

THE THREE FORMS  
OF UNITY

*The Belgic Confession,  
The Heidelberg Catechism &  
The Canons of Dordt*

*With an Introduction by Nick Needham*

# CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION** *by Nick Needham*

*vii*

**THE BELGIC CONFESSION (1561)**

*1*

**THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM (1563)**

*29*

**CANONS OF THE SYNOD OF DORT (1618-1619)**

*59*

## INTRODUCTION

**T**he “Three Forms of Unity” is the name for three of the most significant and influential doctrinal standards to emerge from the Reformation and its aftermath: the Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Canons of Dort (1619). To the extent that these are unknown among Evangelicals today, it can only reveal a depth of ignorance that gravely impoverishes our knowledge of the richness of our theological heritage. The three documents together make up the collective confession of faith of the Dutch Reformed tradition—a tradition whose impact on the wider Reformed world has been almost incalculable.

### **THE BELGIC CONFESSION (1561)**

The Belgic Confession was written by one of the forgotten heroes of the Reformation, Guido de Bres (1522-67). A native of Mons, whose personal study of the Scriptures persuaded him of the truth of the Reformation Gospel, De Bres spent several years in Protestant England from 1548 to 1552 as part of a congregation of Dutch Reformed refugees who had fled from Spanish persecution. (The Netherlands at that time—modern Belgium and Holland—were under Spanish sovereignty, and the intensely Roman Catholic Spaniards were very hostile to the Reformation.) However, starting in 1552 De Bres was back in the Netherlands, preaching, teaching, and church-planting,

# THE BELGIC CONFESSION (1561)<sup>1</sup>

## **ARTICLE I. *That There is One Only God***

We all believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God; and that he is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good, and the overflowing fountain of all good.

## **ARTICLE II. *By What Means God Is Made Known unto Us***

We know him by two means; first, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate “the invisible things of God,” namely “His power and divinity,” as the apostle Paul says (Rom. 1:20). All which things are sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse. Secondly, he makes himself more clearly fully known to us by his holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation.

1. Revised at the Synod of Dort in 1619

**ARTICLE III. *Of the Written Word of God***

We confess that this Word of God was not sent, nor delivered by the will of man, but that “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” as the apostle Peter says (2 Pet. 1:21). And that afterwards God, from a special care, which he has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit his revealed word to writing; and he himself wrote with his own finger, the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.

**ARTICLE IV. *Canonical Books of the Holy Scripture***

We believe that the Holy Scriptures are contained in two books, namely, the Old and New Testament, which are canonical, against which nothing can be alleged. These are thus named in the Church of God. The books of the Old Testament are, the five books of Moses, viz.: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; the books of Joshua, Ruth, Judges, the two books of Samuel, the two of the Kings, two books of the Chronicles, commonly called Paralipomenon, the first of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, the Psalms of David, the three books of Solomon, namely, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs; the four great prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel; and the twelve lesser prophets, namely, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Those of the New Testament are the four evangelists, viz.: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles; the fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul, viz.: one to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, one to the Galatians, one to the Ephesians, one to the Philippians, one to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, two to Timothy, one to Titus, one to Philemon, and one to the Hebrews; the seven epistles of the other apostles, namely, one of James, two of Peter, three of John, one of Jude; and the Revelation of the apostle John.

**ARTICLE V. *From Whence the Holy Scriptures Derive Their Dignity and Authority***

We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and conformation of our faith; believing without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesses in our hearts, that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling.

**ARTICLE VI. *The Difference between the Canonical and Apocryphal Books***

We distinguish those sacred books from the apocryphal, viz.: the third book of Esdras, the books of Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Jesus Syrach, Baruch, the appendix to the book of Esther, the Song of the three Children in the Furnace, the history of Susannah, of Bell and the Dragon, the prayer of Manasses, and the two books of the Maccabees. All of which the Church may read and take instruction from, so far as they agree with the canonical books; but they are far from having such power and efficacy, as that we may from their testimony confirm any point of faith, or of the Christian religion; much less detract from the authority of the other sacred books.

**ARTICLE VII. *The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, to Be the Only Rule of Faith***

We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe, unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein. For, since the whole manner of worship, which God requires of us, is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures: “nay, though it were an angel from heaven,” as

the apostle Paul says (Gal. 1:8). For, since it is forbidden, to add unto or take away anything from the word of God (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19), it does thereby evidently appear, that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. Neither do we consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore, we reject with all our hearts, whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule, which the apostles have taught us, saying, "Try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 Jn. 4:1). Likewise, "if there come any unto you; and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house" (2 Jn. 1:10).

