



**Christian
Truths
Summarized:**

**The Creeds and
Reformed
Confessions**

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Creeds and Reformed Confessions

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First Printing: February 2011
Second Printing: January 2012

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Why Creeds and Confessions?

The church of Christ, since its earliest days, has been characterized by creeds agreed upon by the whole church (for example, see the Nicene Creed on page 2 of this booklet). Soon after the Reformation (in the 16th century) churches found it necessary to compose confessions to specify what they believed the Bible said about certain topics and to prove to her adversaries that she was indeed a Christian church. Since that time Reformed and Presbyterian churches, among other Protestant denominations, have held their confessions very dear and see them as faithful summaries of biblical teaching. Some however, find a “book of confessions” to be an assault on the Bible and its authority, and reject them outright from the beginning. To do so is a misunderstanding of creeds and confessions and their proper use in the historic Christian church. Here are a few reasons why we have creeds and confessions.

1. Creedal statements have always been an identifying mark of God’s people:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (*Deut 6:4*).

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (*Matt 16:16*).

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory” (*1 Tim 3:16*).

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” (*2 Tim 1:13*).

“... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (*Jude 3b*).

2. Creeds and confessions help summarize the main truths of Scripture. They are not divinely inspired words and can be changed, if necessary, to reflect a proper understanding of God’s word.
3. They are helpful for teaching and learning what the Bible says concerning who God is, what Christ came to earth to do, and who we are as God’s beloved children.
4. They unite the church of Christ of all times and all places around a common confession.
5. They provide an identifying mark for churches around the globe.
6. They give a standard according to which the church can guard and protect herself from false teaching.
7. Creeds and confessions help Christians give praise to God as we seek to know more about him and his word and to live lives as disciples of Jesus Christ .

The Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed has been around in some form since the 3rd Century AD. We call it the Apostles' Creed because it contains the main teaching of the apostles recorded in the New Testament. Each phrase of the Apostles' Creed is clearly based on verses from the Bible: the creed gives us the main summary of the good news that the Triune God saves sinners. The Father sent his only begotten Son into the world to die on the cross and rise from the dead. The Holy Spirit applies that work of salvation to sinners who believe in Jesus. The creed has united Christians around the world for almost 1,800 years. When we speak the Apostles' Creed believing what it says, we unite ourselves with others who have professed and do profess the truth of the historic Christian faith.

1. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.¹
2. And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord;²
3. Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary;³
4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell;⁴
5. The third day He rose again from the dead;⁵
6. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;⁶
7. From there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.⁷
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit.⁸
9. I believe a holy catholic⁹ Church, the communion of saints;¹⁰
10. The forgiveness of sins;¹¹
11. The resurrection of the body;¹²
12. And the life everlasting.¹³ AMEN.

(1) Gen 1:1-3; Psalm 86:10; Neh 9:6; John 11:27; Acts 17:24-26; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6; Heb 11:3; Rev 1:8

(2) John 10:36-38; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15-19; 2:9; 2 Peter 1:17; 3:18

(3) Matt 1:18-25; Luke 2:8-11

(4) Psalm 22:1; Isa 53:4-12; Luke 23:13-25, 32-34, 44-46; Acts 2:22-28; 1 Cor 15:3-4; 1 Peter 3:18-19

(5) Matt 27:62-66; 28:1-9; Luke 24:44-47; Rom 1:4; 1 Cor 15:12-20; Rev 1:18

(6) Luke 24:49-51; John 20:17; Heb 1:1-3; 9:24; 10:12-13; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22

(7) Matt 24:27, 36; 25:31-46; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:10-11; 1 Thess 4:15-18; Rev 1:7

(8) Psalm 51:11; Isaiah 63:10-11; John 16:7-15; Acts 1:8-9; 1 Cor 6:19-20; Gal 5:22-23, 25; 2 Tim 1:14

(9) The word "catholic" describes the church as a body that is drawn from all places and all times. As such the word catholic is a more comprehensive adjective than "universal".

