



Account of Faith

This confession of faith is an expression of and a witness to the churches' agreement in belief. Thus it cannot itself be an object of faith or a compulsory law for faith. As a summary interpretation of Holy Scripture it is grounded in and limited by Scripture. It presupposes the Apostles' Creed as a common confession of Christendom and remains open to the future disclosure of further truth.

The ground and content of our confession is the central event of the rule of God. The predominantly narrative style is in harmony with this. As an account of faith this confession is meant to serve for instruction in the churches, for theological reflection, and for giving witness to the faith to the world. As a lively response of the believing community to God's effectual Word, the confession of faith becomes praise of the mighty acts of God.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

The Apostles' Creed is based on statements of faith of the New Testament, which were summarized in multi-part formulas in the 2nd century and expanded in the 3rd century (e.g. in the "Old Roman Creed"). After further additions and changes, they received their current form in the 5th century.

Part 1

The Establishment of God's Rule

1. God's Revelation in Jesus Christ

God has revealed himself in his Son Jesus Christ and in him has established his rule for the salvation of mankind. Heb 1:1 ff.
Gal 4:4 f.

As the One who came from God, Jesus of Nazareth brought God near to men and men to God: with unique authority he called men back to the living God; he set them free from the bonds of godlessness, forgave their sins, healed the sick, and had fellowship at table with sinners. With his words and deeds the royal rule of God dawned. Mark 1:15
Eph 2:13
John 8:36
Matt 9:10-13

The work of Jesus who came to earth "to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8), was brought to completion in his suffering and dying for all men. In Jesus' vicarious death for the guilt of humanity of all ages, God disclosed himself to us as the One who is love. Mark 10:45
1 Cor 11:23-25
John 3:16
1 John 4:16

In the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, God made the work of reconciliation effectual and raised the crucified one to be the present Lord. God has made him, for us, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). With his resurrection the end of the age has begun. His resurrection gives assurance, to all of us who believe in him, of our resurrection to eternal life. 1 Cor 15:14-22
Acts 2:36
Rom 4:25

As the resurrected One Jesus is exalted to the glory of the Father from which he came. In this exaltation he is Lord not only over his church, but over the whole world as well. Christ's rule is believed and proclaimed by his church; it will be recognized by all men when he comes as the perfecter of the world. John 17:4
Phil 2:5-11

God's saving work in Christ reaches its initial aim in the proclamation by his church of the message of reconciliation. In the ministry of reconciliation, which is performed in the power of the Holy Spirit Christ himself is at work, and he places all the world under the claim of its Creator. The church that proclaims him and lives by his power becomes the sign of God's new world. 2 Cor 5:17-21

2. Man's Sin and His Turning to God

In the encounter with Jesus Christ we are made aware of the evil within us and in the structures of society as sin against God. God's reconciling and judging word lays bare to us the guilt of men as a denial of responsibility before God. Indifference and indolence, fear and self-assurance are expressions of our separation from God. Luke 5:8
Rom 3:22-24

Always at work in evil is the Evil One, God's Adversary who corrupts God's good creation. At the same time, evil issues from the heart of man, who succumbs to temptation and transgresses God's commandment. The doing of evil brings him under the dominion of the Evil One. Hence man is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1), and is estranged from the life that is from God. He is abandoned to the powers and forces that are at enmity with God. Mark 7:20-23
John 8:34

Turning away from God and contempt for his love lead to exploitation, oppression and subjugation of man by men, and also to despairing solitude. The man who wishes to be like God and thinks that he can define good and evil according to his own estimates misses his own destiny. He corrupts God's good creation and threatens its very existence. Gen 3:1-7

Rebellion against God's rule appears not only in morally reprehensible words and deed. It can be actualized also in sacrificial commitment to liberty, peace and justice, to religion, truth and beauty. Any good deed can at the same time be, in relation to God, the most highly refined form of self-justification and self-seeking. In light of the love of God, the mystery of evil is disclosed even in men's "good" and "pious" deeds, and precisely in them, so that no one is right before God, and no one can live without grace.

Rom 10:2-4

Anyone who rejects God's offer of grace and forgiveness remains under the wrath and judgment of God, forfeits eternal life, and imprisons himself in his own willful alienation from God. Unbelief leads to eternal perdition; but whoever accepts God's judgment upon his sins and the offer of grace lays hold upon the eternal life that Christ has secured for us.

