

ANABAPTIST CONFESSIONS  
OF  
FAITH

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## Waldensian Confessions of Faith, 1120

- 1.** We believe and firmly maintain all that is contained in the twelve articles of the symbol, commonly called the apostles' creed, and we regard as heretical whatever is inconsistent with the said twelve articles.
- 2.** We believe that there is one God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 3.** We acknowledge for sacred canonical scriptures the books of the Holy Bible. (Here follows the title of each, exactly conformable to our received canon, but which it is deemed, on that account, quite unnecessary to particularize.)
- 4.** The books above-mentioned teach us: That there is one GOD, almighty, unbounded in wisdom, and infinite in goodness, and who, in His goodness, has made all things. For He created Adam after His own image and likeness. But through the enmity of the Devil, and his own disobedience, Adam fell, sin entered into the world, and we became transgressors in and by Adam.
- 5.** That Christ had been promised to the fathers who received the law, to the end that, knowing their sin by the law, and their unrighteousness and insufficiency, they might desire the coming of Christ to make satisfaction for their sins, and to accomplish the law by Himself.
- 6.** That at the time appointed of the Father, Christ was born – a time when iniquity everywhere abounded, to make it manifest that it was not for the sake of any good in ourselves, for all were sinners, but that He, who is true, might display His grace and mercy towards us.
- 7.** That Christ is our life, and truth, and peace, and righteousness – our shepherd and advocate, our sacrifice and priest, who died for the salvation of all who should believe, and rose again for their justification.
- 8.** And we also firmly believe, that there is no other mediator, or advocate with God the Father, but Jesus Christ. And as to the Virgin Mary, she was holy, humble, and full of grace; and this we also believe concerning all other saints, namely, that they are waiting in heaven for the resurrection of their bodies at the day of judgment.
- 9.** We also believe, that, after this life, there are but two places – one for those that are saved, the other for the damned, which [two] we call paradise and hell, wholly denying that imaginary purgatory of Antichrist, invented in

opposition to the truth.

**10.** Moreover, we have ever regarded all the inventions of men [in the affairs of religion] as an unspeakable abomination before God; such as the festival days and vigils of saints, and what is called holy-water, the abstaining from flesh on certain days, and such like things, but above all, the masses.

**11.** We hold in abhorrence all human inventions, as proceeding from Anti-christ, which produce distress (Alluding probably to the voluntary penances and mortification imposed by the Catholics on themselves), and are prejudicial to the liberty of the mind.

**12.** We consider the Sacraments as signs of holy things, or as the visible emblems of invisible blessings. We regard it as proper and even necessary that believers use these symbols or visible forms when it can be done. Notwithstanding which, we maintain that believers may be saved without these signs, when they have neither place nor opportunity of observing them.

**13.** We acknowledge no sacraments [as of divine appointment] but baptism and the Lord's supper.

**14.** We honour the secular powers, with subjection, obedience, promptitude, and payment.

## Waldenses Confession of 1544

- 1.** We believe that there is but one God, who is a Spirit – the Creator of all things – the Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all; who is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth – upon whom we are continually dependent, and to whom we ascribe praise for our life, food, raiment, health, sickness, prosperity, and adversity. We love him as the source of all goodness; and reverence him as that sublime being, who searches the reins and trieth the hearts of the children of men.
- 2.** We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son and image of the Father – that in Him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells, and that by Him alone we know the Father. He is our Mediator and advocate; nor is there any other name given under heaven by which we can be saved. In His name alone we call upon the Father, using no other prayers than those contained in the Holy Scriptures, or such as are in substance agreeable thereunto.
- 3.** We believe in the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, proceeding from the Father, and from the Son; by whose inspiration we are taught to pray; being by Him renewed in the spirit of our minds; who creates us anew unto good works, and from whom we receive the knowledge of the truth.
- 4.** We believe that there is one holy church, comprising the whole assembly of the elect and faithful, that have existed from the beginning of the world, or that shall be to the end thereof. Of this church the Lord Jesus Christ is the head – it is governed by His word and guided by the Holy Spirit. In the church it behooves all Christians to have fellowship. For her He [Christ] prays incessantly, and His prayer for it is most acceptable to God, without which indeed their could be no salvation.
- 5.** We hold that the ministers of the church ought to be unblameable both in life and doctrine; and if found otherwise, that they ought to be deposed from their office, and others substituted in their stead; and that no person ought to presume to take that honour unto himself but he who is called of God as was Aaron – that the duties of such are to feed the flock of God, not for filthy lucre's sake, or as having dominion over God's heritage, but as being examples to the flock, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, and in chastity.
- 6.** We acknowledge, that kings, princes, and governors, are the appointed and

established ministers of God, whom we are bound to obey [in all lawful and civil concerns]. For they bear the sword for the defence of the innocent, and the punishment of evil doers; for which reason we are bound to honour and pay them tribute. From this power and authority, no man can exempt himself as is manifest from the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, who voluntarily paid tribute, not taking upon himself any jurisdiction of temporal power.