(10) Acts 2:42-47; 1 Cor 12:13-14, 27; Gal 3:26-28; 6:10; Eph 1:22-23; 2:18-22; Heb 10:24-25

(11) Psalm 130:4; Acts 13:38; Rom 5:6-10; Col 1:14; 1 John 1:9; 2:1-2

(12) John 6:39-44; 1 Cor 15:21-54; Phil 3:20-21

(13) John 11:25-26; Col 3:3; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 5:11-13; Rev 21:1-4

The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed originated some time in the 4th century AD. We call it the Nicene Creed because it was first adopted by a Christian church council held in 325 AD in Nicea (an ancient city in the Northwestern part of modern day Turkey). The Nicene Creed is similar to the Apostles' Creed, though it goes into more detail about the person and work of Jesus. Some heretics in the early church denied the deity of Christ in various ways. The Nicene Creed alludes to many Bible verses to show that Jesus, the eternal Son of God, is God. We call this a Trinitarian creed because it speaks of the one true God who exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This creed, like the Apostles' Creed, has been believed and professed by Christians around the world for well over a thousand years. We believe and profess it because we stand in line with the biblical, historic Christian church.

1. I believe in¹ one God,² the Father³ Almighty,⁴ Maker of heaven and earth,⁵ and of all things visible and invisible.⁶
2. And in one Lord Jesus Christ,⁷ the only-begotten Son of God,⁸ begotten of the Father before all worlds;⁹ God of God,¹⁰ Light of Light,¹¹ very God of very God;¹² begotten, not made,¹³ being of one substance with the Father,¹⁴ by whom all things were made.¹⁵
3. Who, for us men and for our salvation,¹⁶ came down from heaven,¹⁷ and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,¹⁸ and was made man;¹⁹ and was crucified also for us²⁰ under Pontius Pilate;²¹ He suffered²² and was buried;²³ and the third day He rose again,²⁴ according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven,²⁵ and sits on the right hand of the Father;²⁶ and He shall come again, with glory,²⁷ to judge the living and the dead;²⁸ whose kingdom shall have no end.²⁹
4. And I believe in the Holy Spirit,³⁰ the Lord³¹ and Giver of life;³² who proceeds from the Father and the Son;³³ who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified;³⁴ who spoke by the prophets.³⁵
5. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church.³⁶ I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;³⁷ and I look for the resurrection of the dead,³⁸ and the life of the world to come.³⁹ AMEN.⁴⁰

(1) John 14:1; Rom 10:8-10; 1 Peter 1:21

(2) Deut 6:4; 1 Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6

(3) Isaiah 63:16; Matt 6:9

(4) Ex 6:3; Rev 4:8

(5) Gen 1:1; Neh 9:6

(6) Col 1:15-16; Heb 11:3

(7) Luke 2:11; Acts 11:17; Rom 5:21

(8) Matt 14:33; Mark 1:1; 1 John 5:13

(9) Psalm 2:7; John 1:1-3; 1:18; 3:16; Heb 5:5

(10) John 5:18; Heb 1:3; 1:8

(11) Psalm 27:1; John 1:9; 8:12

(12) John 17:1-5

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- (13) *Psalm 2:7; John 1:1-3*
(14) *John 8:58; 10:30; 17:21; Titus 2:13*
(15) *Col 1:16, Heb 1:1-2*
(16) *Isaiah 53:6; Matt 1:21; 1 Tim 2:4-5*
(17) *John 6:33; 6:35; Phil 2:6-8*
(18) *Isaiah 7:14; Matt 1:20; Luke 1:35*
(19) *John 1:14; Rom 9:5; Gal 4:4*
(20) *Mark 15:25; Acts 4:10; 1 Cor 15:3*
(21) *Matt 27:2; Mark 15:15*
(22) *Isaiah 53:1-5; Mark 8:31; Heb 2:18*
(23) *Luke 23:53; 1 Cor 15:4*
(24) *Luke 24:1; Rom 1:4; Cor 15:4*
(25) *Luke 24:51; Acts 1:10*
(26) *Acts 7:55; Heb 10:12*
(27) *Acts 1:11; 1 Thess 4:16*
(28) *Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:1*
(29) *Isaiah 9:7; 2 Peter 1:11*
(30) *Gen 1:2; John 14:26; 2 Cor 13:14*
(31) *Acts 5:3-4*
(32) *Psalm 104:30; John 6:63*
(33) *John 15: 26; 16:7; 20:22*
(34) *Isaiah 63:11-12; Matt 28:19; 1 Cor 12:3; Eph 4:30*
(35) *1 Sam 19:20; Eze 11:5; 11:13*
(36) *Acts 2:42; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5-9*
(37) *Matt 28:19; Eph 4:5*
(38) *John 11:24-25; 1 Cor 15:12-49*
(39) *John 10:28-29; Rom 6:23; 1 John 2:25*
(40) *Psalm 106:48*