Rom 1:18
2 Thess 1:9

God's grace in Christ effects the conversion of man to God. Through faith in Jesus Christ man is made right before God and becomes a child of God. Faith is not a human achievement, but acceptance of God's grace. The believer experiences the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in forgiveness and liberation. Through the working of the Holy Spirit he is born again to a new life with God.

Rom 3:21-29
Rom 8:14-18
Col 1:13
1 John 1:9

3. The New Life from the Holy Spirit

The gospel brings every man – even the religious man – into crisis. It means judgment and renewal for one who turns to salvation in Christ. The Holy Spirit initiates in the believers a new life, whose ground and center is Jesus Christ himself.

John 9:39-41
1 Cor 2:14 f.
Rom 8:1-4
Gal 2:20

The new life from the Holy Spirit takes its form by placing man in new relationship and by transforming his old relationships. It binds man to God and to his people, the church of Jesus Christ, and transforms all interpersonal relationships. The new life is expressed in our heeding God's word, in prayer and in doing the will of God.

1 Cor 12:12 f.
Jas 1:22-25
Mark 12:29-31

The new life is God's gift, which should be preserved in submission and sanctification. It does not save us from afflictions and temptations, from suffering and oppression, from doubts and desires, but it gives us the strength to endure them and to confirm our faith in Jesus Christ. Even wrong choices and failures, errors and defeats cannot separate us from Christ, who remains faithful to us and forgives us our faults. The Holy Spirit is promised to us as our advocate and helper, and through the word of Holy Scripture God speaks to our lives. Bible reading, mutual brotherly counsel, and prayer offer the guidance to us on our way as disciples of Christ. The Christian is on the way, together with the church of Jesus Christ, towards the consummation of God's rule, and he lives even here and now in the liberty of the children of God to which his Lord has liberated him. Joy in the Lord is his strength.

1 Cor 1:30
2 Cor 6:1-10
Ps 32
Rom 8:26-28
John 5:39
1Thess 5:16-18
Gal 5:1
Neh 8:10

4. God's Creation

In our belief in Jesus Christ we acknowledge that God through his word created the world out of nothing. God's original creation is matched by his creative power today, to which the existence of every man bears witness. This world of ours did not come into being of its own accord, but it has its origin and its destiny in the goodness of God, who imparts his life to his handiwork, because he wills not to remain alone, but to have fellowship with men as his creatures.

Gen 1 – 2
Heb 11:3
Rom 4:17
John 1:4
Gen 1:27

In spite of the sins of men, God preserves the world for its redemption. The Christian community lives in the midst of the yet unredeemed world, as Christ is beginning in her the restoration of fallen creation. As children of God, Christians experience in themselves how God is beginning to lift the fate of death and nothingness that rests

Matt 5:45
Acts 14:17
Rom 8:16 ff.
Rom 14:17

upon the world, by bestowing, through the Holy Spirit, liberty and righteousness, peace and joy. Together with the whole creation they yearn for the full and complete redemption that is promised to them.

As the Lord of history God is Lord of all men and nations, all ages and generations. He has given to men the charge, "Subdue the earth and rule over it." God's will and word bestow upon man his dignity and make him the holder of inalienable human rights.

Jesus Christ is Lord even over the fallen world, and he discloses to those who believe in him the overthrow of the world's gods, both manifest and hidden. Through him the world regains its goodness as God's creation. Therefore Christians take seriously their responsibility for the preservation and protection of creation.

The Christian community acknowledges God as the Creator and preserver also of the structures of creation, in which we as Christians are called to live. God created man in his shared humanity. In marriage and family, society and state, he provides for man the setting for a life in community.

Acts 17:26
Gen 1:28
Ps 8:6
Matt 28:18
Col 2:15
1 Cor 8:4
1 Tim 4:4 ff.
1 Cor 3:21 ff.
Gen 2:15
Ex 20:1-17

Rom 9-11

5. The People of Israel and the Church of Jesus Christ

Through faith in Jesus Christ, whom God brought forth from Israel in his time, we recognize Israel as God's chosen people. God has demonstrated in a unique way, in the election and calling of this people, his creative power and his lordship over all peoples. His love for all peoples led to the covenant with this special people. In them, God wills to bless all peoples and set them as a light to the peoples. God's election and calling of Israel have not become obsolete through the unfaithfulness and disobedience of this people. In God's preserving the Jewish people until our present time, we recognize a sign of his faithfulness and mercy. The secret of this people is and remains their election and salvation by God.