**ARTICLE VIII. *That God Is One in Essence, yet Nevertheless Distinguished in Three Persons***

According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God, who is the one single essence, in which are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct, according to their incommunicable properties; namely, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father is the cause, origin and beginning of all things visible and invisible; the Son is the word, wisdom, and image of the Father; the Holy Ghost is the eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son. Nevertheless God is not by this distinction divided into three, since the Holy Scriptures teach us, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have each his personality, distinguished by their properties; but in such wise that these three persons are but one only God. Hence then, it is evident, that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, and likewise the Holy Ghost is neither the Father nor the Son. Nevertheless these persons thus distinguished are not divided, nor intermixed: for the Father has not assumed the flesh,

nor has the Holy Ghost, but the Son only. The Father has never been without his Son, or without his Holy Ghost. For they are all three coeternal and co-essential. There is neither first nor last: for they are all three one, in truth, in power, in goodness, and in mercy.

**ARTICLE IX. *The Proof of the Foregoing Article of the Trinity of Persons in One God***

All this we know, as well from the testimonies of holy writ, as from their operations, and chiefly by those we feel in ourselves. The testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, that teach us to believe this Holy Trinity are written in many places of the Old Testament, which are not so necessary to enumerate, as to choose them out with discretion and judgment. In Genesis, chap. 1:26, 27, God says: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," etc. "So God created man in his own image, male and female created he them." And Gen. 3:22: "Behold the man is become as one of us." From this saying, "Let us make man in our image," it appears that there are more persons than one in the Godhead; and when he says, "God created," he signifies the unity. It is true he does not say how many persons there are, but that, which appears to us somewhat obscure in the Old Testament, is very plain in the New.

For when our Lord was baptized in Jordan, the voice of the Father was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17; Mk. 1:11): the Son was seen in the water, and the Holy Ghost appeared in the shape of a dove. This form is also instituted by Christ in the baptism of all believers. Baptize all nations, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel thus addressed Mary, the mother of our Lord, "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35); likewise, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy



Ghost be with you” (2 Cor. 13:14). And there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one. In all which places we are fully taught, that there are three persons in one only divine essence. And although this doctrine far surpasses all human understanding, nevertheless, we now believe it by means of the Word of God, but expect hereafter to enjoy the perfect knowledge and benefit thereof in Heaven. Moreover, we must observe the particular offices and operations of these three persons towards us. The Father is called our Creator, by his power; the Son is our Saviour and Redeemer, by his blood; the Holy Ghost is our Sanctifier, by his dwelling in our hearts. This doctrine of the Holy Trinity, has always been defended and maintained by the true Church, since the time of the apostles, to this very day, against the Jews, Mohammedans, and some false Christians and heretics, as Marcion, Manes, Praxeas, Sabellius, Samosatenus, Arius, and such like, who have been justly condemned by the orthodox fathers. Therefore, in this point, we do willingly receive the three creeds, namely, that of the Apostles, of Nice, and of Athanasius: likewise that, which, conformable thereunto, is agreed upon by the ancient fathers.

#### **ARTICLE X. *That Jesus Christ Is True and Eternal God***

We believe that Jesus Christ, according to his divine nature, is the only begotten Son of God, begotten from eternity, not made nor created (for then he should be a creature), but co-essential and coeternal with the Father, “the express image of his person, and the brightness of his glory” (Heb. 1:3), equal unto him in all things. He is the Son of God, not only from the time that he assumed our nature, but from all eternity, as these testimonies, when compared together, teach us. Moses says that God created the world; and John says that all things were made by that Word (John 1:3), which he calls God. And the apostle says that God made the worlds by his Son (Heb. 1:2); likewise, that

“God created all things by Jesus Christ” (Eph. 3:9). Therefore it must needs follow, that he who is called God, the Word, the Son, and Jesus Christ did exist at that time, when all things were created by him. Therefore the prophet Micah says, “His goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (5:2). And the apostle: “He has neither beginning of days, nor end of life” (Heb. 7:3). He therefore is that true, eternal, and almighty God, whom we invoke, worship and serve.

