



**CONFESION OF THE FAITH  
AND DOCTRINE BELIEVED AND  
PROCLAIMED BY THE PROTESTANTS  
OF THE KINGDOM OF SCOTLAND,  
PRESENTED TO THE SCOTTISH  
PARLIAMENT AND AUTHORIZED AT  
ITS PUBLIC SESSIONS AS DOCTRINE  
GROUNDED ON THE INFALLIBLE WORD  
OF GOD.**

**[Preface]<sup>1</sup>**

Greetings. The Parliament of Scotland along with those among its people accepting Christ Jesus and his holy gospel, wish fellow-Scots and all other kingdoms and nations acknowledging the same Lord Jesus, grace, mercy and peace from God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, such as accompanies [God's] Spirit of justice and right judgement.<sup>2</sup>

For a long time, dear friends, we have been keen to make public the gist of the doctrine that we confess, which is why we have been lambasted and exposed to danger. However, such has been the satanic rage at us and at Christ Jesus (his eternal truth being in recent times brought out into the open among us here), that we have had no opportunity until now to explain ourselves, as we would have been glad to do. Most of Europe, we assume, is aware of the state of turmoil we here have been in over the entire last year.

But since, due to the unlimited goodness of our God (who never permits his suffering people to be completely thwarted), some respite and freedom have unexpectedly come our way, we feel obliged to publish this brief and clear doctrinal statement that has been put to us. It is what we believe and confess. This is partly to reassure our friends who, as we well know, have been (and still are) deeply wounded by spiteful mockery from those who are inarticulate, and partly to silence insolent scoffers who presume to condemn things

which they neither have listened to nor even understand.

We are under no illusion that the inveterate malice of such people can be cured by this straightforward confession of ours. Not at all, for we know that the sweet fragrance of the gospel is, and shall be death for those destined to be lost. Rather, our chief concern is for those among us of wavering faith. Our wish is to communicate to them our deep convictions, lest they may be agitated or misled by various rumours circulated about us by Satan to frustrate this most holy project of ours.

And so we would ask that if anyone should spot any article or opinion in this our confession that is incompatible with God's holy Word, please kindly advise us of this in writing with the spirit of Christian love. We sincerely promise on our word of honour that we will address their concerns from *the mouth of God*<sup>3</sup> (that is, from holy Scripture), or rectify anything that proves to be inappropriate. For we call on God as our witness that from the bottom of our hearts we detest all heretical sects and all teachers of error, clinging as we do in all humility to the purity of the gospel of Christ. This is the only food of our souls, and is consequently so precious to us that we are prepared to risk the gravest of imaginable dangers rather than let ourselves be deprived of it. For we are strongly convinced that anyone who disowns Christ, or is embarrassed in company to acknowledge him, will not be recognized by the Lord in the presence of the Father and his holy angels. Aided, therefore, by the powerful inspiration of our Lord Jesus Christ, our resolute intention is to persevere to the end in the confession of this our faith, as in the following articles:

### Article 1: God

We believe in and acknowledge one God only, to whom alone we must adhere, whom alone we are bound to serve, whom alone we must worship, and in whom alone we must

place our trust. He is eternal, infinite, beyond measure, unfathomable, all-powerful, invisible, a self-contained single being – yet distinguishable as three Persons, Father, Son, and holy Spirit. It is our credo that all things in heaven and earth, both visible and invisible, have been created and are kept in place by him; that they are governed and guided by his inscrutable providence for whatever purpose his eternal wisdom, goodness, and judgement has destined them, notably the demonstration of his own glory.

### **Article 2: The Creation of Humankind**

We believe and declare that this our true God created man, namely Adam, our original father, in his own image and likeness; that he gave him wisdom, authority, right judgement, free will, and transparent self-knowledge, to the effect that in human nature as a whole no imperfection could be identified. From this honour and perfection both man and woman lapsed – following the woman's deception by the serpent and the man's compliance with the prompting of the woman. Both combined to act in contravention of God's supreme authority. Beforehand he had explicitly warned of death if they presumed to eat from the forbidden tree.

### **Article 3: Original Sin**

Due to this violation, commonly referred to as 'original sin', the image of God was completely obliterated in Adam and Eve. They and their descendants became hostile to God, in thrall to Satan and indulgent in sin in light of the fact that eternal death has had, and shall have, power and control over all who have not been, are not, or shall not be, reborn on divine initiative. This rebirth is effected through the power of the holy Spirit, instilling in the minds of God's chosen ones an assured faith in the promise of God revealed to us in his

Word. By means of this faith, we appropriate Christ Jesus along with the gifts of grace and benefits promised to us in him.

