

ARTICLES OF RELIGION

AS ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ON THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF MAY IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIVE

[Extract from the Minutes of the Third General Council of the Reformed Episcopal Church, held at Chicago, May 18, 1875]:

Whereas, This church has, in its Declaration of Principles, proclaimed its belief in the doctrines of grace substantially as they were set forth in the Thirty-nine Articles; therefore,

RESOLVED: As the sense of this Council, that the Articles reported by the Committee on Doctrine and Worship, and accepted at this Council, be and are hereby adopted, as containing substantially the great truths known as the "Doctrines of Grace."

RESOLVED: That the foregoing preamble and resolution be printed as a Prefatory Note to the Articles of Religion.

ARTICLE I—*Of the Holy Trinity*

THERE is but one living and true God, who is a spirit, everlasting; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead, there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

ARTICLE II—*Of the Word, or Son of God, which was made Very Man*

THE Son, who is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed virgin of her substance: so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to satisfy Divine justice, and to reconcile us to his Father, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original sin, but also for actual sins of men.

ARTICLE III—*Of the Resurrection of Christ, and His Second Coming*

CHRIST did truly rise from death, and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth, our High Priest and Advocate, at the right hand of the Father whence he will return to judge the world in righteousness. This Second Coming is the blessed hope of the Church. The heavens have received him, till the times of the restitution of all things. To those who look for him he shall appear a second time without sin unto salvation. Then shall he change the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. He will take to himself his great power, and shall reign till he have put all enemies under his feet.

ARTICLE IV—*Of the Holy Ghost*

THE Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

It is the work of the Holy Ghost to reprove and convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; to take of the things of Christ and show them to men; to regenerate—making men willing, leading them to faith in Christ, and forming Christ in them the hope of glory; to strengthen them with might in their inner man, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith; and to secure in them that walking in the ways of God which is called the Fruit of the Spirit. The True Church is thus called out of the world, and is builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit.

ARTICLE V—*Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation*

ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: Holy Scripture is therefore the Word of God; not only does it contain the Oracles of God, but it is itself the very Oracles of God. And hence it containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, viz.:

Of the Old Testament

<i>Genesis</i>	<i>The Proverbs</i>
<i>Exodus</i>	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>
<i>Leviticus</i>	<i>Song of Solomon</i>
<i>Numbers</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>
<i>Deuteronomy</i>	<i>Jeremiah</i>
<i>Joshua</i>	<i>Lamentations of Jeremiah</i>
<i>Judges</i>	<i>Ezekiel</i>
<i>Ruth</i>	<i>Daniel</i>
<i>The 1st Book of Samuel</i>	<i>Hosea</i>
<i>The 2d Book of Samuel</i>	<i>Joel</i>
<i>The 1st Book of Kings</i>	<i>Amos</i>
<i>The 2d Book of Kings</i>	<i>Obadiah</i>
<i>The 1st Book of Chronicles</i>	<i>Jonah</i>
<i>The 2d Book of Chronicles</i>	<i>Micah</i>
<i>The Book of Ezra</i>	<i>Nahum</i>
<i>The Book of Nehemiah</i>	<i>Habakkuk</i>
<i>The Book of Esther</i>	<i>Zephaniah</i>
<i>The Book of Job</i>	<i>Haggai</i>
<i>The Psalms</i>	<i>Zechariah</i>
	<i>Malachi</i>

Of the New Testament

<i>Matthew</i>	<i>1st Timothy</i>
<i>Mark</i>	<i>2d Timothy</i>
<i>Luke</i>	<i>Titus</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>Philemon</i>
<i>Acts of the Apostles</i>	<i>Hebrews</i>
<i>Romans</i>	<i>James</i>
<i>1st Corinthians</i>	<i>1st Peter</i>
<i>2d Corinthians</i>	<i>2d Peter</i>
<i>Galatians</i>	<i>1st John</i>
<i>Ephesians</i>	<i>2d John</i>
<i>Philippians</i>	<i>3d John</i>
<i>Colossians</i>	<i>Jude</i>
<i>1st Thessalonians</i>	<i>The Revelation</i>
<i>2d Thessalonians</i>	

The Book commonly called "The Apocrypha" is not a portion of God's Word, and is not therefore to be read in churches, nor to be used in establishing any doctrine.

ARTICLE VI—*Of the Old Testament*

THE Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises; and although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, does not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, as a rule of right living, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.