**ARTICLE XI. *That the Holy Ghost Is True and Eternal God***

We believe and confess also, that the Holy Ghost, from eternity, proceeds from the Father and Son; and therefore neither is made, created, nor begotten, but only proceeds from both; who in order is the third person of the Holy Trinity; of one and the same essence, majesty and glory with the Father, and the Son: and therefore, is the true and eternal God, as the Holy Scriptures teach us.

**ARTICLE XII. *Of the Creation***

We believe that the Father, by the Word, that is, by his Son, has created of nothing, the heaven, the earth, and all creatures, as it seemed good unto him, giving unto every creature its being, shape, form, and several offices to serve its Creator. That he does also still uphold and govern them by his eternal providence, and infinite power, for the service of mankind, to the end that man may serve his God. He also created the angels good, to be his messengers and to serve his elect; some of whom are fallen from that excellency, in which God created them, into everlasting perdition; and the others have, by the grace of God, remained steadfast and continued in their primitive state. The devils and evil spirits are so depraved, that they are enemies of God and every good thing, to the utmost of their power, as murderers, watching to ruin the Church and every member thereof, and by their wicked stratagems to destroy all; and are, therefore, by their

own wickedness, adjudged to eternal damnation, daily expecting their horrible torments. Therefore we reject and abhor the error of the Sadducees, who deny the existence of spirits and angels: and also that of the Manichees, who assert that the devils have their origin of themselves, and that they are wicked of their own nature, without having been corrupted.

### ARTICLE XIII. *Of Divine Providence*

We believe that the same God, after he had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but that he rules and governs them according to his holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without his appointment: nevertheless, God neither is the author of, nor can be charged with, the sins which are committed. For his power and goodness are so great and incomprehensible, that he orders and executes his work in the most excellent and just manner, even then, when devils and wicked men act unjustly. And, as to what he does surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire into, farther than our capacity will admit of; but with the greatest humility and reverence adore the righteous judgments of God, which are hid from us, contenting ourselves that we are disciples of Christ, to learn only those things which he has revealed to us in his Word, without transgressing these limits. This doctrine affords us unspeakable consolation, since we are taught thereby that nothing can befall us by chance, but by the direction of our most gracious and heavenly Father; who watches over us with a paternal care, keeping all creatures so under his power, that not a hair of our head (for they are all numbered), nor a sparrow, can fall to the ground, without the will of our Father, in whom we do entirely trust; being persuaded, that he so restrains the devil and all our enemies, that without his will and permission, they cannot hurt us. And therefore we reject that damnable error of the Epicureans, who say that God regards nothing, but leaves all things to chance.

**ARTICLE XIV. *Of the Creation and Fall of Man, and His Incapacity to Perform What Is Truly Good***

We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after his own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will, agreeably to the will of God. But being in honour, he understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but willfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death, and the curse, giving ear to the words of the devil. For the commandment of life, which he had received, he transgressed; and by sin separated himself from God, who was his true life, having corrupted his whole nature; whereby he made himself liable to corporal and spiritual death. And being thus become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways, he has lost all his excellent gifts, which he had received from God, and only retained a few remains thereof, which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse; for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness, as the Scriptures teach us, saying: "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not" (Jn. 1:5), where St. John calls men darkness. Therefore we reject all that is taught repugnant to this, concerning the free will of man, since man is but a slave to sin, and has nothing of himself, unless it is given from heaven. For who may presume to boast, that he of himself can do any good, since Christ says, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him" (Jn. 6:44)? Who will glory in his own will, who understands, that to be carnally minded is enmity against God? Who can speak of his knowledge, since "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:14)? In short, who dare suggest any thought, since he knows that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God? And therefore what the apostle says ought justly to be held sure and firm, that "God worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). For there is no will nor understanding, conformable to the divine will and

understanding, but that Christ has wrought in man; which he teaches us, when he says, “Without me ye can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5).

#### **ARTICLE XV. *Of Original Sin***

We believe that, through the disobedience of Adam, original sin is extended to all mankind; which is a corruption of the whole nature, and a hereditary disease, wherewith infants themselves are infected even in their mother’s womb, and which produces in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof; and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God, that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind. Nor is it by any means abolished or done away by baptism; since sin always issues forth from this woeful source, as water from a fountain; notwithstanding it is not imputed to the children of God unto condemnation, but by his grace and mercy is forgiven them. Not that they should rest securely in sin, but that a sense of this corruption should make believers often to sigh, desiring to be delivered from this body of death. Wherefore we reject the error of the Pelagians, who assert that sin proceeds only from imitation.