**7.** We believe that in the ordinance of baptism the water is the visible and external sign, which represents to us that which, by virtue of God's invisible operation, is within us – namely, the renovation of our minds, and the mortification of our members through [the faith of] Jesus Christ. And by this ordinance we are received into the holy congregation of God's people, previously professing and declaring our faith and change of life.

**8.** We hold that the Lord's supper is a commemoration of, and thanksgiving for, the benefits which we have received by His sufferings and death – and that it is to be received in faith and love – examining ourselves, that so we may eat of that bread and drink of that cup, as it is written in the Holy Scriptures.

**9.** We maintain that marriage was instituted of God. That it is holy and honourable, and ought to be forbidden to none, provided there be no obstacle from the divine word.

**10.** We contend, that all those in whom the fear of God dwells, will thereby be led to please him, and to abound in the good works [of the gospel] which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them – which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, sobriety, and the other good works enforced in the Holy Scriptures.

**11.** On the other hand, we confess that we consider it to be our duty to beware of false teachers, whose object is to divert the minds of men from the true worship of God, and to lead them to place their confidence in the creature, as well as to depart from the good works of the gospel, and to regard the inventions of men.

**12.** We take the Old and the New Testament for the rule of our life, and we agree with the general confession of faith contained in [what is usually termed] the apostles' creed.

# The Schleithem Confession of Faith

Translated by J. C. Wenger

Adopted by a Swiss Brethren Conference, February 24, 1527

**Editorial Note:** The Seven Articles of Schleithem were written with Michael Sattler of Stauffen, Germany, as the chief author, it is believed. Sattler was originally an officer in a Roman Catholic monastery. He early embraced the faith of the Swiss Brethren and served until his early martyrdom (May 1527) as an outstanding leader. Van Braght lists the nine charges on which Sattler was sentenced to death, together with Sattler's reply. He also gives a brief account of his trial and a copy of a letter from "Brother Michael Sattler of Staufen" to "the Church of God at Horb" (1938 *Martyrs' Mirror*, 416-420). In his farewell pastoral letter Sattler wrote, "Remember our assembly, and strictly follow that which was resolved on therein," an undoubted reference to the Seven Articles and a hint as to his own leadership in the meeting.

The Schleithem Confession was widely circulated. Ulrich Zwingli translated it into Latin and attempted to refute it already in 1527. It was in print in its original German form as early as 1533. John Calvin used a now-lost French translation of the Seven Articles in his refutation of Anabaptism published in 1544. By 1560 there was also a Dutch translation of the confession. The English translation in W. J. McGlothlin's *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, Philadelphia, 1911, 3-9, was made from Zwingli's Latin translation. For an excellent survey of known manuscript copies and printed editions of the Schleithem Confession, see Robert Friedmann's article in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XVI, 2 (April, 1942), 82-87.

The Seven Articles are not at all a full statement of Christian doctrine. They were written in days of fierce persecution when there was little interest in or possibility of erecting a grand system of Christian theology. Sattler wished only to set up certain pillars of truth against the unsound teachings of that period. He seems in particular to be setting up a defense against the doctrines of some "false brethren" with antinomian tendencies.

Along with the writings of Conrad Grebel (very limited in extent) and Pilgram Marpeck (extensive, but not of the quality of the Dutch Menno Simons) the Schleithem Confession is of great significance for the determination of the teaching of the first Swiss Brethren.

The following is my translation of the full text of the pastoral letter, apparently from “Brother Michael Sattler,” and which includes the Seven Articles of faith. For the German text used, see Walther Köhler: *Brüderlich Vereinigung etzlicher Kinder Gottes sieben Artikel betreffend.....* (Flugschriften aus der ersten Jahren der Reformation, 2. Band, 3. Heft), Leipzig, 1908, 305-316, also Heinrich Böhmer: *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges und der Wiedertäufer*, Bonn, 1910; second edition, 1921; reprint, Berlin, 1933, 27-35. The translation is somewhat free in places, particularly in the citation of Bible verses where the King James Version was followed unless the German text deviated too markedly. Here is the translation, reprinted from *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XIX, 4 (October, 1945), 247-253.

Note the words in brackets are inserted by the translator to clarify the text. The words in parentheses are a part of the original text. [J. C. W.]