The Athanasian Creed

The Athanasian Creed was probably written around the 7th Century AD. It is called the Athanasian Creed because for many years people believed that an early church pastor, Athanasius (d. 373) wrote it (though this is most likely not the case). The Athanasian Creed is lengthier and more comprehensive than both the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed because it describes in detail the doctrine of the Trinity. This creed, like the Nicene Creed, was written in response to heresy in the early church. Simply stated, the Athanasian Creed summarizes what the Bible teaches about the Trinity. There are not three gods, but one God who exists in three eternal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Athanasian Creed may sound overly technical, but it clearly sets forth the biblical truth of the majesty and mystery of the Triune God. This creed is quite relevant today because many cults and sects still deny the biblical teaching of the Trinity. We hold fast to this creed because we join with the historic Christian church as we worship the one true "God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity."

1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith;
2. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.¹
3. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;²
4. Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.
5. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son and another of the Holy Spirit.³
6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.⁴
7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son and such is the Holy Spirit.
8. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Spirit uncreate.⁵
9. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.
10. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.
11. And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal.⁶
12. As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.
13. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty;⁷
14. And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty.
15. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God;⁸
16. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.⁹

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17. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord;
 18. And yet they are not three Lords, but one Lord.
 19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord;
 20. so are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say: There are three Gods or three Lords.¹⁰
 21. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.¹¹
 22. The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten.¹²
 23. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.¹³
 24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.
 25. And in this Trinity none is afore, nor after another; none is greater, or less than another.
 26. But the whole three persons are co-eternal, and co-equal.
 27. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.¹⁴
 28. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.
 29. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁵
 30. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man.¹⁶
 31. God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and made of the substance of His mother, born in the world.¹⁷
 32. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.¹⁸
 33. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.¹⁹
 34. Who, although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.²⁰
 35. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.
 36. One altogether, not by the confusion of substance, but by unity of person.
 37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;²¹
 38. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;²²
 39. He ascended into heaven, He sits on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty;²³

40. From there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.²⁴
41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;²⁵
42. And shall give account of their own works.²⁶
43. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.²⁷
44. This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.²⁸

(1) *John 14:23-24; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:14; Jude 1:3; Rev 22:18-19*

(2) *Deut 6:4; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 4:6*

(3) *Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14*

(4) *Ex 3:14; Matt 12:32; John 8:58*

(5) *Gen 1:1-2; John 8:58; 1 Tim 1:17; Heb 9:14*

(6) *Deut 6:4; Isa 57:15; 1 Cor 8:4-6*

(7) *Job 33:4; Rom 15:19; Rev 1:8; 17-18*

(8) *John 1:1-2; 8:58; 10:30; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor 8:6*

(9) *Mark 12:29*

(10) *Ex 12:12; 20:3; 23:13; 1 Cor 8:4; 1 Thess 1:9*

(11) *Psalm 90:2; Isa 9:6; 40:28; Daniel 4:34*

(12) *John 1:14; 3:16-18; 1 John 4:9*

(13) *Luke 11:13; John 15:26; 20:22; Rom 8:9; Eph 4:30*

(14) *Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14*

(15) *John 3:18; Rom 10:9; 1 John 5:10*

(16) *John 1:1-14*

(17) *John 8:58; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:1-5*

(18) *John 10:30; 11:35; Heb 2:17-18; 4:15*

(19) *Phil 2:5-11; Heb 10:5-7; Rev 1:17-18*

(20) *1 Cor 8:6*

(21) *Acts 2:36; 1 Tim 2:5*

(22) *1 Cor 15:1-5*

(23) *Acts 1:9-11; Heb 10:12*

(24) *2 Thess 1:5-10; 2 Tim 4:1*

(25) *John 5:29; Acts 24:15*

(26) *Matt 12:36; 16:27*

(27) *Psalm 62:12; Isaiah 3:10; 2 Cor 5:10*

(28) *John 3:18; Rom 10:9; 1 John 5:10*

The Heidelberg Catechism

The Heidelberg Catechism was first published in Heidelberg, Germany in 1563 by several preachers and teachers of the Protestant Reformation (primarily Zacharias Ursinus).¹ It was written as a tool to instruct Christians in the basics of the faith, which explains the question and answer format (totaling 129 Q/A's). Eventually, the catechism was divided into fifty-two sections so that it could be studied over the course of one year. These divisions are called "Lord's Days" because many Reformed churches had (and still have) a second service on Sunday during which the main truths of the faith were systematically taught using this catechism.