#### **Article 4: The Revelation of the Promise**

For we consistently hold that after the disastrous disobedience, God looked for Adam again, called out to him, rebuked him for his sin and pronounced him guilty – but eventually making him a promise that gave lots of joy, namely that the woman's descendants would smash the head of the serpent; in other words, he would eliminate the doings of the Devil. Just as this promise was repeated and made clearer from time to time, so it was gladly welcomed and unquestioningly accepted by all the faithful, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to David and so on up to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. All (we mean, ancestors in the faith under the Law) anticipated the joyful day of Christ Jesus and were heartened.

#### **Article 5: The Continuity, Growth, and Preservation of the Church**

It is our strong belief that God has preserved, instructed, expanded, honoured, adorned, and summoned his Church from death to life in all eras from Adam up to the advent of Christ Jesus in the flesh. For he called Abraham out of the land of his fathers, gave him instruction and multiplied his descendants, wonderfully taking care of them and even more wonderfully liberating them from tyrannical subjection to Pharaoh. It was to them he gave his commandments, structures and ceremonial rites. He settled them in the country of Canaan. After government by Judges and then Saul, he set up David as king, to whom he made a promise that one of his descendants would sit for evermore on his royal throne.

To this same people he dispatched prophets from time to time in order to bring them back to the right way of their God, a way from which they often deviated through the false worship of images. Due to their perverse contempt of upright behaviour he saw fit to abandon them to their foes (as had been previously threatened in the preaching of Moses) – to the extent that the holy city was destroyed, the Temple burnt down, and the entire country left desolate for seventy years. Nonetheless, out of compassion he restored them to Jerusalem. On the city and the Temple being rebuilt, they – despite being tested and assaulted by Satan – remained there until the Messiah came, as promised.

### **Article 6: The Incarnation of Christ Jesus**

In due course God sent into this world his Son, his eternal Wisdom, the very essence of his own splendour. Through the activity of the holy Spirit he took on human nature from that of a woman, a virgin. In this way the holy descendant of David was born, the messenger of God's grand plan, the true Messiah that was promised. We acknowledge and declare him to be Emmanuel, true God and real human, one person composed of two complete natures. In affirming this we condemn the pernicious and destructive heresies of Arius, Marcion, Eutyches, Nestorius and such others who either denied the eternity of his divinity, or the reality of his humanity, or confused them, or otherwise divided them.

### **Article 7: The Need for the Mediator to be True God and True Man**

We grant and confess that this most remarkable union of the divinity and humanity in Christ Jesus derives from the eternal and immutable decision of God, from which also our entire salvation originates and depends on.

## Article 8: Election

For that same eternal God and Father, who out of sheer grace chose us in Christ Jesus, his Son, before the world was established, designated him as our head, our brother, shepherd and guardian of our souls. Yet since the hostility between the righteousness of God and our sins was such that it was beyond all human endeavour to reach him, it was necessary for the Son of God to come down to us, share a body like ours, flesh like ours, and bones like ours. He thereby became the ideal mediator between God and humanity, and gave those who believe in him the opportunity of becoming God's own people – as he attests: *I am going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*<sup>4</sup> By means of this remarkable association, what we forfeited with Adam is restored to us again. This is why we presume to call God our 'Father', not so much because he created us (which we have in common with those who are rejected), as because he has given us his sole Son to be our brother, and granted us grace to recognize and welcome him as our only mediator, as stated above.

Moreover, the Messiah and redeemer had to be true God and true man, since he was to receive the punishment liable for our offences, standing in for us at the judgement of his Father, and to die for our sins and disobedience. The purpose was to vanquish him who was the cause of death. However, since it was not possible for the Deity alone to undergo death, and as humanity on its own could never conquer it, [God] combined both in one person. The aim was that the frailty of the one should experience suffering and die (which we had deserved) – and that the infinite and invincible power of the other, that is, of the Divinity, should triumph, procuring for us life, liberty, and permanent victory.

## **Article 9: The Death, Suffering, and Burial of Christ**

And so we confess and believe beyond all doubt that our Lord Jesus willingly offered himself to his Father as a sacrifice on our behalf; that he endured provocation from wrong-doers; that he was injured and tormented for our offences; that despite being the completely innocent Lamb of God he was condemned before a secular judge so as to procure our absolution at the tribunal of our God; and that he not only endured the cruel death of the cross (an abominable thing anyway, according to God), but also temporarily bore the anger of his Father that sinners had deserved.

Nonetheless, we still maintain that even in the course of his anguish and torment (which he suffered in body and mind to compensate for people's sins) he remained the cherished and blessed Son of his Father. Hence our testimony and conviction that any other sacrifice for sin is superfluous. If there are any who [promote other sacrifices], we do not hesitate to say that they degrade the death of Christ, and the eternal exoneration and reparation thereby earned for us.