### **BROTHERLY UNION OF A NUMBER OF CHILDREN OF GOD CONCERNING SEVEN ARTICLES**

May joy, peace and mercy from our Father through the atonement of the blood of Christ Jesus, together with the gifts of the Spirit--Who is sent from the Father to all believers for their strength and comfort and for their perseverance in all tribulation until the end, Amen--be to all those who love God, who are the children of light, and who are scattered everywhere as it has been ordained of God our Father, where they are with one mind assembled together in one God and Father of us all: Grace and peace of heart be with you all, Amen.

Beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord: First and supremely we are always concerned for your consolation and the assurance of your conscience (which was previously misled) so that you may not always remain foreigners to us and by right almost completely excluded, but that you may turn again to the true implanted members of Christ, who have been armed through patience and knowledge of themselves, and have therefore again been united with us in the strength of a godly Christian spirit and zeal for God.

It is also apparent with what cunning the devil has turned us aside, so that he might destroy and bring to an end the work of God which in mercy and grace has been partly begun in us. But Christ, the true Shepherd of our souls, Who has begun this in us, will certainly direct the same and teach [us] to His honor

and our salvation, Amen.

Dear brethren and sisters, we who have been assembled in the Lord at Schleithem on the Border, make known in points and articles to all who love God that as concerns us we are of one mind to abide in the Lord as God's obedient children, [His] sons and daughters, we who have been and shall be separated from the world in everything, [and] completely at peace. To God alone be praise and glory without the contradiction of any brethren. In this we have perceived the oneness of the Spirit of our Father and of our common Christ with us. For the Lord is the Lord of peace and not of quarreling, as Paul points out. That you may understand in what articles this has been formulated you should observe and note [the following].

A very great offense has been introduced by certain false brethren among us, so that some have turned aside from the faith, in the way they intend to practice and observe the freedom of the Spirit and of Christ. But such have missed the truth and to their condemnation are given over to the lasciviousness and self-indulgence of the flesh. They think faith and love may do and permit everything, and nothing will harm them nor condemn them, since they are believers.

Observe, you who are God's members in Christ Jesus, that faith in the Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ does not take such form. It does not produce and result in such things as these false brethren and sisters do and teach. Guard yourselves and be warned of such people, for they do not serve our Father, but their father, the devil.

But you are not that way. For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. You understand me well and [know] the brethren whom we mean. Separate yourselves from them for they are perverted. Petition the Lord that they may have the knowledge which leads to repentance, and [pray] for us that we may have constancy to persevere in the way which we have espoused, for the honor of God and of Christ, His Son, Amen.

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The articles which we discussed and on which we were of one mind are these:

1. Baptism

2. The Ban [Excommunication]
3. Breaking of Bread
4. Separation from the Abomination
5. Pastors in the Church
6. The Sword
7. The Oath.

*First*, Observe concerning baptism: Baptism shall be given to all those who have learned repentance and amendment of life, and who believe truly that their sins are taken away by Christ, and to all those who walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and wish to be buried with Him in death, so that they may be resurrected with Him, and to all those who with this significance request it [baptism] of us and demand it for themselves. This excludes all infant baptism, the highest and chief abomination of the pope. In this you have the foundation and testimony of the apostles. Mt. 28, Mk. 16, Acts 2, 8, 16, 19. This we wish to hold simply, yet firmly and with assurance.

*Second*, We are agreed as follows on the ban: The ban shall be employed with all those who have given themselves to the Lord, to walk in His commandments, and with all those who are baptized into the one body of Christ and who are called brethren or sisters, and yet who slip sometimes and fall into error and sin, being inadvertently overtaken. The same shall be admonished twice in secret and the third time openly disciplined or banned according to the command of Christ. Mt. 18. But this shall be done according to the regulation of the Spirit (Mt. 5) before the breaking of bread, so that we may break and eat one bread, with one mind and in one love, and may drink of one cup.

*Third*, In the breaking of bread we are of one mind and are agreed [as follows]: All those who wish to break one bread in remembrance of the broken body of Christ, and all who wish to drink of one drink as a remembrance of the shed blood of Christ, shall be united beforehand by baptism in one body of Christ which is the church of God and whose Head is Christ. For as Paul points out we cannot at the same time be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils; we cannot at the same time drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of the devil. That is, all those who have fellowship with the dead works of darkness have no part in the light Therefore all who

follow the devil and the world have no part with those who are called unto God out of the world. All who lie in evil have no part in the good.

Therefore it is and must be [thus]: Whoever has not been called by one God to one faith, to one baptism, to one Spirit, to one body, with all the children of God's church, cannot be made [into] one bread with them, as indeed must be done if one is truly to break bread according to the command of Christ.