The Heidelberg Catechism's basic structure follows that of the epistle of Romans: guilt, grace, and gratitude or sin, salvation, and service. After the introduction (Q/A 1), the catechism teaches us what the Bible says about sin, depravity, and God's justice. Then, in the middle and largest part of the catechism, we learn about grace and salvation. Here we are told who Jesus is and what he has done to save sinners. The second part of the Catechism also gives a short commentary on the Apostles' Creed and a discussion about the two sacraments. The last part of the catechism has to do with gratitude or Christian service. Christians obey God's law (the Ten Commandments which the catechism expounds) not to be justified, but because they are justified. Christian obedience is a way for us to say thanks to God for his grace in Christ. The catechism also comments on the Lord's Prayer in this final section.

The Heidelberg Catechism is aimed at training the Christian in the essentials of the faith: we learn the meaning of the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer when we study the Heidelberg Catechism. These main parts of the faith have been highlighted since the days of the ancient church. This catechism is a warm and personal statement of faith which has been translated into many different languages over the years. Because the catechism is as biblical and practical as it is, many Reformed churches around the world still teach and preach through these truths weekly. After reading the Heidelberg Catechism no one can honestly say the doctrine of the Protestant Reformation is dry, dull, or dead. In the words of one Reformed theologian, the Heidelberg Catechism is a "practical handbook of theology."

(1) Though debated by some historians, Caspar Olevian may have had a hand in writing it as well.

Your Only Comfort

Lord's Day 1

1 Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?

A. That I am not my own,¹ but belong body and soul, in life and in death—² to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.³ He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood,⁴ and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil.⁵ He also watches over me in such a way⁶ that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven:⁷ in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.⁸ Because I belong to him, Christ, by

his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life⁹ and makes me whole-heartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.¹⁰

(1) 1 Cor 6:19-20 (2) Rom 14:7-9 (3) 1 Cor 3:23; Titus 2:14 (4) 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:2
(5) John 8:34-36; Heb 2:14-15; 1 John 3:1-11 (6) John 6:39-40; 10:27-30; 2 Thess 3:3; 1 Peter 1:5
(7) Matt 10:29-31; Luke 21:16-18 (8) Rom 8:28 (9) Rom 8:15-16; 2 Cor 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14
(10) Rom 8:1-17

2 Q. What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

A. Three things:¹ first, how great my sin and misery are;² second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;³ third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.⁴

(1) Luke 24:46-47; Rom 7:24-25; 1 Cor 6:11; Titus 3:3-7 (2) John 9:41; 15:22; Rom 3:9-10; 1 John 1:10 (3) John 17:3; Acts 4:12; 10:43; Gal 3:13 (4) Matt 5:16; Rom 6:13; Eph 5:8-11; Col 3:17; 2 Tim 2:15; 1 Peter 2:9-10

Part I: Man's Misery (LD 2 - 4)

Lord's Day 2

3 Q. How do you come to know your misery?

A. The law of God tells me.¹

(1) Rom 3:20; 7:7-25

4 Q. What does God's law require of us?

A. Christ teaches us this in summary in Matthew 22¹– You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.² This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.³ On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

(1) Matt 22:37-40; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27 (2) Deut 6:5 (3) Lev 19:18; Gal 5:14

5 Q. Can you live up to all this perfectly?

A. No.¹ I have a natural tendency to hate God and my neighbor.²

(1) Rom 3:9-20, 23; 1 John 1:8, 10 (2) Gen 6:5; 8:21; Jer 17:9; Rom 7:23-24; 8:7; Eph 2:1-3; Titus 3:3

The Belgic Confession

INTRODUCTION

The Belgic Confession of Faith gets its name from the area in which it was written, namely, modern day Belgium. Guido de Bres, a Dutch preacher during the Reformation in the 16th century, wrote this confession in 1561 to convince the Roman Catholic Church that Protestants (Christians who “protested” the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church) were not a cult or a sect, but orthodox Christians who held to the essential teachings of the biblical faith. After de Bres’ death as a martyr in 1567, many Reformed Protestant churches adopted this statement and in 1618-19 the Reformed churches of Holland officially adopted it as their statement of faith at the Synod of Dort.¹ Since then, many Reformed churches around the world have adopted this confession as a summary of what they believe.