#### **ARTICLE XVI. *Of Eternal Election***

We believe that all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin, by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest himself such as he is; that is to say, “merciful and just” (Ps. 116:5): “Merciful,” since he delivers and preserves from this perdition all, whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel of mere goodness, has elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works: “Just,” in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves.

#### **ARTICLE XVII. *Of the Recovery of Fallen Man***

We believe that our most gracious God, in his admirable wisdom and goodness, seeing that man had thus thrown himself into temporal and eternal death, and made himself wholly miserable, was pleased to seek

THE HEIDELBERG  
CATECHISM (1563)

*Or Christian Instruction  
as Conducted in the Churches and Schools  
of the Electoral Palatinate*

**Question 1. What is thy only comfort in life and in death?**

*Answer.* That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready henceforth to live unto Him.

**Q2. How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou in this comfort mayest live and die happily?**

*A.* Three things: first, the greatness of my sin and misery. Second, how I am redeemed from all my sins and misery. Third, how I am to be thankful to God for such redemption.

**THE FIRST PART: *Of Man's Misery*****Q3. Whence knowest thou thy misery?**

*A.* Out of the Law of God.

**Q4. What does the Law of God require of us?**

*A.* Christ teaches us in sum, Matthew 22:37–40, “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

**Q5. Canst thou keep all this perfectly?**

*A.* No: for I am by nature prone to hate God and my neighbor.

**Q6. Did God create man thus wicked and perverse?**

*A.* No, but God created man good, and after His own image, that is, in righteousness and true holiness; that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love Him, and live with Him in eternal blessedness, to praise and glorify Him.

**Q7. Whence then comes this depraved nature of man?**

*A.* From the fall and disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in Paradise, whereby our nature became so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin.

**Q8. But are we so depraved, that we are wholly unapt to any good and prone to all evil?**

*A.* Yes; unless we are born again by the Spirit of God.

**Q9. Does not God then wrong man, by requiring of him in His law that which he cannot perform?**

*A.* No: for God so made man, that he could perform it; but man, through the instigation of the devil, by wilful disobedience deprived himself and all his posterity of this power.

**Q 10. Will God suffer such disobedience and apostasy to go unpunished?**

*A.* By no means; but He is terribly displeased with our inborn as well as our actual sins, and will punish them in just judgment in time and eternity, as he has declared: “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Deut. 27:26).

**Q11. Is then God not merciful?**

*A.* God is indeed merciful, but He is likewise just; wherefore His justice requires that sin, which is committed against the most high majesty of God, be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment both of body and soul.

## THE SECOND PART: *Of Man's Redemption*

**Q12. Since then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal and eternal punishment, what is required that we may escape this punishment and be again received into favor?**

*A.* God wills that His justice be satisfied, therefore we must make full satisfaction to the same, either by ourselves or by another.

**Q13. Can we ourselves make this satisfaction?**

*A.* By no means: on the contrary, we daily increase our guilt.



# CANONS OF THE SYNOD OF DORT (1618–19)

## FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE.

### *Of Divine Predestination*

#### *Article I.*

As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are obnoxious to eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish, and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin, according to the words of the apostle (Rom. 3:19), “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God”; (ver. 23) “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”; and (6:23), “for the wages of sin is death.”

#### *Article II.*

But “in this the love of God was manifested, that he sent his only-begotten Son into the world,” “that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (1 John 4:9; John 3:16).

#### *Article III.*

And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom he will, and at

what time he pleaseth; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:14, 15).

*Article IV.*

The wrath of God abideth upon those who believe not this gospel; but such as receive it, and embrace Jesus the Saviour by a true and living faith, are by him delivered from the wrath of God and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them.

*Article V.*

The cause or guilt of this unbelief, as well as of all other sins, is nowise in God, but in man himself: whereas faith in Jesus Christ, and salvation through him is the free gift of God, as it is written, "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 3:8); and, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him," etc. (Phil. 1:29).

*Article VI.*

That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree. "For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:19; Eph. 1:11). According to which decree he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe; while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of *election* and *reprobation*, revealed in the Word of God, which, though men of perverse, impure,

and unstable minds wrest it to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

*Article VII.*

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath, out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation.

This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit; to bestow upon them true faith, justification, and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of the riches of his glorious grace: as it is written, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:4-6). And elsewhere, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30).