God did not abrogate his covenant with Israel when he made a new covenant through Jesus Christ and thereby established his rule of grace for all people. Hence, we recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world. In him salvation is for the Jews as well as for the other peoples.

The church of Jesus shares through Jesus Christ in the promises of God, which he first gave to Israel. In Christ all people are included in God's salvation, as God's people of the new covenant is called and gathered from the Jews and the other peoples. The eschatological rule of God, promised to Israel, has already begun in Jesus Christ, but it is not yet consummated. The church of Jesus Christ, together with the people of Israel, awaits its full realization.

Ex 19:5 f.
Deut 7:7 f.
John 4:22
Gen 12:1-3
Isa 49:6
Hos 11:1-9
Rom 11:26

2 Cor 3
Jer 31:31-34
Luke 22:20
Heb 9:15
Luke 2:25-32
Rom 5:18

Matt 28:19 f.
2 Cor 1:20
Mic 4:1-4
Dan 7:13 f.

6. God's Word – The Bible

Jesus Christ is God's Word in person to us men. In his life and work God has revealed himself comprehensively and definitely for the salvation of men. The resurrected and exalted Christ becomes present reality for us in the power of the Holy Spirit. He makes the proclamation of the gospel, which is accomplished through men, the word of God for us.

In the New Testament we hear the first witnesses to Jesus Christ. The Christian community is grounded in their testimony. That testimony cannot be expanded or superseded by any subsequent Christian proclamation or teaching. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the authors of the New Testament have borne witness to God's salvation that has appeared in Christ. This constitutes the authority and the normative

Acts 4:12
Rom 10:13
Rom 1:16 f.
1 Cor 1:18

1 John 1:1 f.
Acts 1, 2, 8

character of the New Testament for the life and teaching of the church. It is the written word of God.

The Old Testament bears witness to us of God's dealings with his people Israel and of God's will for all mankind. The Christian community understands the Old Testament from the perspective of God's revelation in Christ and sees it as pointing toward that revelation; for Christ is the goal and the end of the law. The New Testament bears witness to us of God's saving work in Christ for all mankind and of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The gospel of the crucified, risen and coming Lord Jesus Christ is the center of the New Testament and hence of the entirety of the Holy Scripture.

The Bible is God's word in human language. Therefore its books bear the signs of the times in which they originated. Their language, their patterns of thought, and their literary forms are bound to the times and places whence they come. Therefore the historical understanding of Holy Scripture is an obligation of the Christian church and its theology, in their listening to the word of God. The historical interpretation of Scripture takes into account the working of the Holy Spirit, both in originating and expounding the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible lives, because God speaks through it.

Ex 20:1-17
Rom 10:4
Acts 2
John 5:39

Heb 1:1
Luke 1:2-4
John 20:31
2 Tim 3:16 f.
2 Pet 1:19-21

Part 2

Life Under God's Rule

I. THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

1. The Gathering and the Sending of the Church

God, who has revealed himself in his Son Jesus Christ and has established his rule for the salvation of men, calls men to a life under this rule. All who believe on Jesus Christ have been transplanted from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. Christ gathers them into his community in a common life, witness and service. The Holy Spirit gives them the will to live in harmony with God's reconciliation. Because Christ first loved us and loves us still, we belong to the family of God as brothers and sisters. As Christ has accepted us, we also accept ourselves and those whom Christ has called, with us, to faith. As Christ has forgiven and still forgives our sins, so we also forgive our neighbors.

The church of Jesus Christ responds to God's reconciling act in praise and worship. Bowing before God she confesses her guilt and receives from him forgiveness and the authority for her mission. In evangelization and service the Christian community bears witness to God's salvation for all men. She intercedes in prayer and supplication for all men and nations. As God sent his Son into the world, so Jesus Christ today sends his church into the world. All members of the church of Jesus Christ are under the commission of their Lord: "Preach the gospel to the whole creation!" (Mark 16:15).

2 Cor 4:5 f.
Col 1:13 f.
Mark 3:31-35
Rom 15:7
Matt 6:12

2 Cor 5:19 f.
Eph 1:3 ff.
John 15:1-8
1 Tim 2:1 ff.
John 20:21
Matt 28:16-20
1 Pet 2:9 f.

2. Proclamation and Instruction

The sending of the church into the world is focused in the public proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all men and in the biblical instruction of her members and their children.