The Belgic Confession follows a definite order. It discusses (roughly in this order) the Triune God, the Bible, the creation and fall of man, salvation that comes by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, the doctrine of the Christian church, the sacraments (baptism and the Lord’s Supper), the civil government, and the last judgment. In all, there are 37 short sections or “articles” that discuss these points of Christian doctrine.

This confession is a personal yet corporate (churchly) statement of what we believe as Christians; it starts with the declaration, “We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth!” The Belgic Confession is an objective statement that explains what “we all believe” as those who are members of the historic Christian church. As Guido de Bres said so well, Christians who wholeheartedly believe these truths would “offer their backs to whips, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to fire” rather than deny these great doctrines of the Christian faith. The Belgic Confession is truly a statement of faith that unites believers around the core truths of Christianity.

(1) A synod is something like a church council; many leaders from many churches get together to pray and discuss the matters of the church. A biblical example can be found in Acts 15, which is sometimes called “the Jerusalem Council.” Later in this booklet we will learn a bit more about the Synod of Dort when we introduce the Canons of Dort.

God and His Revelation in the Scriptures (Articles 1-7)

Article 1

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth¹ that there is one only simple and spiritual Being,² which we call God;³ and that He is eternal,⁴ incomprehensible,⁵ invisible,⁶ immutable,⁷ infinite,⁸ almighty,⁹ perfectly wise,¹⁰ just,¹¹ good,¹² and the overflowing fountain of all good.¹³

(1) Rom 10:10 (2) John 4:24 (3) Deut 6:4; 1 Cor 8:4, 6; 1 Tim 2:5 (4) Psalm 90:2 (5) Rom 11:33 (6) Col 1:15; 1 Tim 6:16 (7) Jas 1:17 (8) 1 Kings 8:27; Jer 23:24 (9) Gen 17:1; Matt 19:26; Rev 1:8 (10) Rom 16:27 (11) Rom 3:25-26; Rom 9:14; Rev 16:5, 7 (12) Matt 19:17 (13) Jas 1:17

Article 2

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,¹ wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to see clearly the invisible things of God, even his everlasting power and divinity, as the apostle Paul says (Rom 1:20). All which things are sufficient to convince men and leave them without excuse. Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word,² that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation.

(1) *Psalm 19:1-4* (2) *Psalm 19:7, 8; 1 Cor 1:18-21*

Article 3

THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD

We confess that this Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of man, but that men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), as the apostle Peter says; 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;¹ and He Himself wrote with His own finger the two tables of the law.² Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.³

(1) *Ex 34:27; Psalm 102:18; Rev 1:11,19* (2) *Ex 31: 18* (3) *2 Tim 3:16*

Article 4

CANONICAL BOOKS OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

We believe that the Holy Scriptures are contained in two books, namely, the Old and the 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, to wit: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; the book of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 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, to wit: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles; the fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul, namely, 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,

Canons of Dort

The Canons of Dort are a set of statements (“canons”) that were written as a response to unbiblical teaching within the Reformed church of Holland in the early 17th century. Some preachers and teachers taught these five points: 1) conditional election, 2) unlimited atonement, 3) partial depravity, 4) resistible grace, and 5) apostasy of true Christians.¹ The Synod of Dort in 1618-19 was called to deal with these errors. The result was a statement of five points that upheld the truths of Reformed doctrine and refuted the errors of the unbiblical teaching. These points are explained in this order in the Canons of Dort: 1) unconditional election, 2) limited/definite atonement, 3) total depravity, 4) irresistible grace, and 5) perseverance/preservation of the saints.²

Some people say it is theological nitpicking to discuss doctrine so meticulously. However, as becomes evident when reading the document, these are significant parts of the Christian faith that need to be discussed in detail. Historic Reformed churches believe that these truths in the Canons of Dort clearly showcase our triune God’s sovereignty in salvation. These truths help Christians believe with more depth and conviction what Psalm 3:8 says, “Salvation belongs to the LORD!”