## **Article 10: The Resurrection**

Because it was impossible for the pangs of death to subjugate the author of life, we believe with certainty that our Lord Jesus – crucified, dead and buried, who descended into Hell, and rose again so that we may be justified, destroying him who was the author of death – restored life to us who were subject to death and its thrall. We know that his resurrection was confirmed by the testimony of his very enemies and by the resurrection of the dead whose tombs opened; they rose up and appeared to many in the city of Jerusalem. It was also confirmed by the testimony of his angels, by what the apostles saw and judged for themselves, and others who conversed, ate and drank with him after his resurrection.

## Article 11: The Ascension

It is undeniable that the very same body that the virgin gave birth to was crucified, dead, buried, resurrected, and ascended into the heavens in order that he might fill all things. There, in our name and to reassure us, he has received all authority in heaven and earth, sitting at the right hand of the Father installed in his kingdom, our advocate and sole intercessor. For believers, only he shall have such renown, honour, and pre-eminence until all his enemies are subdued, just as they will be (we strongly believe) at the last judgement. We certainly believe that in the implementation of this, the return of our same Lord Jesus shall be visible, just as his ascension was. Thereupon the time of renewal and universal restoration shall occur, we firmly confess. Thus, they who from the outset have been exposed to violence, harm and wrong because of the right faith and life shall inherit that blissful immortality originally promised.

In contrast, persons who are stubborn, disobedient, cruelly oppressive, lewd, image-worshippers and all sorts of unbelievers shall be banned to the dungeon of extreme darkness where *their worm will not die, and their fire will not be extinguished*.<sup>5</sup> The reminder of that day of judgement – and what will be delivered at it – not only serves as a bridle restraining our self-gratifying urges, but also is enormously comforting. Consequently, neither the threats of secular rulers nor even the fear of death in this world and present danger drive us to renounce and abandon membership of that holy fellowship we have with our head and sole mediator, Christ Jesus. We confess and declare him the promised Messiah, the sole head of his Church, our just lawmaker, our sole high priest, advocate and mediator. If any human being or angel should presumptuously arrogate to themselves such dignities and functions, we completely despise and abhor them for holding our sovereign and supreme governor, Christ Jesus, in contempt.

## Article 12: Faith in the Holy Spirit

This faith of ours – and its certainty – does not derive from *flesh and blood*,<sup>6</sup> that is, from any inherent faculty in us. Rather, it is inspired by the holy Spirit, whom we proclaim to be God, equal to the Father and the Son, who makes us holy, guiding us into all truth by his own actions. Without him we would remain enemies of God eternally, and ignorant of his Son. For by nature we are so dead, so blind, and so wayward that we are able neither to feel when spurred on and see the light when it shines, nor comply with the will of God when it is revealed – unless the Spirit of the Lord Jesus revive what has died, dispel the darkness of our minds, and bend our rigid attitudes to obey his holy will.

Accordingly, just as we declare that God the Father created us when we were nothing, and just as his Son our Lord reconciled us when we were enemies of [God], so too do we affirm that we are reborn and made holy by the Spirit irrespective of any merit on our part, before or after our regeneration. To put this even more plainly: just as we disavow all praise and glory for our own creation and deliverance, the same applies to our rebirth and holy living. For intrinsically we are incapable of a single good thought. Rather, he who has initiated the work [of transformation] in us is exclusively the one who sustains it in us – highlighting the praise and splendour of his grace that we did not deserve.

## Article 13: The Cause of Good Works

Consequently, we hold that the reason for doing good is not [the exercise of] our own free will. Rather, it is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ who, residing in our hearts by virtue of true faith, generates good works of the kind *which God has prepared to be our way of life*.<sup>7</sup> We stress very strongly that it is profanity to declare that Christ is present in the hearts of anyone in whom there is no spirit of holiness. Accordingly,

we have no inhibition in asserting that among murderers, tyrants, cruel persecutors, adulterers, womanisers, perverts, image-worshippers, drunkards, thieves and all evil-doers there is neither genuine faith nor any share in the Spirit of the Lord Jesus – as long as they stubbornly persist in their wicked ways.

For once the Spirit of the Lord Jesus (which God's chosen people receive via true faith) moves in to the heart of anyone, then he regenerates and renews such a person. The result is that what was previously loved is now hated, and what was previously hated now begins to be loved. This is the source of that constant battle between natural impulses and the Spirit in the children of God. During this, human nature and reason – due to inherent degradation – yearn for personal pleasure and delights, complain in adversity, are arrogant in prosperity, and are permanently predisposed to cause offence to God's majesty. However, the Spirit of God, who *bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God*,<sup>8</sup> causes us to resist base pleasures, and – in awareness of God – to long for release from this bondage of decay, eventually conquering sin to prevent it from lording it over our mortal bodies.