Mark 16:15 f.
Deut 6:7-25

In the gatherings of the Christian community Jesus Christ establishes his rule, by giving his word to his disciples, assuring them of his forgiveness, bestowing his love on them and granting to them his Holy Spirit. In the service of worship Jesus Christ constrains those who are his own to discipleship and obedience, to faith and ministry, to love and hope. In the service of worship Jesus Christ calls men who are not yet Christians to the decision of faith and to the surrender of their lives to God's Lordship.

Matt 18:20
Gal 3:2
John 20:22 f.
Acts 4:31
Rom 12:1 f.

The task of Christian instruction is the training of the members of the community in the obedience of faith and their equipment for a responsible life. At the center of this instruction are the study of the Bible and the translation of the gospel for our time and our world. The teaching of children and youth is a special task of the Christian church, which bears the responsibility before her Lord that the younger generation shall be encouraged to believe in Jesus Christ and to live as his disciples.

Eph 4:15
Col 3:1 ff.
Col 3:20 f.

3. Faith and Baptism

To all who hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, God offers his grace in that gospel: Whoever turns to God in repentance and faith receives forgiveness of his guilt and eternal life. God expects from everyone the response of faith, for which he empowers them through his Spirit. Whoever becomes a Christian turns away from all evil, confesses forthwith Jesus Christ as his Lord and declares his commitment to follow Christ as a member of the church.

Rom 1:5,16 f.
1 Thess 1:9 f.
Rom 10:9 f.
Eph 4:1-6

Jesus Christ has mandated his church to baptize those, who believe in him. Baptism bears witness to a human's repentance toward God. Therefore, only such people should be baptized, who on the basis of their faith ask to be baptized. Baptism following the confession of faith is received only once. In accordance with the practice testified to in the New Testament, the person baptized is immersed in water. Baptism is performed into the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: in this way the person baptized is made subject to the rule of God.

Mark 16:15 f.
Acts 2:38
Acts 8:36-38
Heb 10:10,22
Acts 22:16
Matt 28:19

In the act of baptism, the one baptized receives confirmation of that, which the gospel promises and which he professes before God and men: Jesus Christ died and rose again for me too. My former life under the dominion of sin has been buried; through Christ I have been given new life. God has given me a share in the effect of Christ's death. He allows the power of his resurrection to take effect on me, already now through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and some day through the resurrection to eternal life.

Acts 10:47
Col 2:12 f.
Gal 3:26-28
Rom 6:3-11
1 Pet 3:21
Eph 1:13 f.

With baptism the believer lets himself be incorporated as a member of the body of Christ likewise into the fellowship of the local congregation. There he recognizes his spiritual gifts and responsibilities and exercises them to the glory of God and the good of the people; there too he receives and gives help and correction.

1 Cor 12:13
Acts 2:41 f.
1 Pet 4:10 f.

4. The Lord's Supper

As the Lord of his church Jesus Christ has established the Lord's Supper as the act in which his people assemble with joy at his table, to share the bread and the cup in his name, and as a sign that he gives himself to his disciples.

1 Cor 11:23-29
1 Cor 10:16 f.
Acts 2:47

Luke 24:30,35

In the observance of the Supper we experience the saving nearness and fellowship of Jesus Christ, by recalling his suffering and dying for us. We experience anew our acceptance by the crucified and risen Christ. In the Supper we experience fellowship with all our brothers and sisters whom God has called to faith along with us. In worship and with thanksgiving and supplications we celebrate our reconciliation with God and with each other.

Matt 26:26-28
Acts 2:42

We celebrate the Lord's Supper in joyous anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ and the consummation of his rule, by proclaiming the Lord's death until he returns. We are sent forth from the Lord's table, strengthened and with renewed faith and courage, to a new life in Christ in discipleship, witness and service.

Luke 22:16-20

5. Spiritual Gifts, Ministries and Orders

In the experience of the grace of God the members of the community of Jesus Christ are given gifts of grace that serve to build up the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit bestows in the community particularly the gifts of proclamation and teaching, of love and care, of leadership and day-to-day direction. Thus the Spirit of God enables the people, on their way through time, to fulfill their mission. There is no member of the body of Christ without gifts. All gifts of the Spirit are bestowed with the aim of forming our life under God's gracious rule in peace and order, in cooperation and mutual regard. The priesthood of all believers is the basic structure that is given to the Christian church by her Lord.

