to God is not to be transferred to the saints nor to their images. As it is written in Isaiah [42:8]: “I am the Lord; this is my name. I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to idols.” They teach, however, that the saints are to be honored in this way: that on set and prescribed days and times all gather in one place to hear the word of God and to offer worship to God, that they might celebrate the memory of the saints, and of the benefits and gifts which God conferred on them, and through them to the Church, remembering their faith and life and actions, by which they are stirred to imitate these that they might bear fruit in every good work through the word of God.

In addition, as they are recalling these things about the saints, they sing pious hymns about them, that they might give thanks to God for such great gifts which he poured forth on them in His inexhaustible goodness. They also exhort one another to their way of living, and they pray to God that they might be able to be their companions in this and the future life. Nor is there anything in this which is divergent from the Scriptures. Hebrews 13[:7] says: “Remember those who went before you, who spoke to you the word of God; be imitators of their faith, taking note of the outcome of their way of life.”

Again they teach that this is to be known and believed not only concerning those saints who were before us in former centuries and, having been freed from these miseries, have been received into the blessed life, but also concerning those who are now in the world. Indeed, all who believe in Christ, regardless of the nations in which they live, are saints. And these all have been washed by the washing of regeneration, and have been numbered among the children and heirs of God, and have been freely given faith in Christ, and have been justified, burning with love for all, and have been cleansed from their sins

by the faith of the Church and by its ministry. They commune in the Body and Blood of Christ, and all strive to perform the good works that have been established for them to walk in.

The divine writings call all of these “saints,” who are still living and clothed in mortal flesh, as in 1 Peter 2[:9]: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people which has become [God’s] property.” Again, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13[:12]: “All the saints salute you.” And elsewhere [Heb. 13:24]: “Salute all your leaders and all the saints,” that is, those who are faithful or Christians. Because of this they teach that while we ought to embrace all Christians in love, even the evil ones, and particularly in times of need to reach out helping hands to them, still we ought especially to be of use as we are able to those who share the same doctrine and faith with us and express this in their works. They [the Brethren] teach that when they [the saints, meaning fellow Christians] eagerly follow Christian truth and doctrine, they are to be held in holy and fraternal fellowship, and [we] are always to think well of them and honor them. We are also to ask them to pray for us, as is proper by the law of piety, for the sake of Christ and the bonds of Christian love, building each other up and seeking one another’s counsel. They [the Brethren] also frequently urge them to commend themselves to their prayers.

They teach moreover that those who profess the name of Christ, but who live wanton and impious lives, or go astray by false doctrine and will not acknowledge that they err, should, as much as is possible, be humanely corrected and tolerated in love. And God should be asked to recall them to the way of salvation, that the Gospel of the glory of Christ may be adorned in all.

Article 18

Fasting

Our people teach that fasting is an external form of worship among the pious that is to be offered only to God; and according to the circumstances of persons, nations, places, and things, it is to be observed by one and all without superstition and hypocrisy. Nor are passages of Scripture lacking which speak about the subject of this article. Among the many are 2 Corinthians 6[:4-5]: “Commending ourselves as ministers of God . . . in fasting,” and Christ the Lord Himself says [Matt. 9:15]: “When you fast. . . .” Paul again says in another place [1 Cor. 7:5]: “that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer.”

They then teach that fasting does not consist of discrimination of foods, but in moderate consumption of them, and sobriety and temperance and affliction of one’s body and humility before God. It also makes a difference why

one fasts in spirit and will. However, that fasting is helpful and pleasing and acceptable to God is taught in Matthew chapter 6[:16-18] and Isaiah 58[:3-7].

But as to whether one is to take pleasure in food, they warn each person to be guided by the words of Christ, who said to the crowds which He called to come to Him [Matt. 15:10-11]: “Listen and understand, it is not what goes into the mouth that makes a person unclean; but what comes out of the mouth, this makes a person unclean.” And the Apostle says [Rom. 14:14-15, 17]: “I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself, but if anyone considers something to be unclean, then it is unclean for him. In truth, if your Brother [or Sister] is made sorrowful on account of your food, you are no longer walking according to love, if by your food you lose one for whom Christ died. For the Kingdom of God is not food and drink, but justice and peace and joy through the Holy Spirit.”