Since worldly people lack the Spirit of God, they do not experience such a struggle; rather, they are keen to indulge unrepentantly in sin, goaded on by the Devil and their wanton desires. As was stated previously, the children of God resist sin and are distressed when they are aware of temptation to do wrong. If they lapse, they pull themselves together by means of sincere, authentic repentance. And they do these things not through their own ability, but through the power of the Lord Jesus, detached from whom they can do nothing.

#### **Article 14: Works That God Considers Good**

We confess and declare that God has provided humankind with his holy Law. Not only does this prohibit all such deeds

that displease God and offend his divine majesty, it also stipulates all such ones that please him, and which he has promised to reward. These works are of two sorts, one to the honour of God, the other for the benefit of our neighbours. Both are validated by the revealed will of God.

The works of the first table [of the Law] are these: to have one God, to worship and honour him; to turn to him in all our troubles; to revere his holy Name; to hear his Word, believe it, and to participate in his holy sacraments.

The good works of the second table are: to show respect to father, mother, princes, rulers and governing authorities; to love them, support them and definitely obey their orders (if not repugnant to a commandment of God); to safeguard the lives of the innocent; to overthrow tyranny; to come to the defence of the oppressed; to keep our bodies pure and holy; to live soberly and in moderation; to deal fairly in word and deed with everyone; and finally, to subdue all desire to harm our neighbours. These works are highly pleasing and acceptable to God, being the ones commanded by him.

Acts to the contrary are odiously sinful, always displeasing him and provoking his anger. For example: not turning to him alone in our need; not listening to his Word with deep respect, disregarding and despising it; being in possession of images or venerating them; having idolatrous worship and defending it; making light of the sacred name of God; treating irreverently, misusing or scorning Christ's sacraments; disobeying or resisting those whom God has placed in authority (providing they do not exceed the bounds of their office); committing murder or consenting to it; bearing hatred, or letting innocent blood to be shed if we can prevent it. Lastly, we declare that the breach of any other commandment in the first or second table [of the Law] constitutes sin, kindling God's hot indignation at the proud, ungrateful world.

Accordingly, we assert that good works are only those that are done in faith and as commanded by God, who in his Law has expressed what the things are that please him.

In contrast, we declare as evil not only those works that are explicitly at odds with God's command, but also those that in matters of religion and divine worship have no other authority than human invention and opinion. From the outset, God has always rejected this, as the words of the prophet Isaiah, and our master, Christ Jesus, instruct us: *In vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.*<sup>9</sup>

### Article 15: The Law's Perfection and Human Imperfection

We confess and know the Law of God to be thoroughly just, impartial, holy and perfect. It orders those things, which – if done perfectly – can give life and bring humanity to eternal happiness. However, our nature is so corrupt and imperfect that we are never able to perform the requirements of the Law completely. Indeed, *if we say we have no sin (even after we have been reborn) we deceive ourselves, and the truth [of God] is not in us.*<sup>10</sup>

Hence, we have to embrace Jesus Christ with his righteousness and work of reparation, as he is the ultimate goal and consummation of the Law. Through him we are given liberty from the curse and anathema of [the Law] even if we fall short on some points. For by regarding us as members of the body of his Son Christ Jesus, God the Father accepts our imperfect obedience as if it were perfect – by investing our works, which are tarnished with so many flaws, with the impeccable virtue of his Son. We do not mean liberty of a kind exempting us from obedience to the Law (we have made that clear above). Rather, our view is that in reality no one on earth (with the sole exception of Jesus Christ) has obeyed, does obey, or shall obey the Law as required.

And after doing all there is to do, we still need to prostrate ourselves and sincerely admit that *we are worthless slaves.*<sup>11</sup> Consequently, whoever brag about the merits of their own deeds or put their trust in works of supererogation,<sup>12</sup> boast

about nothing and are misplacing their trust in a wretched form of idolatry.

### Article 16: The Church

Just as we believe in one God – Father, Son, and holy Spirit, so we firmly hold that from the beginning there has been, still is, and shall be one Church until the end of the world. In other words, there is a single community of numerous people chosen by God worshipping him in the right manner. It adheres to him by true faith in Christ Jesus, who is the sole head of this Church. It is also the body and bride of Christ. This Church is catholic, that is, universal, since it contains the elect of all ages, kingdoms, peoples and languages – whether they be Jewish or pagan – having communion and fellowship with God the Father and with his Son Christ Jesus through the sanctifying work of the holy Spirit. The Church is therefore called the communion of saints, not of worldly persons. As citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, [saints] enjoy incalculable benefits, namely, *one God, one Lord Jesus, one faith, and one baptism*.<sup>13</sup> Outside this Church there is neither life nor eternal life.