1 Cor 12-14
Rom 12:1-8
Eph 4:11-16
1 Pet 2:5-10

The Christian community calls suitable men and women, whose special endowment by the Holy Spirit and calling by God she recognizes, into special ministries and equips them to perform these ministries. In particular she provides for the ministries of proclamation, instruction, pastoral care, service to the needy, and leadership. Spiritual gifts and offices alike serve the gathering together and the sending- forth of the church of Jesus Christ.

1 Tim 3
Acts 20:28
1 Tim 5:17-22
1 Tim 4:12-16
2 Tim 2:2

Each local congregation is understood as a manifestation of the one body of Christ and is responsible for ordering its own life and ministry. These local congregations are bound together, not primarily through organizational ties, but by the one Lord and the one Spirit. The congregations strengthen each other through fellowship in the faith, and by learning from each other, through intercession and by mutual aid. Such things as structure of the congregation and denominational organization, administration and finance, institutions and works, are not ends in themselves, but are instruments of the mission of the church in this world.

1 Cor 1:2
Eph 4:3-6
1 Cor 16:1-4

6. Pastoral Care and Church Discipline

The pastoral care of the members is entrusted to the entire congregation. The aim of this pastoral care is to encourage and empower all members of the community to live a life of discipleship to Jesus Christ and of submission to God. Rebuke and comfort, confession of sin and promise of forgiveness serve this aim, as do sharing in joys and fears, sufferings and trials, afflictions and distresses of our neighbours. Here the word of Scripture applies: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

Phil 2:5 ff.
1 Pet 4:10 f.
Gal 6:1
Jas 5:19 f.
Rom 12:9 ff.

If in a member of the church the belief in Jesus Christ is extinguished, the love of God and neighbour has grown cold, and all pastoral efforts to bring that person back to Christ and his church remain fruitless, the community will exclude him from its fellowship. In the case of conscious and willful offense and sin against God's manifest

Matt 18:15
1 Cor 5:13
1 Tim 1:19 f.
1 Cor 5:5

will and of persistence in that way, the community has no alternative but to use this means of discipline. It will do this in sorrow for not having believed firmly enough and not having loved devotedly enough, and in the hope that the member under discipline will find grace with God anew and will return to the fellowship of the church.

7. The One Body of Christ and the Divided Churches

The Christian experiences the fellowship of the church primarily in the local gathering of believers. There the one baptism upon confession of faith is performed and the one bread, instituted by the one Lord, is broken and shared. Therefore the local congregation is seen to be the manifestation of the one body of Jesus Christ, permeated by the one Spirit and filled with the one hope.

The one Spirit bestows many gifts, which can be exercised in the local congregations but also in the churches that are separated from each other, in a mutually enriching diversity. Jesus Christ is building his community in the various churches and fellow-ships. Regardless of the diversities, and regardless of error and fault on all sides, it cannot be God's will for denominational barriers to hinder the visible fellowship of all believers and thus their credible testimony to all the world. Therefore we pray, with Christians of the whole earth, for the renewal of all communions and churches, that more mutual recognition may become possible, and that God may lead us to the unity that he wills for us. Even today it is the task not only of the individual Christians from various churches, but also of these churches themselves, to take whatever steps are possible out of their separation toward each other, to eliminate existing prejudices, and conscientiously to formulate and represent objections, to learn from each other, to pray for each other, and together to glorify Christ in witness and service.

Eph 4:3-6
1 Cor 10:16 f.

1 Cor 12:1-11
John 17:22 f.
Eph 4:1-6
Acts 15
Gal 2

II. CHRISTIANS IN THE WORLD

1. The Responsibility of Faith in the Situation of the Diaspora

It is the will of God for the Christian church to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. The church seeks no dominion in society or over society but is called and empowered for worship of God in the everyday life of this world and thus for the development of shared human life by the power of the Holy Spirit. The church as a whole and each of its members are ready for the responsibility of faith. They speak for God and his righteousness, and in their life as brothers and sisters God's gracious rule can be discerned.

We live as Christians scattered among those who do not believe. In this situation where we are a minority and are on a mission, we know that in our work and our leisure, in the family and in society we are called to serve God in all our fellow men. Because Christians rejoice in being accepted by God and called to be his co-workers, they live their faith in bearing witness to Christ personally, in demonstrating their solidarity with people who are suffering, in acts of personal assistance, and thus in obedience to the commandment that we love our neighbours. To take our stand for the truth of Jesus Christ also includes our readiness to accept disadvantage and even persecution.