But Christian liberty extends only so far as not to cause scandal to weaker Brethren, as is said again in the same passage [Rom. 14:20]: “All things are pure; but it is evil for that one who eats so as to give offense.” And in another place it says [1 Cor. 8:8]: “Food does not commend us to God; for if we eat, it is none the better for us; and if we do not eat, it is not the worse for us.”

Article 19

Celibacy

They teach concerning celibacy that no one is to be compelled to it nor restrained from it, for God neither commands nor forbids it, but leaves it to the will and decision of each one whether to live celibate or contract marriage.

However, those who take celibacy upon themselves for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven are said to act more correctly and safely than if they become involved and entangled in marriage, in accord with what the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 7[:25-26]: “Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; nevertheless I give my advice that it is good for one to be so.” And at the end of the chapter he says [1 Cor. 7:40]: “In my opinion, it is more blessed if she remains as she is; and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.”

Then they teach that none should choose to follow this advice for celibacy thinking that by this they will merit remission of their sins and life eternal for themselves or for others. For no celibacy or any work of ours brings these things, but only the death and grace of Christ. Indeed, those for whom it is suitable ought to bind themselves to celibacy in order to be able to be more fit and unencumbered for [serving] the Church, the Society [Unity] of Brethren in salutary matters having discovered that many inconveniences accompany married persons. If persons can remain [celibate], then they do well. Paul indeed

says about this [1 Cor. 7:32]: “I want you to be free from anxieties. The one who is celibate cares for those things which are the Lord’s.” And again [1 Cor. 7:26]: “Therefore, I think this is good because of the present necessity.” And the Lord Himself commends those who would make themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of God [Matt. 19:12]. However, they teach that those who choose the celibate life should, as the Apostle has it, strive and excel to be among the first in doing good works, that they may be holy in body and spirit [1 Cor. 7:32-34].

They teach in addition that those who have dedicated themselves to celibacy, and to all those things which can preserve chastity of life when they are practiced diligently, and have pledged to God and the Church that they will chastely remain celibate, so that they can perform a ministry, are more useful and fit for this ministry (to which they have freely consecrated themselves). Such persons are not to contract marriage by their own decision as they could before, unless as the Apostle says it [1 Cor. 7:9], “They burn,” that is, that in their celibacy they are burning so that no advice, instruction, reproof, or warning can tame or hold in the burning. For just as those who have contracted marriage are not free to do whatever they want as before, it is the same with those who have devoted themselves to Christ and His Church in ministry. This ministry ought to have precedence over one’s other desires of any kind, and one is bound for its sake to renounce everything else, even life itself. This purity of life and abstinence from desires has some sure promises for this and the future life, as it says in Mark 10[:29-30]. Again, those who do not fight against the lusts and desires of the flesh cast away the gift conferred on them by God, let go of the Holy Spirit, and are an offense to the Church which they cause to totter and tear to pieces by their inconstancy.

They teach further that the gifts of grace are to be preserved diligently and with the greatest zeal by all. Thus they do not impose on anyone an unbearable yoke which is an offense to the conscience. But all things in the Church should be done in good order, and as Paul says [1 Cor. 14:40], “all things ought to be done for good form” in the Church.

They express the opinion that the Church should promote public tranquility, so that those who are not able to contain themselves should refer the matter to the presiding officers in the church and make use of their authority and counsel. For it is proper that a minister of the Church should do everything by the authority of the Church and fellow ministers, that the minister might be a good example to others, and such ministers will sin less if they make use of the advice of those who have the Spirit of Christ.