Consequently, we completely reject the irreligious thinking of those who claim that people whose lives are in conformity with equity and justice shall be saved irrespective of their religious persuasion. For just as there is neither life nor salvation apart from Christ Jesus, so no one shall share in that except those whom the Father has given to his Son, Christ Jesus, and they who eventually come to him, accepting his teaching and believing in him (we include children of believing parents).

The Church is invisible, known only to God who alone knows the identity of his chosen ones. It embraces both the elect (as stated) that have departed this life (generally called the ‘Church triumphant’), and those still living in the world struggling with sin and Satan – as well as future generations.

## **Article 17: The Consciousness of Souls in the After-life**

The elect who have died are at peace, *resting from their labours*.<sup>14</sup> They are not in a state of sleep and somehow oblivious, as some fantasists claim. Instead, they are liberated from all fear, anguish, and temptation, to which we and all God's chosen ones are subject in this life and so are called the 'Church militant'. In contrast, the rejected ones and the faithless who are deceased are in an indescribable state of anxiety, torment and distress.

Therefore, neither one category nor the other has such repose that they are not conscious of joy or misery. Support for this is the parable of Jesus in Luke 16; also his remarks to the thief, and those words of the dead who were martyred – *Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?*<sup>15</sup>

## **Article 18: Marks Distinguishing the True Church from the False One, and the Arbiters of Doctrine**

Since from the outset Satan has laboured to adorn his satanic synagogue [of false belief] with the title of 'the Church of God', and has incited brutal murderers to persecute, afflict and molest the authentic Church of God and its members – as Cain did to Abel, Ishmael to Isaac, Esau to Jacob, and the entire Jewish priesthood to Christ Jesus and the Apostles after him – it is especially necessary to distinguish the true Church from polluted synagogues by clear and definite marks. This will prevent any delusion on our part that would cause us to receive and accept the one instead of the other, leading to our ruination.

We maintain that the marks, signs, and authentic badges enabling the immaculate spouse of Christ Jesus to be discerned from the abominable *whore*<sup>16</sup> of a pernicious Church are not: an ancient tradition, a usurped title, a

pedigree [of bishops], a designated location or a human majority sanctioning error. For by virtue of his age and status, Cain had priority before Abel and Seth; Jerusalem had precedence over all places on earth, and there too the priests were lineally descended from Aaron. Moreover, far more people stood by the scribes, Pharisees and priests than sincerely believed and assented to Christ Jesus and his teaching. Nonetheless, we would venture to say that no one of sound judgement would grant that any of those just mentioned belonged to the Church of God.

Therefore, we believe, confess, and declare that the marks of the real Church of God are first: the true preaching of the Word of God in which God has disclosed himself to us, as the writings of the Prophets and Apostles proclaim. Secondly: the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, which must be appended to the Word and promise of God in order that these may be internally sealed and reinforced. Lastly: the strict observance of Church discipline in accordance with what God's Word prescribes, whereby vice is suppressed and virtue promoted.

Thus, wherever the above marks are seen and are in place for any duration, the real Church of Christ is definitely at hand – even if numbers are down to two or three. According to his promise, [Christ] is firmly among them. [We are referring] not to that universal Church that we spoke about earlier, rather, particular churches like there were in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus and other places where the ministry was planted by Paul, and which he himself termed 'churches of God'. We who live in the kingdom of Scotland and profess Christ Jesus declare openly that we have such kirks in town, country and [other] places that are reformed.

For our kirks teach what is contained within the written Word of God, in other words, the books of the Old and New Testaments. We mean those books which since antiquity have been considered canonical. We hold that this sufficiently communicates everything necessary for human salvation. As for its interpretation, our position is this: competence does

not belong to a private or public individual, nor to any church whatsoever due to some kind of hierarchical precedence or prerogative that it has above others, whether personal or due to location. Rather, it belongs to the Spirit of God, by whose inspiration Scripture was composed.

Should controversy arise over the right interpretation of some passage or expression in Scripture, or over the reform of any kind of abuse in the Church of God, we should look to what the holy Spirit says consistently in Scripture, and to what Christ Jesus himself did and instructed, rather than consider what men have said or done previously. For it is widely accepted that the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of unity, never contradicts himself in anything. If, then, the interpretation, decision or opinion of any teacher, church or council conflicts with the explicit Word of God as written anywhere else in Scripture, it is certainly the case that in them there is no true understanding intended by the holy Spirit – even if councils, kingdoms and nations have approved and received it. For we cannot risk receiving or allowing interpretation that is incompatible with any principal article of our faith, with any other explicit scriptural text, or with the rule of love.

### **Article 19: The Authority of Scripture**

Maintaining as we do that God's Scriptures are sufficiently instructive to make anyone belonging to God perfectly proficient, we likewise affirm and proclaim that scriptural authority derives from God, not humans or angels. Hence we assert that those who claim that Scripture has no authority other than what it has received from the Church are utterly disrespectful to God and damage the true Church. This always listens to and obeys the voice of her own spouse and minder rather than presume to be mistress of [Scripture].