Matt 5:13-16
Rom 12:1 ff.
John 13:1-17
1 Pet 3:15
Rom 3:21-31
Acts 2:42-47

1 Pet 1:1-12
1 Cor 3:9
Matt 5:43-48
1 Pet 4:12-19

2. The Call to Reconciliation

Because we have our origin in reconciliation with God, we are called also to serve the cause of reconciliation among men. In this spirit Christians make their contribution to

Gal 3:27 f.
Eph 2:14
Matt 5:9

understanding between generations, social and political groups, parties, classes, races and nations. They strive to eliminate any and all discrimination by persons against persons and work for peace in the world. The Christians' calling is to be validated precisely when in substantive issues they must speak a resounding "No." The readiness for reconciliation works for agreement, but it does not mean capitulation in the face of conflict or suppression of real problems.

Gal 2:1-10

Because we have our origin in God's justification of the ungodly, we are called to serve the cause of justice among men. Since Christians live in the liberty for which Christ has set them free, they oppose every form of dependence that injures human dignity. In the spirit of Jesus they support corresponding efforts to liberate men from economic, social and racial oppression. Accordingly, they contend for the basic freedoms of man, especially for freedom of belief and of conscience.

Eph 6:9
Rom 14:19
Heb 12:14

3. Marriage and Family

Man and woman are called, in accordance with the will of God, to be joined in lifelong marriage and to build their life together in love and fidelity. Marriage offers a fundamental and exemplary portrayal of God's will for the ordering of human life. One person esteems the other more highly than himself and accepts him as Christ has accepted him.

Gen 1:27
Gen 2:18-25
Mark 10:7-9
Eph 5:25

For the person who is reconciled with God, bodily existence and sexuality are good gifts from the hand of the Creator. In love for one's partner one will use these gifts responsibly before God. Man and woman, united in marriage, are privileged by God to share in the creation of new life, to be responsible for their children in love and care, to train them in the sight of God, to develop their gifts, and to lead them to faith in Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 6:19 f.
Mark 10:13 -16

In the unmarried state the Christian can discover and accept God's guidance and opportunity. Both gifts, marriage and the unmarried state, are given to Christians to mold their shared life in accordance with God's will and to place it at the service of God's rule. Accordingly, Christians will conduct their lives, in keeping with the model of the New Testament, in homes that are open and hospitable, places of a common life in conversation and celebration, work and prayer, caring for and comforting one another.

1 Cor 7:7
Gal 6:2
Heb 13:1-3

Unrestrained exercise of sexuality is a sign of man's alienation from God, from himself, and from his fellow man. Christians will not abet the deification of sexuality, but will set an example of how the freedom of the children of God takes its form in a new life.

1 Cor 6:9 ff.

4. Christians in Society and State

In accordance with God's will, shared human life finds its form, in the history of this world, in structures of society and in orders of the state. For the maintenance of these orders there is need of law and of the state's instruments of power, but also of the intercession and thanksgiving of the church. Christians stand ready to accept responsibility for the well-being of their fellow men and to share in the task of shaping social and political orders in accordance with human dignity. Christians and Christian communities will seek in every social and political system to find ways to fulfill their mission.

Rom 13:1-7
Jer 29:7
1 Tim 2:1 ff.

Social and political order may not be confused and intermingled with the rule of God and the church of Jesus Christ and can never take the place of these. Therefore we stand for the separation of state and church. Social and political order represents a mandate of God for the world. Its claim is limited: "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to

2 Pet 3:13
Rev 13

God what belongs to God” (Matt. 22:21, by the translator). It is not in keeping with the will of God for society and state to lay claim to man in his totality and to leave him no room for living under the rule of God and in the Christian church. When conflict arises in this matter, “One must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29, by the translator).

Over against all social and political theories with their human designs for a manageable future, Christians bear witness to God’s promise of a new creation and confess God’s rule as the future of the world.

Part 3

The Consummation of God’s Rule

1. The Future of the Christ Who Has Come

Jesus Christ, the Lord of his church and of his world, who was crucified, rose from the dead, and was raised to the right hand of God, will appear, on the day that God alone will determine, in glory as the fulfiller of God’s kingdom and as judge of all men. The Christ who will return is the future of our world and at the same time he is the unsurpassable limit of the progress of which men are capable as well as the end of the history of human failure.