ARTICLE VII—*Of Original or Birth-sin*

ORIGINAL sin standeth not in the following of Adam, as the Pelagians do vainly talk; but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is wholly gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's condemnation. Men are, as the Apostle speaks, "by nature the children of wrath." And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated. And although there is no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence or lust in such hath of itself the nature of sin.

ARTICLE VIII—*Of Man's Condition by Nature*

THE condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ first inclining us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

ARTICLE IX—*Of Works before Justification*

WORKS commonly called good before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit, have not the nature of obedience to God, forasmuch as they spring not of Faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to deserve, or to receive grace.

ARTICLE X—*Of Regeneration, or the New Birth*

REGENERATION is the creative act of the Holy Ghost, whereby he imparts to the soul a new spiritual life.

And whosoever believeth in Christ is born again, for, saith the Scripture, "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

ARTICLE XI—*Of Faith*

THE faith which brings justification is simply the reliance or dependence on Christ which accept him as the sacrifice for our sins, and as our righteousness.

We may thus rely on Christ, either tremblingly or confidingly; but in either case it is saving faith. If, though tremblingly, we rely on him in his obedience for us unto death, instantly we come into union with him, and are justified. If, however, we confidingly rely on him, then have we the comfort of our justification. Simply by faith in Christ are we justified and saved

ARTICLE XII—*Of the Justification of Man*

WE are pardoned and accounted righteous before God, only for the Merit of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ, by Faith; and not for our own Works or Deservings. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He bare our sins in his own body. It pleased our heavenly Father, of his infinite mercy, without any our desert or deserving, to provide for us the most precious sacrifice of Christ, whereby our ransom might be fully paid, the Law fulfilled, and his justice fully satisfied. So that Christ is himself the righteousness of all them that truly do believe in him. He for them paid their ransom, by his death. He for them fulfilled the Law, in his life. So that now in him, and by him, every true Christian man may be called a fulfiller of the Law. Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

ARTICLE XIII—*Of Repentance*

THE Repentance required by Scripture, is a change of mind toward God, and is the effect of the conviction of sin, wrought by the Holy Ghost.

The unconverted man may have a sense of remorse, or of shame and self-reproach, and yet he may have neither a change of mind toward God, nor any true sorrow; but when he accepts Christ as his Saviour, therein he manifests a change of mind, and is in possession of repentance unto life. The sinner comes to Christ through no labored process of repenting and sorrowing; but he comes to Christ and repentance both at once, by means of simply believing. And ever afterwards his repentance is deep and genuine in proportion as his faith is simple and childlike.

ARTICLE XIV—*Of the Sonship of Believers*

BELIEVERS in Christ are born of God, through the regenerating power of his Spirit, and are partakers of the Divine nature; for if "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," so "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

And all who are thus born of God are sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ; and therefore, without distinction of name, brethren with Christ and with one another.

ARTICLE XV—*Of Good Works*

GOOD Works, which are the Fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out, necessarily, of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit. They who truly believe will seek to do the will of God, and they who do not thus seek are not to be accounted true believers.

ARTICLE XVI—*Of Works of Supererogation*

VOLUNTARY Works, besides, over and above God's Commandments, which they call Works of Supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare, that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required: Whereas Christ saith plainly, when ye have done all that are commanded to you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

ARTICLE XVII—*Salvation only in Christ*

HOLY Scripture doth set out unto us the Name of Jesus Christ only, whereby men must be saved. His was a finished work, and completely sufficient. Without any merit or deserving on our part, he has secured to believers in him pardon, acceptance, sonship, sanctification, redemption, and eternal glory. Those who believe in him are in him complete. They are even now justified and have a present salvation; though they may not at all times have the sense of its possession.

ARTICLE XVIII—*Of Election, Predestination, and Free Will*

WHILE the Scriptures distinctly set forth the election, predestination, and calling of the people of God unto eternal life, as Christ saith: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" they no less positively affirm man's free agency and responsibility, and that salvation is freely offered to all through Christ.

This Church, accordingly, simply affirms these doctrines as the Word of God sets them forth, and submits them to the individual judgment of its members, as taught by the Holy Spirit; strictly charging them that God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and that we can be saved only by faith in Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE XIX—*Of Sin after Conversion*

THE grant of repentance is not to be denied to as fall into sin after conversion: that is to say, after, by the quickening into life by the Holy Ghost, they have turned to God by faith in Christ, and have been brought into that change of mind which is repentance unto life. For after we have received the Holy Ghost we may, through unbelief, carelessness, and worldliness, fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may arise again, and amend our lives; but every such fall is a grievous dishonor to our LORD, and a sore injury to ourselves.

ARTICLE XX—*Of Christ, alone without Sin*

CHRIST, in the truth of our nature, was made like into us in all things, sin only excepted, from which he was clearly void, both in his flesh, and in his spirit. He came to be the Lamb without spot, who, by sacrifice of himself, made *once for ever*, should take away the sin of the world; and sin (as St. John saith) was not in him. But all we the rest, although born again in Christ, yet offend in many things; and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

ARTICLE XXI—*Of the Church*

THE souls dispersed in all the world, who adhere to Christ by faith, who are partakers of the Holy Ghost, and worship the Father in spirit and in truth, are the body of Christ, the house of God, the flock of the Good Shepherd—the holy, universal Christian Church.

A visible Church of Christ is a congregation of believers in which the pure Word of God is preached, and Baptism and the LORD's Supper are duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. And those things are to be Considered requisite which the LORD himself did, he himself commanded, and his apostles confirmed.

As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome have erred: so also others have erred and may err, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith.

ARTICLE XXII—*Of the Authority of a Church*

A CHURCH hath power to decree Ceremonies, and to establish forms of worship, and laws for the government and discipline of its members, and to declare its own faith; yet it is not lawful for any Church to ordain or decide anything contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. And as the Church ought not to decree anything against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce anything to be believed for necessary of salvation. The Nicene Creed, as set forth in the Prayer-book of this Church, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought to be received and believed; for they may be proved by Holy Scripture.

ARTICLE XXIII—*Of the Authority of General Councils*

GENERAL Councils (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God), may err, and sometimes have erred, not only in worldly matters, but also in things pertaining to God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation are not binding, as such, on a Christian man's conscience, unless it may be proved that they be taken out of Holy Scripture. No law or authority can override individual responsibility, and therefore the right of private judgment: For the individual Christian, as Christ distinctly affirms, is to be judged by the Word. The only Rule of faith is God's Word written.

ARTICLE XXIV—*Of Ministering in the Congregation*

THOSE who take upon themselves the office of public preaching, or ministering the ordinances in the congregation, should be lawfully called thereunto, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be moved to this work by the Holy Ghost, and are duly accredited by the LORD's People.

That doctrine of "Apostolic Succession," by which it is taught that the ministry of the Christian Church must be derived through a series of uninterrupted ordinations, whether by tactual succession or otherwise, and that without the same there can be no valid ministry, no Christian Church, and no due ministration of Baptism and the LORD's Supper, is wholly rejected as unscriptural, and productive of great mischief.

This Church values its historic ministry, but recognizes and honors as equally valid the ministry of other Churches, even as God the Holy Ghost has accompanied their work with demonstration and power.

ARTICLE XXV—*Of the Sacraments*

BY the word Sacrament this Church is to be understood as meaning only a symbol or sign divinely appointed.

Our LORD Jesus Christ hath knit together his people in a visible company by sacraments, most few in number, most easy to be kept, most excellent in signification, viz.: Baptism and the LORD's Supper.

Those five so-called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed by the Scriptures; but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism and the LORD's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

And in such only as worthily receive Baptism and the LORD's Supper are they of spiritual benefit and yet not that of the work wrought (*ex opere operato*), as some men speak. Which word, as it is strange and unknown to Holy Scripture, so it gendereth no godly, but a very superstitious sense. In such as receive them rightly, faith is confirmed and grace increased by virtue of prayer to God. But they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves judgment, as St. Paul saith; while it is equally true that none, however conscious of unworthiness, are debarred from receiving them, if they are trusting in the LORD Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

ARTICLE XXVI—*Of Baptism*

BAPTISM represents the death of believers with Christ, and their rising with him to newness of life. It is a sign of profession, whereby they publicly declare their faith in him. It is intended as a sign of regeneration or new birth. They that are baptized are grafted into the visible Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin and of adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly set forth. The Baptism of young children is retained in this Church, as agreeable to ancient usage and not contrary to Holy Writ.

ARTICLE XXVII—*Of the LORD's Supper*

THE Supper of the LORD is a memorial of our Redemption by Christ's death, for thereby we do show forth the LORD's death till he come. It is also a symbol of the soul's feeding upon Christ. And it is a sign of the communion that we should have with one another.

Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of bread and wine into the very body and blood of Christ) in the Supper of the LORD cannot be proved by Holy Writ, is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many and idolatrous superstitions.

Consubstantiation (or the doctrine that Christ is veiled under the unchanged bread and wine, and that his very body and blood are present therein and separate the one from the other) is utterly without warrant of Scripture, is contradictory of the fact that Christ, being raised, dieth no more, and is productive, equally with transubstantiation, of idolatrous errors and practices.

We feed on Christ only through his Word and only by faith and prayer; and we feed on him, whether at our private devotions, or in our meditations, or on any occasion of public worship, or in the memorial symbolism of the Supper.

The elements of the LORD's Supper were not by Christ's ordinance designed to be reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

ARTICLE XXVIII—*Of both Kinds*

THE Cup of the LORD is not to be denied to any of his people, for both the bread and the wine, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be ministered to all Christian men alike.

ARTICLE XXIX—*Of Unworthy Persons Ministering in the Congregation*

ALTHOUGH in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the Word and ordinances; yet, forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, the believer is not deprived of the benefits of God's ordinances; because, though they be ministered by evil men, yet are they Christ's institution, and set forth his promise.

Nevertheless, it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences: and finally, being found guilty, by just judgment, be deposed

ARTICLE XXX—*Of the One Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross*

THE Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. And as there is only this one sacrifice in the Christian Church, once made, never to be repeated, so there is but the one Priest, even Jesus Christ, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses, in the which it is commonly said that the Priest offers Christ for the quick and the dead, for the remission of pain or guilt, or any representations of the LORD's Supper as a sacrifice, are blasphemous tables and dangerous deceits.

ARTICLE XXXI—*Of Certain Erroneous Doctrines and Practices*

THE Romish doctrines concerning purgatory, penance, and satisfaction, have no support from the Word of God, and are, besides, contradictory of the completeness and sufficiency of the redemption in Christ Jesus, of justification by faith, and of the sanctifying efficacy of God the Holy Ghost Praying for the dead is man's tradition, vainly invented, and is in violation of the express warnings of Almighty God to the careless and unconverted. The adoration of relics and images, and the invocation of saints, besides that they are grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, are idolatrous practices, dishonoring to God, and compromising the mediatorship of Christ. It is also repugnant to the Word of God, to have public prayer in the Church, or to minister the ordinances, in a tongue not understood by the people.

ARTICLE XXXII—*Of Confession and Absolution*

PRIVATE confession of sins to a priest, commonly known as Auricular Confession, has no foundation In the Word of God, and is a human invention. It makes the professed penitent a slave to mere human authority, entangles him in endless scruples and perplexities, and opens the way to many immoralities.

If one sin against his fellow-man, the Scripture requires him to make confession to the offended party; and so, if one sin, and bring scandal upon the Christian Society of which he is a member. And Christians may often, with manifest profit, confess to one another their Sins against God, with a view solely to instruction, correction, guidance, and encouragement in righteousness. But in any and every case confession is still to be made to God; for all sins are committed against him, as well such as offend our fellow-man, as those that offend him alone.

Priestly absolution is a blasphemous usurpation of the sole prerogative of God. None can forgive sins as against God but God alone.

The blood of Jesus Christ only can cleanse us from our Sins, and always we obtain forgiveness directly from God, whenever by faith in that blood we approach him with our confessions and prayers.

ARTICLE XXXIII—*Of the Marriage of Ministers*

CHRISTIAN Ministers are not commanded by God's Law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christian men, to marry at their own discretion.

ARTICLE XXXIV—*Of the Power of the Civil Authority*

THE power of the Civil Magistrate extendeth to all men, as well Ministers as People, in all things temporal; but hath no authority in things purely spiritual. And we hold it to be the duty of all men who are professors of the Gospel, to pay respectful obedience to the civil authority, regularly and legitimately constituted.

ARTICLE XXXV—*Of Christian Men's Goods*

THE riches and goods of Christian men are not common, but their own, to be controlled and used according to their Christian judgment. Every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability; and as a steward of God, he should use his means and influence in promoting the cause of truth and righteousness, to the glory of God.

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