Article 20
The Time of Grace
In which Divine Favor both ought to be sought and can be found

Finally, they teach in this chapter that as long as they are living, people may know a time granted them by God, which is a time of grace in which they may seek Him and His grace, goodness, mercy, and leniency. They should find this in His promises and thus attain a blessed salvation. Paul has this to say in Acts [17:26-27] about this subject: “God allotted the time of their existence and fixed the boundaries of the places people were to live, so that they might seek God, if perhaps they would feel after Him and find Him.” And the Lord says through the Prophet [Isa. 49:8]: “I heard you in an acceptable time, and I helped you in the day of salvation.” “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” [2 Cor. 6:2].

Therefore our people diligently admonish that one should not fail to make full use of this time of grace, but that while one is in good health and is permitted to pass through this time, one should do penance to attain a higher life, be reconciled to God, and through His administration in the Church render one’s conscience peaceful and tranquil and secure. One should firmly believe that one’s sins are forgiven and that God is appeased because of Christ. One should certainly believe that one is made firm in Christ’s grace, walking and going forward in good works. One should also certainly believe that when one’s soul is freed from the chains of the body it will not pass over into any punishment, but like Lazarus will be carried by the angels into eternal blessing, where it will remain forever with Christ, in whose presence all things exist and can be sought. Not even on the last day does one need to fear the judgment of death, for one will be caught up into heavenly life. Paul wishes us to strive for this, as in writing to the Hebrews he says [Heb. 3:13]: “Exhort one another continually every day, while it is still called today, that none of you may be hardened by the seduction of sin.” “For we who have believed enter into rest” [Heb. 4:3], that is, we who have harkened to the voice of God in time.

They teach besides that all should be most certain that if they die in their sins without penitence and faith in the Gospel, that their soul, like that of the impious rich man for whom there was no grace left [Luke 16:19-31], will be subject to eternal judgment. Those who depart this life in an impenitent state on the last and concluding day of all will hear the horrible voice of God [Matt. 25:41]: “Depart from me, you evil-doers, into eternal fire, which has been prepared for the Devil and His angels.” Again, in John 5[:29] it says: “And those who have done evil will come forth into a resurrection of condemnation.”

They also warn that no one should put off being converted to the Lord, trying to avoid the guilt of one's crimes and doing penance until old age or illness, being secure for the time being and "sleeping on both ears" [as they say], indulging in the enticements of the world and the flesh, and acting according to the inclination of their own will. For it is written [Ecclus. 5:5-9]: "Do not pile sin upon sin, and do not say 'the mercy of the Lord is great; he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins,' for mercy and anger come forth quickly from Him, and His anger rests on sinners. Do not delay being converted to Him, putting it off from day to day, for His anger will come quickly, and He will destroy you in the day of vengeance." This applies in the highest degree to those who, after having received the testimony of divine favor, voluntarily immerse themselves in sin, and spurn and neglect saving admonitions to come to their senses in time, and foolishly and impudently wasting the mercy of God. They continue in sins to the very last moment, and then when the crisis point of death is imminent and only when they are awakened to the fact that the moment of death is at hand do they begin to fear hell with horror. And only then do they become wise to the fact that they are in danger of experiencing the final furor of the Lord (as His words clearly testify) and not His mercy. The Lord says in Micah 3[:4]: "They will cry to me, and I will not hear them; and I will turn my face from them in that time because they have acted wickedly in their strivings." Indeed, these are "those who did not desire to hear my voice, though I extended my hands to them all the day long" [Isa. 65:1-2]. Truly, it must be feared that those who have so lazily and wastefully squandered the time that God has given them to repent will receive a reward worthy of their deeds.

Nevertheless, so that no one may despair, they teach that even in extreme danger of death if a sign of penitence truly appears in someone, this person is not to be dismissed without the consolation of absolution. (Granted that such repentance happens only very rarely, as Paul correctly says [Heb. 6:3], "We will do this if God permits.") For the time of grace endures as long as life itself lasts. And so, as long as it lasts, one may recall what Paul says along with the prophet [Heb. 3:7-8; Ps. 95:7-8]: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as with provocation in the day of testing in the desert, etc." May all who are admonished by these things find comfort in the time before the sun is darkened and the mountains are covered with darkness; may they recover their senses, and when they are old, may they return to God and do all things so that they may not fall from glory. This our people encourage with the highest zeal and care.