## **Article 20: General Councils, Their Power, Authority, and Why They Are Convened**

While not rashly disparaging the declarations of devout men assembled in lawfully convoked general councils, we also do not automatically accept without close examination anything imposed on people in the name of general councils. For it is obvious that being human, some councils have manifestly erred on matters of vital importance. To the extent, then, that a council validates a decree and canon it issues by the clear divine Word, we readily honour and accept it. But if people – under the pretext of a council – fabricate new articles of faith for us or devise regulations incompatible with the divine Word, then we are obliged to reject them as diabolical teaching. These lure our souls from the voice of our God alone to follow human tenets and systems.

No general councils were convened to make any perpetually binding law that God had not already made; also not to invent new articles of faith, nor to validate the authority of the Word of God – and certainly not to pronounce something to be his Word, or the true interpretation of it, which was not previously expressed in his Word by his holy will. Instead, the reason for councils (we mean the kind that deserve this name) was partly to confute heresies, and [partly] to make a public confession of their faith for posterity. They did both on the authority of God's written Word, and not by virtue of any presupposition or prerogative that they were infallible by virtue of being a council. We reckon this to have been the principal reason for general councils.

The next reason was to establish good discipline and the observance of order in the Church. In it (as within *the household of God*<sup>17</sup>) it is appropriate that *all things be done decently and in order*.<sup>18</sup> We are not of the view that a single model and ceremonial order can be prescribed for all ages, occasions and places. And since ceremonies devised by humans are only temporary, they may and ought to be

changed when their observance fosters superstition rather than edification of the Church.

### Article 21: The Sacraments

Our ancestors under the Law had two major sacramental rites (besides the truth represented by sacrifices), namely circumcision and the Passover. Anyone treating them with indifference or contempt was reckoned not to belong to the people of God. We also testify that we now (in the age of the Gospel) have just two sacraments. These were instituted by the Lord Jesus with instructions that they be celebrated by everyone wishing to be considered as members of his body. They are Baptism, and the Supper or Table of the Lord, called the communion of his body and blood.

Further, God instituted both the Old and New Testament sacraments not only to visibly distinguish between his people and those who were not part of his covenant, but also to exercise the faith of his followers. In addition, participating in them was intended to seal internally the guarantee of his promises and of that special attachment, union and fellowship which the chosen ones have with their head, Christ Jesus.

Thus we completely condemn the conceit of those asserting that the sacraments are nothing other than simple and bare signs. Far from it, our firm conviction is that through baptism we are grafted on to Christ Jesus in order to share in that perfect integrity of his that covers up our sins and forgives them. Moreover, we believe that in the correctly observed Supper, Christ Jesus is joined with us in such a way that he becomes the true nourishment and food of our souls.

However, we entertain no notion of any transubstantiation of the bread into the natural body of Christ, or of wine into his blood, in the way the papists have harmfully taught and deplorably believed. Instead, our union and association with the body and blood of Christ in the correct celebration of the

sacrament is effected by the activity of the holy Spirit. By virtue of true faith he elevates us beyond everything that is visible, physical and terrestrial, enabling us to feast on the body and blood of Christ Jesus that once was broken and shed for our sake. Being now in heaven, he appears before his Father on our behalf.

And despite the remoteness of his immortalised heavenly body from us mortals here on earth, we still must strongly believe that *the bread that we break is a sharing in the body of Christ and the cup of blessing that we bless is a sharing in the blood of Christ*.<sup>19</sup> Therefore it is our conviction that in celebrating the Lord's Supper properly, believers eat the body and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus in such a manner that he abides in them, and they in him – in fact they are made into 'flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones'.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, just as the eternal Deity bestowed life and immortality on the physical body of Christ Jesus (which in its own natural state was mortal and perishable), so too does Christ Jesus confer on us similar privileges after we have eaten and drunk his flesh and blood. Even though we grant that these are neither given uniquely at that point – nor [given] simply through inherent power and efficacy of the sacrament alone – we still maintain that in the proper observance of the Lord's Supper, believers blend with Christ Jesus in a manner beyond the grasp of human understanding.

Furthermore indeed, while believers handicapped by indiscipline and human weakness do not improve as much as they would desire at the very point of the Supper's celebration, we still declare that it will yield fruit subsequently, like fertile seed sown on good ground. For the holy Spirit, who can never be detached from the correct institution of the Lord Jesus, will not deprive the faithful of the fruit of that mystical celebration. However, we say that all this results from genuine faith that appreciates Christ Jesus, who alone produces the desired effect of the sacrament in us.

