

THE KING'S CONGREGATION

*Jesus Christ ... the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords ... 1 Timothy 5:14-15
I will declare Thy Name to My brethren; In the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise. Hebrews 2:12*

CONFESSION OF FAITH

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ARTICLE I: INTRODUCTION

1. “*Who do the crowds say that I am? . . . But who do you say that I am?*” (Luke 9:18, 20). Through these two simple questions, Jesus made His disciples articulate in their own words, in the midst of wide spread confusion and wrong opinion, the truth He had revealed to them, and He made them do so with specificity sufficient to distinguish the truth from all existing false opinion. This is confessionalism, and the risen and ascended Jesus has continued this process with His disciples down through the centuries. Through false philosophies arising without and heresies arising within, Christ has ever forced His Church to search His Word anew and articulate His truth with new breadth and depth sufficient to affirm the truth and expose the lie. Though confessing the faith involves fallible men, it is not a man-made process. It is God’s own way of bringing His people to maturity and overcoming the lies of Satan and unregenerate humanity. It has never been enough for God’s people to affirm His Word—God has always required them to articulate *what His Word means*, and then to live it out in the face of a hostile, unbelieving world. Further, it has never been enough for God’s people to rest on the faithful confession of their forebears in the faith, which though sufficient to overcome the lies of an earlier day may be insufficient to expose and defeat the particular heresies and false philosophies of the present day. Finally, faithful confession must be stated not only among faithful disciples who agree, but trumpeted within the Church catholic and among the surrounding culture. Faithful confession often carries a cost within and without the covenant community as Peter, after his faithful confession, would learn when he followed Jesus to His trial and denied Him, and later when he was martyred. Martin Luther, a saint who understood the importance and cost of faithful confession, said it well:

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every part of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, then I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Him. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all battlefields besides is merely flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

With this understanding and in this spirit, we make the following confession. We seek to stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before—we add our “amen” to their faithful confessions and at the same time seek to confess the faith with greater clarity and specificity, particularly regarding false philosophies, heresies, and sub-biblical teachings of our own day. In this endeavor, may God help us.

2. Our confession of faith points to the heart of the Christian faith and to some of our distinctives as a particular body of believers. As such, this confession does not necessarily define the boundaries of our fellowship. Some Christians will differ with some of what is set forth herein. These Christians are nevertheless welcome to worship the Lord together with us. Our basis for unity and communion is a biblical confession of the lordship of Jesus Christ, and the absence of a hardened, sinful lifestyle.

3. This confession of faith does represent the doctrinal understanding of the eldership of The King’s Congregation, and it is our intention that the teaching and preaching at The King’s Congregation reflect this understanding. Procedural standards for our church government can be found in our Constitution.

4. As a body of reformational evangelicals, we seek to display our unity in truth with other faithful churches, not only in the present, but also with the historic Christian church throughout the centuries. Although not included here, we are also in essential agreement with the historic confessions of the Reformation, including the Synod of Dordt, the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism (together known as the Three Forms of Unity), the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646, and the London Baptist Confession of 1689.

ARTICLE II. HISTORIC CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS

5. Together with the historic church, we confess the following:

The Apostles' Creed (AD 2nd century)

6. We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin, Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day He rose again 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.

We 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. Amen.

Nicene Creed Constantinople (AD 381)

7. We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father

before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the virgin, Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into Heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets.

And we believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church; acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Definition of Chalcedon (AD 451)

8. Following, then, the holy fathers, we unite in teaching all men to confess the one and same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and in humanity; truly God and truly man, with a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father according to His deity, and consubstantial with us according to the humanity; like us in all respects, sin only excepted. Before the ages He was begotten of the Father, according to the deity, and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, He was born of Mary the virgin, who is Godbearer according to His humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures; without confusing them, without interchanging them, without dividing them, and without separating them; the distinction of natures by no means taken away by the union, but the properties of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one subsistence; not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as from the beginning the prophets have declared concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the symbol of the fathers has handed down to us.

A Westminster Creed¹

9. We believe man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

We believe that the word of God, which in written form consists of the scriptures of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, is self-authenticating and infallible; that it is the only ultimate authority for faith and life, thus directing us how we may glorify and enjoy God.

We believe God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; that there is but one true and living God; that there are three persons in the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

We believe God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass; that God made all things of nothing, by the word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good; and that God

¹ Based on the 17th century Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

preserves and governs all His creatures and all their actions. We believe our first parents, though created in God's image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, sinned against God, by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; and that their fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

We believe God determined, out of His mere good pleasure, to deliver His elect out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer. We believe the only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continues to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever. We believe Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king. We believe Christ as our Redeemer underwent the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, the cursed death of the cross, burial, and continued under the power of death for a time; He rose again from the dead on the third day, ascended up into heaven, sits at the right hand of God, the Father, and is coming to judge the world at the last day.

We believe we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit; We believe God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, and repentance unto life to escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin; We believe by His free grace we are effectually called, justified, and sanctified, and gathered into the visible church, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation; We believe that we also are given in this life such accompanying benefits as assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

We believe that at death, we are made perfect in holiness, and immediately pass into glory; and our bodies, being still united with Christ, rest in their graves, till the resurrection; We believe that at the resurrection, we shall be raised up in glory, openly be acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

A Modern Statement

10. *We believe* the Bible to be the only inerrant Word of God. It is our only ultimate and infallible authority for faith and practice.

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three Persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Lord God is omnipotent; He is the Almighty. He is omnipresent—entirely present throughout all creation while not limited by it. He is omniscient, with nothing at all hidden from His sight, whether past, present, or future. In all things He is limited by nothing other than His own nature and character. He is holy, righteous, good, severe, loving, and full of mercy. He created the heavens and earth, and everything in them, in the space of six ordinary days, and all very good. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Governor of everything that has been made.

We believe in the true deity and full humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

We believe in the full deity of the Holy Spirit, acknowledging Him together with the Father and the Son in the works of creation and redemption.

We believe that because of Adam's sin all mankind is in rebellion against God. For the salvation of such lost and sinful men, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary.

We believe that salvation is by grace through faith alone, and that faith without works is dead.

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and lost; those who are saved to the resurrection of life, and those who are lost to the resurrection of damnation. We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE III: CREATION²

The Creator-Creature Distinction

11. *We believe* that God exists uniquely, being separate from the universe, as well as being independent of any external conditions or limitations which characterize the existence and life of everything in the universe.

We deny that all being is one, that there are no fundamental distinctions in reality, and that God is somehow identical with what is opposite of Him.

We deny that God is part of or correlative to the world, that God must exist under all the same conditions or restrictions as any other thing which exists, and that history or the world process exists within God as part of His own development.

We deny that there is any thing which exists as an intermediate kind of entity between the Creator and the creation, being neither fully divine nor fully creature.

God's Ultimacy

12. *We believe* that God is a personal, sovereign, transcendent, and triune Spirit; He alone is infinite, self-sufficient, unchanging, and eternal.

We deny that God is a secondary, created, developing or dependent being.

We deny that God is a being composed of physical matter, regardless of how refined matter is construed to be.

We deny that the act of creation changed the being of God, added anything to His perfections, or altered the internal relations among the persons of the Trinity.

We deny that God's eternal plan, purpose or decree of creation is inseparable from the execution of that plan or that any created thing was brought into actual existence from all eternity.

We deny that anything apart from God is equally ultimate with Him, and that any created thing has in itself the abilities or prerogatives of God.

We deny that the ideas, forms, essences, concepts, or ideals of things can exist of themselves or have existed eternally apart from God.

We deny that matter, the physical universe, angels, and souls can exist of themselves or have existed eternally.

² Adapted from "A Reformed Confession Regarding Creation," by Greg L. Bahnsen (Draft 3, May 18, 1994).

We deny any view which maintains or implies that any reality distinct from God is not dependent upon His creative will and sovereign providence.

Creation from Nothing

13. *We believe* that according to His wise plan and simply by His all-powerful act of speaking, God created from nothing, and as completely distinct from Himself, every finite thing which exists, whether physical or spiritual, and that all are dependent upon His will, His power, and His providence.

We deny that the opening words of Genesis 1 are a dependent clause, speaking of "when God began to create," rather than a declaration about the divine act of creation in the absolute and ultimately originative sense.

We deny that any finite thing originally came into being from anything which existed prior to, or was caused to exist by anything in addition to, God's creative word.

We deny that any finite thing is an extension of, emanation from, or was created out of God's own being.

We deny that any finite thing has the ability to create from nothing any separate personal being or any physical object or force.

The Goodness of Creation

14. *We believe* that creation was an act of the sovereign, good pleasure of God, equally that of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the purpose of manifesting His glory, power, wisdom, and goodness; and that all things were created good.

We deny that God was under any compulsion, necessity, or personal need to create the world.

We deny that the Son and Spirit were merely secondary agents of God, the Creator.

We deny that there can be any awareness, understanding, or knowledge of the created realm which does not simultaneously disclose the existence, glorious attributes, and moral character of God the Creator.

We deny that there is any other ultimate source of rational unity or material order in the universe, or that there is any other ultimate source of rational distinction and material diversity, than God the Creator.

We deny that any created agent or person exists ultimately to serve the purposes and glory of anything or anyone within the realm of creation.

We deny that material things are inherently evil, of less value than incorporeal things, or that they tend to retard or thwart piety, spirituality, or personal sanctification.

We deny that man was created as merely free and neutral, or that at creation he needed grace to counteract the moral encumbrance of a physical body, rather than being made in the image of God as positively righteous.

We deny that sin was essential to or inevitable in finite and dependent reality, or a necessity arising from the nature of the world in general or from the nature of created man in particular.

The Mature Condition of Original Creation

15. *We believe* that the world which God created was at its very beginning invested and inhabited with a rich diversity of already mature, identifiable kinds of things and creatures.

We deny that the finite things in this world which are seen originally developed or were made out of things which are likewise seen.

We deny that the finite, mature, original things which God made came into being by any natural process in addition to direct divine utterance or formation.

We deny that the divine creation of mature living forms precludes subsequent, providentially designed, processes of change, elaboration or variation.

The Historicity of the Creation Account

16. *We believe* that the account of creation in the first chapter of Genesis is straightforward, accurate, and historical, showing the origin of all things including the human race, whereas the more specific focus of the account in chapter two of Genesis is the history of the first man and woman.

We deny that the use of literary or poetic structure or devices in Scripture implies a departure from true history or physical reality.

We deny that the realm of natural scientific truth and the realm of religious truth speak of utterly different dimensions of reality, or that they are completely isolated, unrelated or independent of each other.

We deny that the first chapter of Genesis is saga or myth.

We deny that the creation account in Genesis 2 contradicts the account found in the first chapter.

We deny that the creation account in Genesis 2 explains, implies, or justifies the view that the events of creation, in part or whole, which are narrated in the first chapter took place by means of the normal, prevailing or natural processes of divine providence which are operative throughout subsequent history.

The Days of the Creation Week

17. *We believe* that the numerically sequential days of the creation week in Genesis 1, consisting of an evening and a morning, were the very first chronological days of genuine history, of the same general duration of days in a conventionally understood week, and that step by step through these days God made the heavens and earth a well ordered cosmos, inhabitable for man, after which God ceased His work of physical creation.

We deny that the "days" of Genesis 1 were ages or long periods of time.

We deny that the six days of creation in Genesis 1 represent a reconstruction of the world subsequent to God's original act of creation and a catastrophe which befell the world.

We deny that ages or long periods of time intervened between the separate days mentioned in the creation week of Genesis 1.

We deny that the days of the creation week in Genesis 1 are merely a literary figure of speech or poetic device providing a pedagogical framework for affirming that God created all things.

We deny that believers may, in a faithful handling of God's word, espouse non-chronological views of the days mentioned in Genesis 1 out of a desire to escape the difficulties which might exist between Genesis 1 and the alleged findings of natural science.

We deny that the diversity, order, harmony and inhabitable quality of the world can be attributed to any inherent features or forces within the world itself, or to any other factor but the resplendent wisdom and supreme power of God Himself.

Man's Uniqueness and Supremacy Over the Animals

18. *We believe* that man was immediately and instantaneously created by a special engagement of the Triune counsel, not after the "kind" of any animal, but as the very image of the uncreated God Himself.

We deny that man evolved over long ages through the continuous development of forces resident in the physical world.

We deny that the "dust" from which man was formed, and which was lifeless prior to the divine "in-breathing," was any more organic or indicative of the animal realm than the "dust" to which he returns at death.

We deny that the human race has any animal parentage or biological, developmental ancestry among the lower animals.

We deny that man's unique dignity, dominion, moral character or spirituality can be accounted for in terms of any affinities to the physiology, anatomy, historical background or behavioral conditioning of animals.

The Historic and Moral Significance of Our First Parents

19. *We believe* that Adam and Eve were historical figures immediately created by God, equally as His image, with divine mandates for subduing the world, marriage, labor and sabbath rest.

We deny that Scripture or theological consistency permits us to reject the historicity of the first Adam's immediate creation, while upholding the historicity of the Last Adam's miraculous resurrection.

We deny that a set of human-like creatures, after a long period of evolutionary biological development, were spiritually made into or invested with the image of God.

We deny that the first man and first woman were created simultaneously or with equal authority with respect to each other.

We deny that the status and privilege of being made as God's image applies more to man than to woman, that man has higher spiritual value than woman, and that man is more fully human than woman.

We deny that animals and the vegetative world have the same value, dignity, or rights as man created as the image of God with dominion over the lower creation.

We deny that man's dominion over the lower creation permits him to abuse anything therein according to his own unrestrained desire, in any way contrary to the ends for which God ordained it to be used, and in any fashion other than as a husbandman seeking the cultivation of all the creation to the glory of God.

We deny that man is required or allowed to work perpetually, without entering into God's

ordained, weekly sabbaths of physically resting in the Lord, offering Him consecrated worship, and enjoying Him and His people.

We deny that the institution of marriage is not original to mankind, but evolved historically for cultural or sociological reasons.

The Importance of the Doctrine of Creation

20. *We believe* that all devout, faithful, and biblically-based theology presupposes, and that the very gospel message of salvation must be presented within the theological context of the indispensable and foundational truth that God created the heavens and the earth.

We deny that we may know God in any other way but self-consciously as creatures, and that we may know God in any way, either in committed belief or hypothetical abstraction, which disregards that He is our Creator and the Creator of all things.

We deny that any Christian doctrine is properly conceived or faithfully set forth which contradicts, compromises or ignores the biblical teaching about creation.

We deny that the world or any aspect thereof may be correctly understood, or that any intelligible and morally appropriate use and application may be made of such knowledge, apart from the all-embracing, presupposed, theological worldview which affirms God the Creator, based on God's own, ultimately authoritative, self-revelation.

The Worship Due the Creator

21. *We believe* that a faithful understanding of the glorious biblical truth that God created all things makes it morally incumbent upon all men, and should incite them, to reverence Almighty God and worship Him as worthy of all praise, and that this is more especially true for those who enjoy the grace of re-creation after the image of God, our Redeemer.

We deny that anything or anyone may be worshiped or venerated except the creator God, through Christ Jesus, the only mediator between God and man, and deny that this worship may be guided or enhanced by any human imagination, direction or authority, which is not prescribed by God's own revealed will.

We deny that God's original work of creation ended His involvement with, or intrusion into, the world, that there is no need for or spiritual reality of re-creation, and that history has any other end than a new creation of God wherein righteousness dwells.

ARTICLE IV: KINGDOM

The Centrality of the Kingdom

22. *We believe* that the central theme of the Bible is the Kingdom of God. The Bible is the true story of the Almighty Triune God and His glorious plan for a Kingdom on earth, reflective of heaven, brought to fruition through Man, His image-bearer; the story of how, in God's mysterious and wonderful providence, Satan destroyed God's Kingdom in its infancy by leading Man into sin, death, and slavery, and by using fallen man to build Satan's kingdom in the earth; the story of how God the Son resurrected God's Kingdom by destroying the works of the devil—by taking to Himself full humanity, giving His life as a propitiation for sin, and

triumphing over death and Satan in His bodily resurrection from the dead and ascension to the throne of God in heaven; the story of how the Son of God, by and through His Spirit, applies and works out the implications of His great triumph, creating a new race of regenerate humanity, renewing the earth, and ultimately offering up to God the Father a perfected and glorified Kingdom, just as God intended from the beginning in His mysterious and wonderful providence.

We deny that the Kingdom of God is a secondary biblical doctrine.

We deny that a full understanding of the biblical doctrine of the Kingdom of God is necessary for salvation.

We deny that a believer can have a sub-biblical view of the Kingdom of God, relating as it does to God's original creation purposes and to the person and work of Christ, without being negatively affected in their Christian life.

God's Original Plan

23. *We believe* that the Kingdom of God in its broadest and most basic sense is the entire, glorious world-order which God originally intended for man and the earth. Its basic elements are a King (God) with loyal vice-regents and subjects (Adam and mankind) dwelling in a realm (the earth) under the King's rule (His Word), to the end that God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven. The Kingdom of God is the glorious world-order that would have resulted had Adam not sinned, but rather obeyed God and carried out His dominion mandate to fill the earth and bring it and mankind to full fruitfulness and glory.

We deny that God's original plan was for man and the earth to remain in a perpetual state of simplicity and undevelopment as is often conceived in the naturalistic, evolutionary myth of the noble savage.

We deny that Adam's and earth's original perfection (flawlessness) in holiness and blessedness means that they were also perfect (fully mature and developed) in fruitfulness and glory.

Christ, the Last Adam

24. *We believe* the Kingdom of God is also that which Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, came to establish. But unlike the first Adam, the Last Adam bore the burden of establishing the Kingdom in a cursed earth inhabited by a hostile kingdom of fallen men, slaves of sin and death, held captive by the devil to do his will. Thus, the messianic Kingdom of Jesus Christ involves a strong element of holy war not present in the kingdom-task assigned to the first Adam.

25. *We believe* that to establish the Kingdom of God, it was necessary for Christ to destroy the works of the devil, who through his lies and deceit murdered the first Adam, and with him mankind, and took them captive to do his will and establish his kingdom. Christ destroyed the works of the devil by becoming the Prophet, Priest, and King of a new race of regenerate humanity. As Prophet, Christ brings truth and light to dispel the devil's lies and darkness. As Priest, Christ brings life purchased with His own blood to destroy death. As King, Christ frees slaves of Satan, sin, and death to serve Him in love.

We deny that the Kingdom of God belongs or pertains only to national Israel or any other ethnic group.

We deny that the Kingdom of God and the New Testament Church are unrelated or entail separate divine agendas.

We deny that Christ came to offer a national kingdom to the Jews, and when they rejected it introduced the Church as a separate people of God with different promises, commands, and goals.

We deny that God intends to establish His Kingdom in the future in the form of a political regime of national Israel.

We deny that any ethnic people, by virtue of their ethnicity, are excluded from or have a lesser interest in the Gospel, the Church, or the Kingdom of God.

26. *We believe* Christ's work was perfect and complete in His ministry, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, and that in them He crushed the Serpent's head and triumphed over the powers of darkness, making a spectacle of them. By His resurrection, Christ was declared the Son of God with Power. Upon His ascension to the Father, Christ was crowned King of kings and Lord of lords and received a Kingdom which shall never end, which extends to the very ends of the earth, and which includes all nations, tribes, and peoples, that they should serve Him. Christ, seated at His Father's right hand, began His messianic reign which shall continue until all His enemies are made a footstool for His feet. During Christ's reign, all men everywhere, including kings and judges of the earth, are commanded to repent, believe the Gospel, and bow the knee to their rightful King. Though the Kingdom began as small and as apparently insignificant as a mustard seed, it will grow to dominate the garden; though it began as a small stone, it will grow to be a mountain which fills the whole earth. Prior to His return, Christ with the Sword of His mouth, the Word of God, shall conquer a vast multitude which no man can number. These, through faith and repentance, own their King and receive from Him eternal life—pardon for their treason, deliverance from the penalty of death, a seat at the King's table, and a commission in His army. Those men and nations who harden their hearts and refuse their rightful King, Christ breaks with a rod of iron—sovereignly administered historical judgments in the form of war, economic distress, political unrest, "natural" disasters—beginning with the judgment on apostate Jerusalem which Christ effected through the Legions of Rome in 70 A.D. When Christ has abolished all rule, power, and authority, He will return and abolish the last enemy, death, at which time those who are alive will be changed from perishable to imperishable and the dead will be raised imperishable. The righteous will participate in a resurrection of life and glory, and unrighteous in a resurrection of damnation. Christ will then present a perfected Kingdom, a renewed earth, and a saved world to the Father.

We deny that the inauguration of the Kingdom of God or the placing of Christ's enemies under His feet awaits Christ's return.

We deny that the Kingdom is established in full form instantaneously.

We deny that the Kingdom consists of a military regime imposed on an unwilling world.

We deny that the Kingdom of God in this age is confined to heaven, that it is the same as or co-extensive with the Church, or that it is limited to the hearts of believers.

We deny that the Kingdom of God is dualistic, pertaining only to non-material, other-worldly matters.

We deny that the Kingdom's inclusion of and concern with things earthly and human renders the Kingdom "unspiritual" or "carnal."

We deny that the Kingdom is political in its primary focus or in its source of power and

authority.

We deny that during this age, there are two sources of legitimate authority—the Word of God for the Church and “spiritual things,” and the light of nature or general morality for civil government and “carnal things.”

We deny that the presence of a few tares in a field of wheat makes the field a tare field, and that the victory of Christ’s kingdom prior to His return necessarily entails the personal regeneration of every living individual.

We deny that a period of years, whether seven, one-thousand, or some other amount, intervenes between Christ’s return and the delivering up of the Kingdom to the Father.

We deny that the final resurrection has already occurred or that it is merely “spiritual” in the sense of not involving physical bodies or the actual abolishment of physical death.

The Church’s Role

27. *We believe* that believers in this age, being one with Christ and comprising His body and bride, the Church, are spiritually seated with Him in heaven and participate in His reign, holy war, and the advancement of His Kingdom. Christ’s Great Commission is a claim of kingly right and authority over the earth and all nations and peoples in it pursuant His Father gift, as well as a commission for His Church to make that which is already true legally, true practically and visibly. The Church participates in Christ’s present reign and carries out her Commission by rendering true worship to God, living holy lives, proclaiming the gospel, baptizing, and teaching the nations to observe all that Christ, the King, has commanded. The offensive weapons of Kingdom warfare are the Word of God, prayer, and worship which are mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

We deny that Christ establishes His Kingdom directly while His Church looks on as spectators.

We deny that spiritual warfare pertains only to the individual believer’s inward struggle for personal sanctification against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We deny that the primary means of advancing the Kingdom are political or governmental activities.

We deny that there is any neutral ground in any sphere between Christ and His Kingdom on the one hand, and Satan and the kingdom of unregenerate man on the other.

The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament

28. *We believe* that though the inauguration of the messianic Kingdom of God awaited the first advent of Christ, the Kingdom existed in an anticipatory and typological way in the Old Testament period. God, through His providence and grace, always enabled His people by faith to see Christ and His Kingdom from afar and to experience some of their blessing and warfare. The Old Testament saints by faith looked forward to Christ and His Kingdom and through faith enjoyed forgiveness of sins, communion with God, and His providential blessing. The Old Testament saints also experienced conflict with the opposing kingdom of Satan and unregenerate man. God’s redeeming and freeing of Israel from Egyptian slavery through Moses and holy war,

God's bringing Israel out in the Exodus and constituting them as His people and His army, His bringing them into the land of Canaan and waging holy war through Joshua and the Israelites against the hostile inhabitants of the land, and His establishing of the kingdom of Israel in power and glory through David and Solomon, are all true historical events and yet are also anticipatory pictures of Christ (the greater Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon), His Kingdom, and their exploits.

We deny that the Old Testament saints were saved through a different faith or held to a different hope than New Testament saints, except that New Testament saints have the benefit of the accomplished work of Christ.

ARTICLE V: COVENANT

The Covenantal Headship of the First Adam and the Last Adam

29. *We believe* that God created man, and indeed the whole earth and all it contains, to relate to Him in covenant. A covenant is a personal relationship, sovereignly created and administered, with attendant blessings and curses. God created Adam as the covenant head of the earth and all it contained, including the entire human race. As covenant head, Adam acted not only on his own behalf, but also on behalf of all he represented. Thus, when he sinned against God, the human race sinned, and when God cursed Adam, He cursed the whole earthly creation. Likewise, Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, acted not only on his own behalf, but also on behalf of a new (regenerate) human race and the entire earthly creation. His perfect work as the Last Adam will ultimately result in the renewal and glorification of the earth and humanity.

The Nature of God's Covenant

30. *We believe* that God's covenant with man is a gracious covenant from beginning to end. God created Adam, and later Eve from Adam, in His image in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. God blessed Adam and Eve apart from any works they had done. God placed Adam, later to be joined by his wife, Eve, in the Garden of Eden and commanded Adam to tend and guard it. The Garden was a sanctuary prepared by God where He graciously communed with Adam and Eve apart from any works they had done. Among the plants of the Garden, God placed two sacramental trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God freely gave Adam, and later Eve, to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Life apart from any works they had done. By eating of the Tree as God commanded, man confessed that God alone has life in and of Himself, and that man's life is a gift from God. Thus, man's first step in fulfilling God's command to fill, subdue, and rule over the earth was to serve and commune with God in His garden sanctuary. By communing with God and serving Him faithfully as priest and prophet, Adam was to grow in wisdom and maturity until God glorified him and invested him with kingly office as signified by granting him to eat of the tree of kingly rule, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. By abstaining from this Tree and eating of it only when God permitted, Adam would confess that God alone has wisdom, true discernment between good and evil, which is necessary for kingly rule, that man receives wisdom and exercises authority only by serving God in submission to His Word, and that mature, godly wisdom is not present at birth, even in a flawless man, but is perfected over time by honoring God and submitting to His word.

We deny that it is possible for man to "merit" or "earn," in the full sense of those words,

anything from God. By virtue of who God is and who man is, man owes God full, affirmative, perfect obedience, love, and honor. Thus, it is impossible for man to do more than he ought so that God owes him something in return. God's covenant whereby He promised to reward Adam with glory for sustained, perfect faithfulness was not a covenant of "works" (in the normal sense of that word), but a covenant of grace. God's sending of His Son to take on flesh and become the Last Adam, pay for His people's sin, and conquer where the first Adam was defeated is greater grace—grace extended not only to finite creatures, but to sinners and enemies—but God's covenantal dealings with man are all of grace from first to last. The glorification which Adam stood to gain, and which the Last Adam did gain for Himself and His people, is what the Bible often calls "eternal life." Eternal life does not primarily refer to perpetuity of life, although it includes that, but to the nature and quality of life that Jesus attained to upon His resurrection—the glorified life of the Heavenly Man which is suited to dwelling in the presence of God.

We deny that anyone, including Jesus and Adam before his fall, pleased God apart from faith. We acknowledge that Jesus and Adam pre-fall did not need faith in a substitutionary sacrifice and redeemer.

The First Adam's Covenantal Unfaithfulness and God's Curse

31. *We believe* that by eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil against God's command, Adam grasped for kingly office before God had conferred it, thus declaring his autonomy from God and deciding good and evil for himself. As a result of Adam's sin, God justly cursed him and all he represented, judicially consigning the human race to slavery of Satan, sin, and death, and the earthly creation to corruption and futility. As a result of his sin, man lost God's image in the strictest sense (true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness), was corrupted in his entire being, and became wholly incapable of pleasing God in any respect.

The Renewal of God's Covenant in and through the Last Adam

32. *We believe* that after the fall of the first Adam, even as soon as God pronounced the curse, He also out of sheer, over-abounding grace, promised another Adam, the Seed of the Woman, who would come and be bruised by Satan but in turn would crush Satan, and who would keep God's covenant and succeed where the first Adam failed, thus delivering His people from Satan, sin, and death. Until the Last Adam came, God graciously called men into personal, covenantal relationship with Him, pointing them forward to the Last Adam and saving them through faith alone. During this period, God entered into a progressive series of covenants with His people, all of which ministered His grace to them by faith and through them to the earth. These covenants progressively pointed men to and instructed them regarding the coming Last Adam and the new creation that would come to pass through Him.

We deny that the various covenants spoken of in Scripture are essentially different or can be rightly set in opposition to one another. They all are born of God's grace and communicate the same basic message, although they may administer God's grace to His people under different regulations and formalities. In the Mosaic Covenant (which the New Testament often refers to as the "Old Covenant"), God redeemed and delivered His people by sheer grace, apart from anything they had done. He then commanded them to trust and love Him, and He gave them

commandments to inform their obedience - - show them how to abide in His love and to express their faith and love in return. God commanded them, when they sinned, to return to Him in faith through repentance and substitutionary blood sacrifice which pointed to the Last Adam, the true Passover Lamb of God. This grace-based relationship and message were contained in all of God's covenants and are the essence of the New Testament gospel.

We deny that it was possible to keep any of God's covenants apart from faith. Trusting God, believing His promises, was the heart of all the covenants and always the first duty of God's people.

The Last Adam's Covenantal Faithfulness and the Blessings Thereof

33. *We believe* that Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, succeeded where the first Adam failed. Jesus as a man grew in wisdom and learned obedience, faithfully and perfectly serving God as prophet and priest, even to the point of death on the cross for the sins of His people. God then exalted and glorified Jesus as King of heaven and earth. Jesus attained the perfected (matured) righteousness, glorification, and kingly office the first Adam failed to attain. Through His perfect work as the Last Adam, Jesus not only restores His people to innocent righteousness, but gives them perfected righteousness and glorification, and will ultimately renew and glorify the entire earth and humanity as God originally intended. Jesus inaugurated the New Covenant, which is superior to the Old Covenant in that it is based on Christ's perfect, finished work, whereas the Old Covenant could only anticipate and point forward through types and shadows to that work.

We deny that the New Covenant abolishes either the requirement of sustained covenant faithfulness by God's people or the curses of the Covenant upon those who are unfaithful. Both the blessings and the curses of the New Covenant are intensified over those of the Old Covenant.

We deny that God's requirement of sustained covenant faithfulness is contrary to salvation by grace through faith or the security of the salvation of God's people. God saves His people to the uttermost, and He produces faith and sustained faithfulness in those whom He saves.

We deny that faith and works can rightly be set in opposition to one another. Living faith always produces the fruit of Christian character and good works. The works which are condemned in Scripture are dead works, faithless works.

ARTICLE VI: GOVERNMENT

Introduction

34. *We believe* that God, for the establishment and advancement of His Kingdom, has ordained three basic covenantal units among men—the family, the church, and the community or civil society—each with its own government. The family is foundational to and is the basic unit of church and society. All three governments are essential components of the Kingdom of God, and all are subordinate to the Word of God which assigns to each differing, yet interrelated and co-dependent, spheres of responsibility. The Scriptures and history record the harm and confusion caused when any of the three governments fails to fulfill its God-given responsibilities or asserts an unbiblical independence of or superiority over the others. To fulfill their proper

function, all of these governments are dependent on the grace of God, common or special, working in individuals to bring about biblical self-government. Without such self-government or self-control, no other government can function according to the Word of God. The overarching duty of every individual, family, congregation, and society is to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

We deny that these governments are the result of man's fall into sin, although each now plays an important role in restraining sin.

We deny that the authority of these governments can rightly be set against one another.

We deny that any form of human government can be considered absolute.

Self-government

35.

We believe that a man is saved in truth when in an effectual call the Holy Spirit regenerates him and he consequently submits, in faith, to the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:5). As a follower of Jesus Christ, he seeks to live in submission to His Word.

We deny that Christ can be received as Savior and rejected as Lord (Matt. 7:21).

36. *We believe* that the elect were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to live holy and blameless lives (Eph. 1:4).

We deny that holiness can be defined on the authority of the word of man. Our only standard of holiness is the law of God, found in the Old and New Testaments (2 Tim. 3:16).

37. *We believe* that God will always complete any saving work He has begun. A regenerated man will not fall away from God's work of salvation (Rom. 8:29-31). The basis for this is God's faithfulness and not the faithfulness of the believer (1 Cor. 1:8-9).

We deny that faith in God's sustaining faithfulness is in any way a cushion for sin. A life characterized by sin is inconsistent with assurance of salvation (Rom. 6:1-6; 1 John).

38. *We believe* that a follower of Christ has an obligation to regularly and honestly confess his sins before God (1 Jn. 1:9; Prov. 28:13). In honest confession, the quality of a man's relationship with God is maintained and protected.

We deny that confession of sin is the foundation of the believer's relationship to God. Salvation does not depend on ongoing confession of sin; the joy of salvation does (Ps. 51:10-13).

39. *We believe* that God commands all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel. All unregenerate men therefore have a true obligation to do so (Acts 17:30; 2 Thess. 1:8).

We deny that unregenerate men are unjustly excluded from grace. Because they are dead in their sins, they have no desire for God's grace apart from the quickening influence of that grace (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 8:6-8; 1 Cor. 2:14). They are therefore responsible for remaining in sin.

40. *We believe* that at regeneration God creates each true believer a new man, created to grow in love and good works (Eph. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:17).

We deny that this new man exists alongside the old man inherited from Adam. The old man was crucified in Christ (Rom. 6:1-11; Gal. 2:20). We deny that the crucifixion of the old man eliminates an ongoing struggle against the flesh (Gal. 5:17)

41. *We believe* that God has given to each individual various gifts of varying worth (1 Cor. 12:7-24). Each believer has an obligation to understand accurately what his gifts are, and to put them to work in the service of God (Eph. 4:11-16).

We deny that equality in Christ (Col. 3:10,11) or giftedness, spiritual or natural, nullifies God-assigned roles and stations (Col. 3:12-22; Phil. 2:3).

Family Government

42. *We believe* that God has ordained man as the head of woman and, more particularly, the husband as the head of his wife. The husband is answerable to God for the spiritual state of everyone in his household (Eph. 5:23).

We deny that the hierarchy established by God in the household diminishes in any way the worth of women in the sight of God or their husbands (Gal. 3:28). Righteous men rise up and call their righteous wives blessed (Prov. 31:28).

43. *We believe* that men are responsible to protect their families and to provide for them (1 Tim. 5:8), loving their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). Wives are responsible to minister to their husbands and children (Tit. 2:4), to be homemakers, keeping their homes well-managed and clean (Tit. 2:5).

We deny that reversal or rejection of God's assigned roles to husbands and wives can occur without serious damage to the family and, consequently, to the church and society (Tit. 2:5).

44. *We believe* the prosperity of a household is a gift from God (2 Cor. 9:10-11).

We deny that godly living is an automatic means to wealth and prosperity (Heb. 11:35-38).

45. *We believe* that God blesses in a material way when men honor Him through hard work over a long time, when they are generous with the blessings God has already given, and when they provide for their families and dependents (2 Thess. 3:7-10).

We deny that covetousness and greed can be a means to obtain the blessings God bestows (1 Tim. 6:5).

We believe that believing parents have an obligation before God to provide their children with a godly understanding of the world in which they are growing up. To this end, genuinely Christian education, however administered, is essential (Dt. 6:1-6).

We deny that the civil authority or the church has the obligation to educate our children for their vocational callings. That responsibility belongs to the parents (Eph. 6:4).

46. *We believe* that marriage is ordained by God, and that man has no authority to sever what God has joined together. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). In certain circumstances, divorce and remarriage are permissible, but must be governed in all respects according to the Word of God (Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:12-13).

We deny that compassion for the divorced requires any softening of the biblical teaching on the subject.

Church Government

47. *We believe* that each local gathering of the visible church is to be governed by a plurality of men called elders, each of whom must meet the requirements for church leadership (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4).

We deny that someone can be called by God to such leadership when his life or family is not in order. Seminary training, long experience, and gifts of leadership or communication are no substitute for obedience (1 Sam. 15:22).

48. *We believe* that each local gathering of the visible church is to be served by a plurality of deacons, each of whom must meet the requirements for church service (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

We deny that such service can be rendered properly when a deacon's life does not meet the criteria set by Scripture.

49. *We believe* the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, to be the sole ultimate and infallible authority for faith and practice in the church. The laws of the Old Testament, including the Mosaic code, are normative for Christians today, provided they are understood and applied according to the teaching of the New Testament (Rom. 13:8-10).

We deny that the grace of God in Christ has changed in any way the definition of right and wrong. Rather, the Spirit works love in us to accomplish the righteous requirements of the law (Rom. 8:4).

50. *We believe* a great commission has been given to disciple the nations to Christ. The means for accomplishing this are the rendering of true worship, the living of holy lives, the preaching of the gospel, baptism, and the teaching of obedience to the commandments of Christ, prior to His return (Matt. 28:18-20).

We deny that the church should work as though we are living in the last generation (2 Thess. 2:1-2).

51. *We believe* the Lord commissioned His church to undertake the discipleship of the world (Matt. 28:18-20). The Lord has commanded baptism with water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Baptism with water is therefore a sacrament (or ordinance) of the Christian church, and the elders of the church are responsible to ensure that baptisms are administered in a scriptural fashion, and the proper signification of water baptism preserved and maintained. Water baptism is the initiatory sign of the New Covenant and, in that sense, supercedes circumcision, the initiatory sign of the Old Covenant. At base, both circumcision and baptism signify consecration of the whole person to God, which involves purification from all that defiles and identification with God. That which is consecrated or sanctified (in the formal sense) belongs to God. Although circumcision under the Mosaic administration took on additional national and ceremonial significance, at its inception and always at its heart, circumcision represented entrance to the same gracious, covenant relationship with God as does baptism, with the same blessings—salvation by grace through faith, covenant succession to following generations, and promises of inheritance and dominion—and the same curses. Thus, baptism

should be applied to previously unbaptized adults who make a credible profession of faith, and to the children of believing parents. Christian water baptism identifies one with Christ and therefore with His work—His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension (Rom. 6:3-7)—and its benefits—regeneration (Tit. 3:5), circumcision of the heart (Col. 2:11-12), purification from sin (Acts 22:16), and the baptism and outpouring of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13; Tit. 3:6; Acts 10:44, 47).

We deny that water baptism imparts grace by means of water. God imparts grace to His saints to enable them to obey Him (2 Cor. 9:8), and strengthens them further by grace in that obedience (Heb. 12:14-15). The faithful observance of water baptism constitutes an important part of that obedience, and is therefore an important means of grace.

We deny that baptism is the believer's testimony of his personal conversion experience or "decision to accept Christ."

52. *We believe* the Lord's Supper is a sacrament or ordinance of the Christian church, and that the elders of the church are responsible to ensure that the Lord's Supper is administered in a scriptural fashion, and its proper signification preserved and maintained. The Lord's Supper is the covenant meal of the New Covenant and, in that sense, supercedes Passover, the covenant meal of the Old Covenant. Like Passover, the Lord's Supper signifies participation in Christ, our Passover Lamb, and through Him, communion with God. Whereas baptism signifies initial consecration to and union with God through Christ, the Lord's Supper signifies continuing communion with God through Christ. Baptism (union) and the Lord's Supper (communion) go together and should not be administered to separate groups within the Church. All who have been baptized and who are able to eat solid food should regularly eat at the Lord's Table, as long as they are not under the discipline of God or of God's people (1 Cor. 11:23-26). The Lord's Supper is a participation by faith in Christ (1 Cor. 10:14-17), and so God blesses faithful, and disciplines unfaithful, participation in the Supper (1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:30), just as He blesses faithful, and disciplines unfaithful, participation in Christ (John 15:1-8).

We deny that the Lord's Supper imparts grace by means of the bread and cup. It is, however, a participation in Christ (1 Cor. 10:14-17). God imparts grace to His saints to enable them to obey Him (2 Cor. 9:8), and strengthens them further by grace in that obedience (Heb. 12:14-15). The faithful observance of the Lord's Supper constitutes an important part of that obedience, and is therefore an important means of grace.

We believe baptism in water and the Lord's Supper to be external signs and seals of covenantal, historical, and spiritual realities.

We deny that these sacraments are an automatic means of grace, *ex opere operato*, grace being through faith alone. Any biblical means to build biblical faith is therefore a means of blessing and grace - - especially including water baptism and the Lord's Supper.

53. *We believe* that legitimate modes of water baptism include immersion, pouring, or sprinkling in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:4; Acts 10:44-48; Heb. 9:9-10).

We deny that the scriptural significance of water baptism can be nullified by the mode of application.

54. *We believe* the sign gifts which were apparent in the first-century church were not given as a normative pattern for subsequent generations (1 Cor. 13:8-13), and have now ceased (2 Cor. 12:12).

We deny that a church must manifest such gifts in order to please God in worship (1 Cor. 14:20-22).

We believe that Christians must fellowship in unity with all true Christians, and that we have no right to judge the hearts of fellow servants. If God has accepted someone, we must gladly do the same.

We deny that such fellowship requires joint ministry with those Christians who teach or practice that which is unbiblical or who have a significantly different understanding of God's Word regarding issues central to reformation. Further, we may hold someone to be a Christian, and yet believe them to be unqualified for leadership. The qualifications for leadership differ from those for fellowship (Rom. 14:1-8; 1 Tim. 3:1-7).

Civil Government

55. *We believe* that Christians are to live quiet and peaceful lives, in true submission to the constitutions, laws, and civil magistrates as ordained by God to be His servants (Rom. 13:1-7).

We deny that this submission is absolute. When civil authorities require something forbidden by God, or forbid something required by God, the duty of Christians is to humbly, respectfully, and submissively disobey (Acts 4:19-20).

We believe that Christians are to pray for those authorities that God has placed above them (1 Tim. 2:1-4).

We deny that this prayer should be limited to blessings (Ps. 139:19-24).

56. *We believe* that Christians should be involved in the political process. Christ required His followers to be salt and light in the world, and He did not exclude civil government from that Christian influence (Matt. 5:13-16).

We deny that the power of the gospel is to be found in political involvement. We do not believe civil government to be a savior (2 Cor. 10:3-6), and deny that the church is a political organization.

We believe that in the prohibition of stealing, God has ordained the institution of private property. We believe that the Christian church should teach against theft in all its forms (Ex. 20:15).

We deny that the institution of private property is a human invention. Rather, it is the result of a biblical understanding of God's ordination of private property. But because man is fallen, the institution of private property, like all God-ordained institutions, has been much abused (Eph. 5:5).

57. *We believe* that the root cause of political disregard for the institution of private property is envy and covetousness (Matt. 20:1-16).

We deny that theft can be sanctified, even if it is done in the name of civil justice (Is. 5:20). If the civil magistrate oversteps the boundaries established for him in Scripture, one result can be various forms of theft, including oppressive taxation.

58. *We believe* that the church is to be constituted or incorporated by the Lord Jesus Christ alone, the only head of the Church (Eph. 5:23).

We deny that an unbelieving civil magistrate has the spiritual authority to establish a Christian church, or to prohibit the free exercise of the Christian religion in any way. While the doctrine of the church establishments in a genuinely Christian nation may be defended, we deny that a pluralistic and humanistic civil magistrate may establish or restrict true religion.

59. *We believe* acceptance of civil incorporation would be an acknowledgment that the civil magistrate has the authority to bring a Christian church into existence, and testifies falsely that the church is a creature of the state. Consequently, we believe that the church must maintain a status as an unincorporated church as a matter of conscience.

We deny that the civil magistrate has no authority in religious matters. We recognize that while the civil magistrate has no authority in sacris, in sacred things, he nevertheless has a measure of authority circa sacra, around sacred things. It is therefore lawful for a church, under the authority and headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, to form an association of natural persons, recognized as such by the civil magistrate.

60. *We believe* that churches should accept various burdens and entanglements of civil regulation and taxation only under protest, acknowledging the weight of such tyrannies as a judgment from God upon a disobedient church.

We deny that to receive this chastisement is compromise. The justice of such chastisement is received from the hand of God, but not acknowledged as just or right in the hand of the magistrate.