Jesus Christ’s appearing in glory will transform the belief and unbelief of men into sight. The same Lord who already rules over the church and world will make his hidden Lordship manifest to all. The return of Christ will bring an end to the time of preaching of the gospel. The last day of our world--epoch will also be the first day of God’s new creation.

In view of this hope we, as the Christian community, confess all the more surely that eternal life is granted to us even now and that the same Spirit who creates new life today will transform our mortal bodies. We confess that no power of death is able to separate us from God’s love and that the dying person rests in the sheltering hands of the God who raised our Lord Jesus Christ.

The return of Jesus Christ will bring about the downfall of all forces that oppose God and will lead the still believing and waiting, suffering and faltering Christian church out of all its affliction and temptation into the fulfillment of God’s rule. The annihilation of evil and of death will unveil to all eyes God’s intention for his fallen creation: the ultimate redemption of the people of God and the restoration of the creation to the peace of God.

In view of this hope the Christian church confesses its Lord as the future of the world. In the strength of this hope the church works for the renewal of men through the grace of God which is proclaimed in the gospel, and through faith which is active in love.

2. The Judgment of the Coming Christ

With the appearing of Jesus Christ we anticipate the resurrection of the dead as the ultimate demonstration of God’s creative and redemptive power. But the resurrection of the dead also signifies that we are set in the presence of our judge, “so that each one receives his reward for what he has done in his lifetime, whether it be good or evil” (2 Cor. 5:10, by the translator).

Acts 1:11
1 Thess 4:13-18
Acts 1:7
Rev 18:21-24
Rev 21:4

Matt 5:8
1 John 3:2
Rev 20:11-21:8

1 Cor 15:20
Rom 8:11
John 14:19
Rom 8:38-39

Matt 6:12
1 John 1:8
Rev 20:14; 21:4
1 Cor 15:56
Rom 8:19-23

1 Cor 15:58
1 Thess 1:9 f.

Rom 2:16
Acts 10:42

Matt 10:32 f.
Matt 18:18

As judge, Christ implements the gospel. He dis-closes whether the works of men are wrought by God's power or men's own doing. The faith that has responded to the gospel is recognized by Christ. Whatever is being done now in the authority of the risen Christ and of the Holy Spirit, every pronouncement of forgiveness as well as the binding and remembering of sins, will then be publicly confirmed by Christ as judge. All self-made righteousness and all self-willed detachment of man from God will be brought to light in the judgment, will be excluded from the new creation, and will end in final separation from God. God respects the freedom of his creature, in that he allows to unbelief the reality that it has chosen for itself. Anyone who rejects God's love, him will God reject.

Matt 25:45 f.
Luke 14:16-24
John 3:36

We extol the love of the God who is free in his grace and mercy, who does not will the death of the sinner but his repentance, whose aim is the redemption and not the rejection of man, whose intention is not the perdition but the salvation of the world.

Ezek 18:23
1 Tim 2:4

3. God's New World

God's aim for the world and for humanity is eternal life in a new creation. God's will is directed toward the new man, who ultimately will attain his destiny to live by God's power and for God, and toward the new people of God, who ultimately will be liberated for true worship of God. God wants to be their God for eternity, and they are to be his people forever.

Rev 21:1-5
John 17:24
Rev 22:3-5

As surely as this future is promised to the Christian church, it is far from being able properly to grasp and to express the vision of the new heaven and the new earth. The church takes the biblical parables and images of the earthly paradise, of the celestial city, of the Father's house, and of the new banquet as a sign and an earnest of the promised glory in which God's rule will come to fulfillment. God's new creation will be the world of resurrected, transformed and transfigured bodily existence. In that world, death and tears, hunger and pain, injustice and sin, loneliness and godforsakenness will be no more. Instead, there will be joy and peace, righteousness and blessedness, adoration and the vision of God forever. In God's new world the creation will find happiness and fulfillment. The perfect and complete redemption of the created universe will also be the final victory of the honor and glory of God.

Rev 22:1-2
Rev 21:9-27
John 14:2
Luke 22:16 ff.
1 Cor 15:42-49
1 Cor 15:28

On November 14, 2020, the Federal Assembly approved the amendment of Section 5 in Part 1.

Translation of the original text from German: John Steely (in: G. Keith Parker, Baptists in Europe: History & Confessions of Faith, Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press 1981, 57-75)

Translation of the new text of section 1. 5: Carsten Claussen.
Translation of the new text of section 2. I. 3: Andrew Duncan.

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