It follows that any who maliciously misrepresent us, such as [saying that] we have held or believed the sacraments to

be simple and bare symbols, cause affront to us and deny the patently obvious truth. Yet we have no reservations about openly admitting that we do make a distinction between the naturally eternal substance of Christ and the elements of the sacramental signs. This means that while it is not our custom to adore the signs as a substitute for what they signify, we do not therefore disparage or interpret them as being of no use and irrelevant. On the contrary, we make use of them with all reverence, examining ourselves scrupulously in advance. For the Apostle's words leave no doubt that *Whoever eats the bread or drinks of the cup in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord.*<sup>21</sup>

### **Article 22: The Correct Administration of the Sacraments**

We consider that there are two prerequisites to administer sacraments properly. The first is that they should be dispensed by legitimate ministers. By this we mean only those who have been commissioned to preach the Word, in whose discourse there is a special talent for preaching, and who have been duly selected for that purpose by some church. The second is that they should be administered using such elements – and in such a manner – as God has directed. If otherwise, we insist that they cease to be genuine sacraments of Christ Jesus.

And this is why we withdraw from fellowship with the papal Church by not sharing in their sacraments. First, their ministers are not ministers of Christ Jesus. They actually allow (even more shockingly) women to baptize, who [anyway] are not permitted by the holy Spirit to be teachers in the Church. Secondly, [the papal Church] has corrupted the two sacraments with its own fabrications in such a way that nothing remains of Christ's celebration in its original simplicity. For oil, salt, spittle and other such things in baptism are just human inventions. Adoration [of the

host], veneration [of the sacrament], processions carrying it around the towns and countryside, and reserving it in boxes or pyxes – all debase the sacrament of Christ, not being its proper observance.

For Christ himself said: *Take, eat, etc. Do this to remember me.*<sup>22</sup> With these words and instructions he made bread and wine holy as the sacrament of his holy body and blood. Intended was that the one should be eaten and the other drunk by everyone, not reserved to be worshipped and venerated as God (in the way that the papists have done till now). It has also been sacrilegious on their part to have removed the other element of the sacrament from the people, namely the holy cup.

Moreover, in the proper use of the sacraments it is essential that both the ministers and the recipients understand why and to what end they were instituted and observed. For if the understanding of the recipient fluctuates, the proper use ceases (as is also the case if the teacher clearly teaches wrong doctrine). This can be seen in the matter of the [Old Testament] sacrifices: although God had ordered them, they came to be rejected by him as unwelcome and offensive, since corrupt men were exploiting them for purposes other than what he had intended. This also applies, we say, to the sacraments of the papal Church. In this, the entire ceremony instituted by the Lord Jesus has been adulterated in its external form, as well as the purpose and meaning of it.

Christ's actions and directions are clear from the Evangelists and St Paul. What the priest does at his altar does not need recounting. The purpose and reason for Christ's institution, and why only it should be used, is expressed in these words: *Do this to remember me [...] as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you show forth (that is, acclaim, preach, highlight and praise) the Lord's death till he comes.*<sup>23</sup> In contrast, how the priests when saying Mass see its purpose and meaning, is there for all to see in the wording of its text and in the writings of their own teachers. This is: that being mediators between Christ and his Church they

‘offer to God the Father’ an appeasing ‘sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead.’ We completely recoil from, deplore and repudiate such a doctrine as being utterly disrespectful of Christ Jesus. It derogates from the sufficiency of his unique sacrifice, offered just once for the acquittal of everyone to be made holy.

### **Article 23: Those Eligible for the Sacraments**

We confess and accept that access to baptism is open both to children of believers and to those at an age to exercise discretion. Therefore we dismiss the Anabaptist error of denying children the right to baptism before they have faith and reason.

However, we believe that the Lord’s Supper is restricted to those who belong to *the family of faith*,<sup>24</sup> capable of self-assessment and examination on both their faith and duty to others around them. Those who eat and drink at that holy table without faith or are involved in dissension and discord with their fellow-Christians, do eat unworthily. This is why, in our Kirk, ministers monitor publicly and privately the knowledge and lifestyles of those to be admitted to the Lord’s Table.

### **Article 24: On Public Office**

We believe and accept that empires, kingdoms, lordships and cities are differentiated and established by God. Similarly, that sovereignty in them (be it of emperors in their empires, kings in their realms, dukes and princes in their domains, or of civic rulers in cities) is an arrangement fixed by God, instituted to convey his own splendour, and for the specific good and convenience of humanity. It follows that we deem any who try to subvert or disturb the entire, long-established system of civil government to be people who are not only

enemies of humanity, but also outrageous rebels against God's express will.