The Canons of Dort can be summarized as a statement of faith in this way: 1) We believe that before the foundation of the world God chose to save sinners based on his good pleasure alone and not because of anything in them or done by them. 2) We believe that Christ died for his sheep, only those whom the Father chose before the foundation of the world. 3) We believe that by nature humans are born in sin and in bondage to sin; they do not have free will. 4) We believe that God’s saving grace is irresistible. 5) We believe that those whom God has chosen, for whom Christ has died, who have been irresistibly changed by grace, will certainly be preserved by God to the end and will never fall away. These points have been called the “Five Points of Calvinism” or “TULIP”, but a careful study will show that neither the Synod of Dort nor any teacher in the Protestant Reformation made up these truths – they are found in the Bible. Because these are important truths, historic Reformed churches hold tightly to these teachings as they seek to glorify God alone for his gracious work of saving sinners from the flames of hell.

(1) These teachers were called the Remonstrants. Today this teaching is best known as Arminian doctrine because one teacher of these points was Jacob Arminius.

(2) These five points are called “points of doctrine” in the Canons of Dort and are divided into smaller articles.

1st Point of Doctrine: Divine Election and Reprobation

Article 1: God’s Right to Condemn All People

As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death,¹ 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: “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be become guilty before God” (Rom

to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh,⁵ so long as they are not seriously converted to God.⁶

(1) James 2:26 (2) Rom 5:11; 2 Cor 1:12 (3) Rom 7:13-24; Phil 3:3 (4) Isaiah 42:3; Matt 12:20 (5) Matt 13:22 (6) Heb 12:29

Article 17: The Salvation of the Infants of Believers

Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with the parents are comprehended,¹ godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom it pleases God to call out of this life in their infancy.²

(1) Gen 17:7; Isaiah 59:21 (2) Acts 2:39; 1 Cor 7:14

Article 18: The Proper Attitude Toward Election and Reprobation

To those who murmur at the free grace of election and just severity of reprobation¹ we answer with the apostle: But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God?² and quote the language of our Savior: Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?³ And therefore, with holy adoration of these mysteries, we exclaim in the words of the apostle: Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.⁴

(1) Job 34:34-37; 40:1-5 (2) Rom 9:20 (3) Matt 20:15 (4) Rom 11:33-36

Rejection of the Errors - 1

The true doctrine concerning election and reprobation having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

PARAGRAPH 1

Who teach: That the will of God to save those who would believe and would persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in God's Word.

Refutation: For these deceive the simple and plainly contradict the Scriptures, which declare that God will not only save those who will believe, but that He has also from eternity chosen certain particular persons to whom, above others, He will grant, in time, both faith in Christ and perseverance; as it is written: "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world" (John 17:6). "And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). And: "just as He chose us in Him

Harmony of the Confessions:

The Three Forms of Unity

Heidelberg Catechism		Belgic Confession Article(s)	Canons of Dort, Head: and Article(s)
Lord's Day	Q+A		
1	1		1:12-14; 1:6-7; 3/4:11 5:8-12; 5:5
	2		1:1-4
2	3		3/4:5-6
	4		
	5	14-15	3/4:3-6; 5:2-3
3	6	14	3/4:1
	7	14-15	1:1; 3/4:1-4
	8	14-15, 24	3/4:3-4
4	9	14-16	
	10	15, 37	
	11	16-17, 20	
5	12	20	
	13	14	
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6	16	18-21	
	17	19	
	18	10, 18-21	
	19	2-7	
7	20	22	
	21	23-24	
	22	7	
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8	24	8-9	
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9	26	12-13	
10	27	13	
	28	12-13	

Scripture Reference Index
for the Creeds and Confessions

**Scripture
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**for the Creeds
and Confes-
sions**

Legend:

- AP Apostles Creed,
NC Nicene Creed,
AT Athanasian Creed,
HC Heidelberg Catechism,
(Q+A number),
BC Belgic Confession,
(Article Number),
CD Canons of Dort,
(Head:Article num-
ber),
RE Rejection of Errors (in
the Canons of Dort).

Genesis

- 1-2 HC 26
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1:1-2 AT 8; HC 53
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- 15:6 HC 60
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Notes:
