

# Don't Just Do Something; *Stand There!*

Southern Seminary and the Abstract of Principles



*A Convocation Address By*

**R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President**

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

August 31, 1993

Alumni Memorial Chapel

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**SOUTHERN SEMINARY AND THE ABSTRACT OF PRINCIPLES**

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**"But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us."  
*II Thessalonians 2:13-15, NASB***

The Seminary Convocation which opens each academic year constitutes a unique gathering of the Seminary community, assembled together to welcome new students and new faculty, and to solemnize the beginning of a new Seminary term. The roots of such an academic convocation are found in the British universities of Oxford and Durham, where for centuries the university communities have assembled to mark the inauguration of formal studies.

At Southern Seminary, the tradition is as old as the institution itself, for the very earliest minutes of the school record formal services at the start of each academic year. A convocation of the Southern Seminary family, gathered for worship and commemoration, is a fitting hallmark of the Seminary's tradition, and is the cause of our gathering this day.

Today, you have witnessed a ceremony which has been a

central part of this institution's life and commitment for 134 years--the signing of the original Abstract of Principles.

The convergence of this ceremony as the first convocation of my service as president and as the occasion of placing my own signature on this sacred document, prompts me to reflect upon the meaning of this confession, on its role as the Seminary's charter of fidelity, on the priceless heritage of faithfulness of those who have preceded us, and on the responsibility we collectively bear to keep faith with this body of biblical doctrine.

Russell Reno, professor of moral theology at Creighton University, recently reflected on the role of confessions in the Church:

The impulse behind confessions of faith is doxological, the desire to speak the truth about God, to give voice to the beauty of holiness in the fullest possible sense. However, the particular forms that historical confessions take are shaped by confrontation. Their purpose is to respond to the spirit of the age by rearticulating in a pointed way the specific content of Christianity so as to face new challenges as well as new forms of old challenges. As a result, formal confessions are characterized by pointed distinctions. They are exercises in drawing boundaries where the particular force of traditional Christian claims is sharpened to heighten the contrast between orthodoxy and heresy, between true belief and false belief.... As they shape our beliefs, confessions structure our identities."<sup>1</sup>

My design today--on this day which will ever remain sacred in my memory as the occasion of my own public attestation of this confession--is for us to consider the central role of the Abstract of Principles in structuring the identity of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The roots of that role are integral to the founding of this institution in the 1850s. The very idea of a central Baptist

seminary was controversial then, and so it remained for over half a century. Baptists, through increasingly convinced of the need for an educated ministry, were suspicious of centralized structures and had long established a pattern of uneven cooperation in educational endeavors. The decline and loss of Columbian College was but the most celebrated embarrassment to Baptist educational efforts.

On the other hand, virtually all of the Baptist colleges and universities founded in the nineteenth century were established for the express purpose of training ministers of the Gospel and had developed theological departments of varying size and impact. Each had a loyal following, however, and none was ready to surrender its own institutional identity in order to meld a larger school. That was true, at least, until the rise of James Petigru Boyce.

Boyce, the son of a patriarchal South Carolina businessman and financier, brought together the threads of seminary aspiration left untied by so many others. As a twenty-nine year old theology professor at Furman University, Boyce delivered his inaugural address as what became the *Magna Carta* of Southern Seminary, "Three Changes in Theological Institutions."

Educated at Brown University and Princeton Seminary, Boyce had followed a privileged educational pathway. In presenting his vision for a uniquely Southern Baptist theological institution, he drew from his own experiences at Brown and Princeton, his tenure as a newspaper editor, his deep rootage in what historian Walter Shurden has identified as the "Charleston Tradition" in Southern Baptist life, and the wisdom which had been imparted to

him by the influence of others.

Among those who influenced Boyce, surely none exerted a more powerful moral, theological, and ministerial impact than Boyce's former pastor and future trustee chairman, Basil Manly, Sr.. Manly, who had been pastor of First Baptist Church, Charleston during Boyce's boyhood, was one of the towering figures of the South, and of the Southern Baptist Convention. Manly was also an ardent confessionalist, who believed that a confession of faith, clearly articulated and endowed with institutional authority, was a necessary precondition to Southern Baptist support for a theological seminary.

Boyce delivered his weighty address, uncertain that Southern Baptists would ever respond to his call, but certain of his rectitude in pointing the denomination toward a vision for theological education that was open at some level to all persons, regardless of their educational preparation, offered the most strenuous programs to persons of exceptional preparation, and was firmly rooted in a confession of doctrinal principles binding upon all who would teach therein.

This last point, the third of Boyce's three proposed changes, is our concern today. Boyce's call was answered in the Educational Convention of 1857 and in the eventual founding of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Boyce was himself to be the central stack pole of the founding faculty.

But Boyce did not dream nor serve alone. The most critical role in bringing the Abstract of Principles to final form was served by Basil Manly, Jr., another of the four founding faculty. The younger Manly had also enjoyed a Princeton Seminary

education. Though he began his studies for the ministry at Newton Theological Institution, a Baptist school, he was directed to Princeton by his father, at least in part because Princeton was governed by a regulative confession of faith.

At Princeton, both Manly and Boyce had studied under the imposing figure of Samuel Miller, a stalwart defender of Presbyterian theological and ecclesiastical standards, who argued that "The necessity and importance of creeds and confessions appears from the consideration that one great design of establishing a Church in our world was that she might be, in all ages, a depository, a guardian, and a witness of the truth."<sup>2</sup>

That same conviction drove Boyce, both Manlys, John A. Broadus, and those who deliberated with them, to propose an Abstract of Principles based upon the Second London Confession, which was itself a Baptist revision of the Westminster Confession. The Second London Confession had been adopted in slightly revised form by the Baptist associations in Philadelphia and Charleston, and had thus greatly influenced Baptists of both the North and the South.

Writing in 1874, Boyce detailed the principles which guided the drafting committee:

The abstract of principles must be: 1. A complete exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of grace, so that in no essential particular should they speak dubiously; 2. They should speak out clearly and distinctly as to the practices universally prevalent among us; 3. Upon no point, upon which the denomination is divided, should the Convention, and through it, the Seminary, take any position.<sup>3</sup>

This explanation clarifies the Abstract's originating process and underlines the incredible theological unity of

Southern Baptists at the middle of the eighteenth century. The members of the drafting committee were certain that Southern Baptists were undivided on "the fundamental doctrines of grace" and that the matters which threatened denominational unity--and were thus avoided by the confession--dealt with issues related to the Landmark controversies, in particular, to questions of baptism and alien immersion, and to contested terrain regarding the Lord's Supper, open and close communion.

The committee protected the integrity of the confession's witness to the doctrines of grace, and, as Boyce indicated, spoke dubiously on no essential particular. Indeed, the Abstract remains a powerful testimony to a Baptist theological heritage that is genuinely evangelical, Reformed, biblical, and orthodox.

When the Committee on the Plan of Organization brought its report in 1858--just one year before classes would begin--the Fundamental Laws of the institution stipulated that the Abstract of Principles, "selected as the fundamental principles of the Gospel, shall be subscribed to by every professor elect, as indicative of his concurrence in its correctness as an epitome of biblical truth; and it shall be the imperative duty of the Board to remove any professor of whose violation of the pledge they feel satisfied."

In that spirit, every elected and tenured faculty member of this institution has freely and willfully affixed his or her name to this historic record and to this confession of faith.

In publishing their report, the Committee also indicated that the Abstract "will always be a guarantee as to the safety of the funds now contributed, against any perversion from their

original intention." The confession was designed to be compact, but "without obscurity or weakness."<sup>4</sup>

Its articles begin with the issue of Holy Scripture, and there is affirmed the basis of all Christian knowledge--the knowledge of the true God who has graciously and freely revealed Himself to His creatures--in Scripture inspired by God which is sufficient, certain, and authoritative. In their certainty they bear witness to the perfection and unblemished truthfulness of God's self-revelation through the written Word.

From there the Abstract is bold to confess that this God who has spoken is none other than the one sovereign Lord and creator of the universe, infinite in all His divine perfections, "the maker, Preserver, and Ruler of all things."

Furthermore, God is revealed to be a Trinity of three divine persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, "without division of nature, essence, or being." Those who voice assaults ancient or modern upon the integrity of the Trinity will find no comfort here.

This God revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit "decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events." No more comprehensive witness to the reality of divine providence is imaginable. This God is neither inert nor inactive nor ineffectual. The relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom is beyond our limited understanding, but God is God, and His sovereignty is unconditioned.

The Abstract testifies to the grace-filled doctrine of election as "God's choice of some persons into everlasting



life--not because of unforeseen merit in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ." But of His mere mercy in Christ! Could there be any more eloquent affirmation of God's saving purpose in election?

The confession also points directly to the issue of human sin through the fall, whereby human beings created in the image of God and thus free from sin "transgressed the command of God," and fell from perfection and holiness, such that all now inherit a nature "corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law," and who become actual transgressors when capable of moral action. Therein is our condemnation.

But Jesus Christ, the "divinely appointed Mediator" took on human form, yet without sin, and "suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners." This same Jesus was buried, rose again the third day, and ascended to His Father, from whose right hand He "ever liveth to make intercession for His people." Beyond all this, He is "the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the Universe."

God's salvific purpose is demonstrated in regeneration, whereby the sinful heart, wholly opposed to God in itself, is quickened and enlightened "spiritually and savingly," as "a work of God's free and special grace alone." Therein is our salvation.

Then the Abstract points to repentance, by which we are "made sensible of the manifold evil" of our individual sin, respond by means of this "evangelical grace" so that with sorrow, detestation of sin, and self-abhorrence, we seek to "walk before God so as to please Him in all things."

Faith is then believing on God's authority the Gospel concerning Christ, "accepting and resting on Him alone for justification and eternal life. This too is a divine gift wrought by the Holy Spirit to those who are unworthy and, on their own part, unable to conjure faith unaided by the Spirit.

Those who have trusted in Christ by faith, are then justified and acquitted before God through the satisfaction that Christ has made, "not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ. they receiving and resting on Him."

Thereafter comes sanctification, by which the redeemed are granted divine strength so as to press "after a heavenly life in cordial obedience to all Christ's commands."

Those whom God has redeemed in Christ, "will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end. Even though they may fall, they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

In successive articles the Abstract affirms and confesses Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church, the Church as the possessor of all "needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which He hath appointed;" baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit as the sign of fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sin, and of consecration unto God; of the Lord's Supper as the Church's ordinance of commemoration of Christ's death and as "a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with Him;" of the Lord's Day as a

regular observance of worship, both public and private; of liberty of conscience on issues "which are in anything contrary to His Word, or not contained in it," and yet of subjugation to civil magistrates in all lawful things.

The Abstract also confesses that our bodies return to dust after death, but our spirits return immediately to God--"the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked, to be reserved under darkness to the judgment." At the last day, the bodies of both the just and the unjust will be raised. On the appointed Day of Judgment, God will judge the world by Jesus Christ, and "the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous into everlasting life."

In this we have inherited a priceless and grace-filled testimony to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the eternal truths revealed in Holy Scripture.

Philip Schaff, whose great work The Creeds of Christendom remains an indispensable classic, defined a creed, however it is labeled, as "a confession of faith for public use, or a form of words setting forth with authority certain articles of belief which are regarded by the framers as necessary for salvation, or at least for the well-being of the Christian Church."<sup>5</sup>

Schaff well described the purpose of the founders of Southern Seminary in framing the Abstract of Principles. It is a testimony to those central doctrines necessary to salvation, and to other issues essential to the well-being of the Christian Church.

What operative convictions are revealed in the Abstract and in the testimony of those who framed the confession?

First, that truth is always confronted with error, and that the doctrinal depository of the Church is ever in danger of compromise. The founders of this institution were quite ready to speak of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, of evangelical truth and heresy. This was a vocabulary used with individuals certain of the reality of divine revelation and the necessity of orthodox teaching. These issues were taken with deadly seriousness.

They offered no apology for stipulating doctrinal issues nor for demanding theological fidelity. In fact, Boyce specifically aimed his critical sights at "That sentiment, the inevitable precursor, or the accompaniment of all heresy--that the doctrines of theology are matters of mere speculation, and that its distinctions only logomachines and technicalities...." There is no theological indifference to be found here--no doctrinal minimalism or lowest common doctrinal denominator is the focus or sentiment.<sup>6</sup>

This is a robust, full-orbed faith from beginning to end; a faith which would establish Southern Seminary on its rightful course.

Southern Seminary was established in the very year Darwin published his The Origin of Species. Critical philosophies were already spreading from Europe to the United States. Harvard had fallen to Unitarianism and Transcendentalism. Established seminaries in the North, once considered secure in the faith, were now seen to be wavering. Boyce and his colleagues saw a "crisis in Baptist doctrine" approaching, and they were

determined that Southern Seminary be ready.<sup>7</sup>

Second, that a confession of faith is a necessary, proper, and instrumental safeguard against theological atrophy or error. As Boyce argued, "It is based upon principles and practices sanctioned by the authority of Scripture and by the usage of our people...." Further, "you will receive by this assurance that the truth committed unto you by the founders is fulfilled in accordance with their wishes, that the ministry that go forth have here learned to distinguish truth from error, and to embrace the former...."

Beyond this, the confession is a safeguard to trustees, to faculty, to students, and to the denomination:

It seems to me . . . that you owe this to yourselves, to your professors, and to the denomination at large; to yourselves because your position as trustees makes you responsible for the doctrinal positions of your professors, and the whole history of creeds has proved the difficulty without them of correcting errorists of perversions of the Word of God--to your professors, that their doctrinal sentiments may be known and approved by all, that no charges of heresy be brought against them; that none shall whisper of peculiar notions which they hold, but that in refutation of all charges they may point to this formulary as one which they hold *ex animo*, and teach in its true import--and to the denomination at large, that they may know in what truths the rising ministry are instructed, may exercise full sympathy with the necessities of the institution, and may look with confidence and affection to the pastors who come forth from it.<sup>8</sup>

Here is where the institution would stand, before God and before the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. The founders were certain that this was solid ground, and in this they were surely right.

**Third, that a theological institution bears a unique responsibility to protect the integrity of the Gospel, and that its professors should give their unmixed and public attestation to the confession of faith.**

As Boyce commented: "You will infringe the rights of no man, and you will secure the rights of those who have established here an instrumentality for the production of a sound ministry. It is no hardship to those who teach here to be called upon to sign the declaration of their principles, for there are fields of usefulness open elsewhere to every man, and none need accept your call who cannot conscientiously sign your formulary."

**Fourth, that those who teach the ministry bear the greatest burden of accountability to the churches and to the denomination.**

Boyce delivered his address as the ghost of Alexander Campbell still haunted the Baptist mind. Campbell criticized confessions of faith as assaults upon freedom of conscience and, as Boyce lamented, "threatened at one time the total destruction of our faith." As Boyce feared, "Had he occupied a chair in one of our theological institutions, that destruction might have been completed."

"It is with a single man that error usually commences;" argued Boyce. "Scarcely a single heresy has ever blighted the Church which has not owed its existence to one man of power and ability whose name has always been associated with its doctrines." Boyce specifically identified Campbellism and Arminianism.

Those who founded this institution were painfully and solemnly aware of the history of heresy which included Arianism, Nestorianism, Pelagianism, Socinianism--a parade of doctrinal deviation. And they were determined to safeguard the institution they would establish, in so far as human determination would suffice. They knew nothing of radical revisionist theologies which would follow, of process philosophy and deconstructionism, of demythologization and logical positivism. But they knew the pattern of compromise and deviation which marked the checkered history of the Church and its testimony to the truth. They had seen the radical Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and they had seen enough to understand the challenge.

The faculty of Southern Seminary would be held to a standard higher than that required of the churches, higher than that required of students, higher than that required of those who would teach at many sister institutions. As Boyce stipulated:

But of him who is to teach the ministry, who is to be the medium through which the fountain of Scripture truth is to flow to them--whose opinions more than those of any living man, are to mold their conceptions of the doctrines of the Bible, it is manifest that more is requisite. No difference, however slight, no peculiar sentiments, however speculative is here allowable. His agreement with the standard should be exact. His declaration of it should be based upon no mental reservation, upon no private understanding with those who immediately invest him into office; but the articles to be taught being distinctly laid down, he should be able to say from his knowledge of the Word of God that he knows these articles to be an exact summary of the truth therein contained.

Let those who would understand Southern Seminary understand this: That our faith is not in the Abstract of Principles, but in the God to whom it testifies; that the revealed text we seek

rightly to divide is not the Abstract of Principles, but Holy Scripture, but that this Abstract is a sacred contract and confession for those who teach here--who willingly and willfully affix their signatures to its text and their conscience to its intention. They pledge to teach "in accordance with and not contrary to" its precepts.

The Abstract is not something foreign which has been imposed upon this institution--it is the charter of its existence and its license to teach the ministry. Its purpose is unity, not disunity; its heart is bent toward common confession.

In some sectors of theological education, confessionalism is assumed and charged to be dead--a fossil of an ancient era when the Church claimed and proclaimed objective truth on the basis of divine revelation.

Some would now celebrate what Edward Farley has identified as the "collapse of the house of authority."<sup>9</sup> Confessions, creeds, doctrines, truth-claims, supernaturalism, theism, commands--all these are swept away by the acids of modernity.

It cannot be so here. Not because we are unaware of the currents of modern knowledge; not because we do not understand the challenges of a relativistic and secular age, where all issues of truth and meaning are automatically privatized and politicized; not because we are unaware of the hermeneutics of suspicion, but precisely because we have faith in God, and in His truth unchanged and unchanging.<sup>10</sup> Our motive is not to seek false refuge in an antiquarian past absolved of all its faults and blemishes, but to keep the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We fear no charges of foundationalism, positivism,



or authoritarianism. We do fear God and His divine judgment.

The Abstract is our most fundamental centering covenant with each other as faculty, students, president, and trustees. For students it is the framework within which you should expect to receive instruction and education. You will not be tested by the Abstract upon your arrival nor your departure, but it should frame your expectations and assure the confessional parameters of your study here. It is a pledge your professors have made before they enter your classroom to teach, and it is because they so highly esteem their calling to teach the ministers of the Church that they have come here and committed their lives to serve the Church and the cause of Christ by investing their lives in you. They do so gladly, heartily, and with consecration. They deserve your utmost respect, affection, and dedicated attention.

For faculty, the Abstract is the charter to teach and the standard of confessional judgment. Southern Seminary is a confessional institution, a pre-committed institution. Teachers here should expose students to the full array of modern variants of thought related to their courses of study. But these options are not value-neutral. The standard of judgment is found within the parameters of the Abstract. In this charter is found the platform for true academic excellence, where all fields of study are submitted to the most rigorous and analytical study; but also found here is the standard for confessional fidelity to the churches and the denomination, for these fields of study and research are conducted by those who have established their own confessional commitments and who make these plain and evident to those who come here to study and to learn.

But the importance and impact of the Abstract of Principles and of Southern Seminary reaches much farther. We have arrived at a critical moment for the Southern Baptist Convention and its churches. A denomination once marked by intense theological commitment and a demonstrable theological consensus has seen that doctrinal unity pass into a programmatic consciousness. We are in danger of losing our theological grammar, and, more seriously by far, of forfeiting our theological inheritance.

This crisis far outweighs the controversy which has marked the Southern Baptist Convention for the last fourteen years. That controversy is a symptom rather than the root cause. As Southern Baptists, we are in danger of becoming God's most unembarrassed pragmatists--much more enamored with statistics than invested in theological substance.

The Abstract is a reminder that we bear a responsibility to this great denomination, whose name we so proudly bear as our own. We bear the collective responsibility to call this denomination back to itself and its doctrinal inheritance. This is a true reformation and revival only the sovereign God can accomplish, but we must strive to be acceptable and usable instruments of that renewal.

The Abstract represents a clarion call to start with conviction rather than mere action. It cries out, "Don't just do something, stand there!" This reverses the conventional wisdom of the world, but it puts the emphasis rightly. Southern Baptists are now much more feverishly concerned with doing than with believing--and thus our denominational soul is in jeopardy.

This people of God must reclaim a theological tradition which understands all of our denominational activity to be founded upon prior doctrinal commitments. This is true for the denomination at every level--and of the local churches as well.

But this message is also critical for the future of theological education and of Southern Seminary. We can never measure our life and work in terms of activity and statistics. In the view of eternity, we will be judged most closely, not on the basis of how many courses were taught, how many students were trained, how many syllabi were printed, or how many books were published, but on whether or not we kept the faith. The other issues are hardly irrelevant, and they are valid markers of institutional stewardship and ministry. But there is a prior question: Does the institution and those who teach here stand for God's truth, and do so without embarrassment? May we answer that question with the humble confidence of Martin Luther, and say *Here we stand; we can do no other. God help us.*

### Conclusion

And now, as a new academic year begins, we welcome you to Southern Seminary. We are standing on sacred ground, drinking from wells we did not dig and living in a city we did not build. Here you will find God-called ministers drawn here to study, God-called professors committed here to teach, God-called administrators and fellow-servants dedicated here to the purposes for which this institution stands.

I commend professors to students and students to professors and all members of this hallowed community to each other. We

will stay about the task, we will keep the faith, and we will care for each other. We will study and teach and serve and learn together in what I pray will be a true community of consecrated scholars.

And now, as we go to classes, seminars, recital rooms, and lecture halls, may we go with the prayer offered by John Calvin before each lecture:

***May the Lord grant that we may engage in the contemplation of the mysteries of God's heavenly wisdom with ever increasing devotion to God's glory and our edification. Amen.***

- (1) Russell Reno, "At the the Crossroads of Dogma," in Reclaiming the Faith, ed. Ephriam Radner and George R. Sumner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 105.
- (2) Samuel Miller, Doctrinal Integrity (Philadelphia, 1824), p. 11.
- (3) James P. Boyce, "The Doctrinal Position of the Seminary," The Western Recorder, June 20, 1874. Fifth in a series of articles. This article was reprinted in Review and Expositor, January, 1944, pp. 18-24.
- (4) "Report of the Committee on Organization," The Southern Baptist, May 11, 1858, p. 1.
- (5) Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes, Three volumes (New York: Harper and Row, 1931), I:3.
- (6) James Petigru Boyce, "Three Changes in Theological Institutions," in James Petigru Boyce: Selected Writings, ed. Timothy F. George (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1989), p. 49.
- (7) Ibid., p. 49.
- (8) Ibid., p. 52. All further citations from James P. Boyce are from this address, ad passim, unless otherwise noted.
- (9) Edward Farley, Ecclesial Reflection: An Anatomy of Theological Method (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), see esp. pp. 165-170.
- (10) Phrase borrowed from Martyn Lloyd--Jones, Truth Unchanged, Unchanging (Westchester, IL: Crossway Publishers, 1993).

*Abstracts of Principles*  
OF THE  
*Southern Baptist Theological  
Seminary*

ABSTRACT OF PRINCIPLES  
OF THE  
SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY

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**I. THE SCRIPTURES.**

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.

**II. GOD.**

There is but one God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of himself, all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience.

**III. THE TRINITY.**

God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being.

**IV. PROVIDENCE.**

God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any wise to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures.

**V. ELECTION.**

Election is God's eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life—not because of foreseen merit in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ—in consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified.

**VI. THE FALL OF MAN.**

God originally created man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors.

**VII. THE MEDIATOR.**

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the divinely appointed mediator between God and man. Having taken upon Himself human nature, yet without sin, He perfectly fulfilled the law, suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended to His Father, at whose right hand He ever liveth to make intercession for His people. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the Universe.

#### **VIII. REGENERATION.**

Regeneration is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, who quickeneth the dead in trespasses and sins, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone.

#### **IX. REPENTANCE.**

Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being, by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbleth himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things.

#### **X. FAITH.**

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatsoever is revealed in His Word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness.

#### **XI. JUSTIFICATION.**

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made; not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith.

#### **XII. SANCTIFICATION.**

Those who have been regenerated are also sanctified, by God's word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification is progressive through the supply of Divine strength, which all saints seek to obtain, pressing after a heavenly life in cordial obedience to all Christ's commands.

#### **XIII. PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.**

Those whom God hath accepted in the Beloved, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall, through neglect and temptation, into sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the Church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

#### **XIV. THE CHURCH.**

The Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church, which is composed of all his true disciples, and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. According to his commandment, Christians are to associate themselves into particular societies or churches; and to each of these churches he hath given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which he hath appointed. The regular officers of a Church are Bishops or Elders, and Deacons.



#### **XV. BAPTISM.**

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of his giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. It is prerequisite to church fellowship, and to participation in the Lord's Supper.

#### **XVI. THE LORD'S SUPPER.**

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and wine, and to be observed by his churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate his death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with him, and of their church fellowship.

#### **XVII. THE LORD'S DAY.**

The Lord's day is a Christian institution for regular observance, and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, resting from worldly employments and amusements, works of necessity and mercy only excepted.

#### **XVIII. LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.**

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word, or not contained in it. Civil magistrates being ordained of God, subjection in all lawful things commanded by them ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

#### **XIX. THE RESURRECTION.**

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God—the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked, to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised.

#### **XX. THE JUDGMENT.**

God hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when every one shall receive according to his deeds: the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life.

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