*Article VIII.*

There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved both under the Old and New Testament; since the Scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose,

and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which he hath chosen us from eternity, both to grace and to glory, to salvation and the way of salvation, which he hath ordained that we should walk therein.

*Article IX.*

This election was not founded upon foreseen faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause, or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc. Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good; from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to that of the apostle. "He hath chosen us [not because we were, but] that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

*Article X.*

The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which doth not consist herein that God, foreseeing all possible qualities of human actions, elected certain of these as a condition of salvation, but that he was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to himself, as it is written, "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil," etc., "it was said [namely, to Rebecca] the elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:11-13); and, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

*Article XI.*

And as God himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent, so the election made by him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled nor annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.

*Article XII.*

The elect, in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves, with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God; such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.

*Article XIII.*

The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before him, for adoring the depth of his mercies, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to him who first manifested so great love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands or from sinking men into carnal security, that these, in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

*Article XIV.*

As the doctrine of divine election by the most wise counsel of God was declared by the prophets, by Christ himself, and by the apostles, and is clearly revealed in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, so it is still to be published in due time and place in the Church of God, for which it was peculiarly designed, provided it be done with reverence, in the spirit of discretion and piety, for the glory of God's most holy name, and for enlivening and comforting his people, without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High.

*Article XV.*

What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election is the express testimony of sacred

**Q14. Can any mere creature make satisfaction for us?**

*A.* None: for first, God will not punish, in any other creature, that of which man has made himself guilty; and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, and redeem others therefrom.

**Q15. What manner of mediator and redeemer then must we seek?**

*A.* One who is a true and sinless man, and yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is at the same time true God.

**Q16. Why must He be a true and sinless man?**

*A.* Because the justice of God requires, that the same human nature which has sinned should make satisfaction for sin; but no man, being himself a sinner, could satisfy for others.

**Q17. Why must He be at the same time true God?**

*A.* That by the power of His Godhead He might bear in His manhood the burden of God's wrath and so obtain for and restore to us righteousness and life.

**Q18. But who now is that Mediator, who is at the same time true God and a true, sinless man?**

*A.* Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is freely given unto us for complete redemption and righteousness.

**Q19. Whence knowest thou this?**

*A.* From the Holy Gospel: which God Himself first revealed in Paradise; afterwards proclaimed by the holy Patriarchs and Prophets, and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law; and finally fulfilled by His well-beloved Son.

**Q 20. Are all men then saved by Christ, as they have perished in Adam?**

*A.* No; only such as by true faith are ingrafted into Him, and receive all His benefits.

**Q 21. What is true faith?**

*A.* It is not only a certain knowledge, whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word; but also a hearty trust, which the Holy Ghost works in me by the Gospel, that not only to others, but to me also, forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation, are freely given by God, merely of grace, for the sake of Christ's merits.

**Q 22. What is then necessary for a Christian to believe?**

*A.* All that is promised us in the Gospel, which the articles of our catholic, undoubted Christian faith teach us in sum.

**Q 23. What are these Articles?**

*A.* I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord: who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

**Q 24. How are these articles divided?**

*A.* Into three parts: the first is of God the Father, and our creation; the second, of God the Son, and our redemption; the third, of God the Holy Ghost, and our sanctification.

**Q 25. Since there is but one Divine Being, why speakest thou of three, Father, Son and Holy Ghost?**

*A.* Because God has so revealed Himself in His Word, that these three distinct Persons are the one, true, eternal God.

## OF GOD THE FATHER

**Q 26. What dost thou believe when thou sayest: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth?**

*A.* That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that in them is, who likewise upholds and governs the same by His eternal counsel and providence, is for the sake of Christ His Son my God and my Father; in whom I so trust, as to have no doubt that He will provide me with all things necessary for body and soul; and further, that whatever evil He sends upon me in this vale of tears He will turn to my good; for He is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing also, being a faithful Father.

**Q 27. What dost thou understand by the Providence of God?**

*A.* The almighty everywhere present power of God, whereby, as it were by His hand, He still upholds heaven and earth, with all creatures; and so governs them, that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, all things, come not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.

**Q 28. What does it profit us to know that God has created, and by His providence still upholds all things?**

*A.* That we may be patient in adversity; thankful in prosperity; and for what is future, have good confidence in our faithful God and Father, that no creature shall separate us from His love; since all creatures are so in His hand, that without His will they cannot so much as move.