It is also our conviction that persons put in authority are to be cherished, honoured, respected and held in the highest esteem, seeing that they are God's representatives. In their councils God himself sits and passes judgement – indeed even on the rulers and princes themselves. God has entrusted to them the sword [of justice] with the integrity and defence of decent people in mind, bringing to justice and punishing all known wrong-doers.

Moreover, we consider that the paramount responsibility of kings, princes, rulers and magistrates is to safeguard religion and keep it pure. Consequently, their remit includes not only the civil order, but also the security of the true religion including suppression of false worship and superstition of any kind. Examples of this were David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah and others highly commended for their zeal in the matter.

Therefore we confess and openly affirm that *whoever resists authority* (in the performance of its duty) *resists what God has appointed*,<sup>25</sup> and is therefore culpable. Besides, we assert that whoever refuses to give assistance, advice and support to princes and rulers as they assiduously labour in the exercise of their office, refuses God their aid, loyalty and counsel – and who through his representative requires it from them.

### **Article 25: The Benefits Generously Bestowed on the Church**

Granted that the true preaching of the Word of God, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of discipline according to the divine Word are the undoubted and unmistakeable marks of the true Church, we do not imply that every individual attached to such a community is a select member of Christ Jesus. For we recognize that

weeds may be sown, grow and proliferate among the wheat. That is to say, the degenerate may blend into the fellowship of the elect, and along with them may outwardly enjoy the benefits of the Word and sacrament. However, since such people are only short-term believers – with their mouths but not in their hearts – they lapse and have no perseverance. Consequently, the fruit of Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension is not theirs.

As for those of genuine, heartfelt belief who confidently express their faith in the Lord Jesus with spoken words, they shall (as we have said before) most certainly receive these gifts. First, during this life, there is forgiveness of sins, and solely by virtue of faith in Christ’s blood. This means that although sin remains and is constantly present in these mortal bodies of ours, yet we will not be charged with it. Rather, it is pardoned and covered with the righteousness of Christ.

Secondly, at the universal judgement each man and woman will be granted resurrection of the body. For ‘the sea shall give up the dead that were in it and the earth shall return those that were buried.’<sup>26</sup> The very hand of eternal God will reach out and touch the dust to make the dead arise in a state of perfection – including the body identical to the one that each person has now – each to receive glory or punishment (depending on their deeds).

Because they who in this life revel in mindless pursuits, cruelty, obscenities, superstition or false worship shall be assigned to *the unquenchable fire*.<sup>27</sup> There they shall be tormented for ever both in body and in soul, which in this world they placed at the service of the devil in abominable ways. However, we are steadfast in believing that they who persevere to the end in doing good and in strongly confessing the Lord Jesus are going to be exalted, honoured and immortalised, co-reigning for ever with Christ Jesus in eternal life. All the elect shall be conformed to his glorified body when he reappears to pass judgement and hands over the kingdom to God his Father. God will then be, and remain

for ever, in all things, blessed God in eternity, to whom with the Son and the holy Spirit be all honour and glory, now and for ever. So be it.

### [Invocation]

*Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee before him.<sup>28</sup> Grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness,<sup>29</sup> and let all peoples cling to the knowledge of your truth.*

**These [...] articles were read before Parliament and ratified by the three Estates. At Edinburgh, the 17<sup>th</sup> day of August, the year of God 1560.**

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> This Preface was not included in the official parliamentary version, but I have included it here as it is included in all separate editions and translations from 1561 onwards.
- <sup>2</sup> The sense is: God bestows his blessings only on true believers, especially if they were oppressed like the Reformers had been. Cf. Isa 4:4; 28:6, Rom 2:5, and 2 Thess 1:5 for the biblical paradigm.
- <sup>3</sup> Matt 4:4.
- <sup>4</sup> John 20:17.
- <sup>5</sup> Isaiah 66:24.
- <sup>6</sup> Matt 16:17.
- <sup>7</sup> Eph 2:10.
- <sup>8</sup> Rom 8:16.
- <sup>9</sup> Matt 15:9. Cf. Isaiah 29:13.
- <sup>10</sup> 1 John 1:8.
- <sup>11</sup> Luke 17:10.
- <sup>12</sup> Doing even more than is required in order to qualify for higher merit.

- 13 Eph 4:5–6.
- 14 Rev 14:13.
- 15 Rev 6:10.
- 16 Rev 17:1.
- 17 1 Tim 3:15.
- 18 1 Cor 14:40.
- 19 1 Cor 10:16.
- 20 Cf. Gen 2:23.
- 21 1 Cor 11:27.
- 22 Matt 26:26 and parallels.
- 23 1 Cor 11:25–26.
- 24 Gal 6:10.
- 25 Rom 13:2.
- 26 Cf. Rev 20:13.
- 27 Matt 3:12.
- 28 Ps 68:1.
- 29 Acts 4:29.