*Fourth*, We are agreed [as follows] on separation: A separation shall be made from the evil and from the wickedness which the devil planted in the world; in this manner, simply that we shall not have fellowship with them [the wicked] and not run with them in the multitude of their abominations. This is the way it is: Since all who do not walk in the obedience of faith, and have not united themselves with God so that they wish to do His will, are a great abomination before God, it is not possible for anything to grow or issue from them except abominable things. For truly all creatures are in but two classes, good and bad, believing and unbelieving, darkness and light, the world and those who [have come] out of the world, God's temple and idols, Christ and Belial; and none can have part with the other.

To us then the command of the Lord is clear when He calls upon us to be separate from the evil and thus He will be our God and we shall be His sons and daughters.

He further admonishes us to withdraw from Babylon and the earthly Egypt that we may not be partakers of the pain and suffering which the Lord will bring upon them.

From this we should learn that everything which is not united with our God and Christ cannot be other than an abomination which we should shun and flee from. By this is meant all popish and antipopish works and church services, meetings and church attendance, (\*) drinking houses, civic affairs, the commitments [made in] unbelief and other things of that kind, which are highly regarded by the world and yet are carried on in flat contradiction to the command of God, in accordance with all the unrighteousness which is in the world. From all these things we shall be separated and have no part with them for they are nothing but an abomination, and they are the cause of our being hated before our Christ Jesus, Who has set us free from the slavery of the flesh and fitted us for the service of God through the Spirit Whom He has given us.

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(\* ) This severe judgment on the state churches must be understood in the light of sixteenth century conditions. The state clergymen were in many cases careless and carnal men. All citizens in a given province were considered members of the state church because they had been made Christians ("chrisened") by infant baptism. Also, in 1527 Zurich had begun to use capital punishment on the Swiss Brethren, with the full approval of the state church leaders. Sattler himself was burned at the stake less than three months after the Schleithem conference.

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Therefore there will also unquestionably fall from us the unchristian, devilish weapons of force – such as sword, armor and the like, and all their use [either] for friends or against one's enemies I would like the records – by virtue of the word of Christ, Resist not [him that is] evil.

*Fifth*, We are agreed as follows on pastors in the church of God: The pastor in the church of God shall, as Paul has prescribed, be one who out-and-out has a good report of those who are outside the faith. This office shall be to read, to admonish and teach, to warn, to discipline, to ban in the church, to lead out in prayer for the advancement of all the brethren and sisters, to lift up the bread when it is to be broken, and in all things to see to the care of the body of Christ, in order that it may be built up and developed, and the mouth of the slanderer be stopped.

This one moreover shall be supported of the church which has chosen him, wherein he may be in need, so that he who serves the Gospel may live of the Gospel as the Lord has ordained. But if a pastor should do something requiring discipline, he shall not be dealt with except [on the testimony of] two or three witnesses. And when they sin they shall be disciplined before all in order that the others may fear.

But should it happen that through the cross this pastor should be banished or led to the Lord [through martyrdom] another shall be ordained in his place in the same hour so that God's little flock and people may not be destroyed.

*Sixth*, We are agreed as follows concerning the sword: The sword is ordained of God outside the perfection of Christ. It punishes and puts to death the wicked, and guards and protects the good. In the Law the sword was ordained

for the punishment of the wicked and for their death, and the same [sword] is [now] ordained to be used by the worldly magistrates.

In the perfection of Christ, however, only the ban is used for a warning and for the excommunication of the one who has sinned, without putting the flesh to death, -- simply the warning and the command to sin no more.

**1.** Now it will be asked by many who do not recognize [this as] the will of Christ for us, whether a Christian may or should employ the sword against the wicked for the defence and protection of the good, or for the sake of love.

Our reply is unanimously as follows: Christ teaches and commands us to learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart and so shall we find rest to our souls. Also Christ says to the heathenish woman who was taken in adultery, not that one should stone her according to the law of His Father (and yet He says, As the Father has commanded me, thus I do), but in mercy and forgiveness and warning, to sin no more. Such [an attitude] we also ought to take completely according to the rule of the ban.

**2.** Secondly, it will be asked concerning the sword, whether a Christian shall pass sentence in worldly disputes and strife such as unbelievers have with one another.

This is our united answer: Christ did not wish to decide or pass judgment between brother and brother in the case of the inheritance, but refused to do so. Therefore we should do likewise.

**3.** Thirdly, it will be asked concerning the sword, Shall one be a magistrate if one should be chosen as such?

The answer is as follows: They wished to make Christ king, but He fled and did not view it as the arrangement of His Father. Thus shall we do as He did, and follow Him, and so shall we not walk in darkness. For He Himself says, He who wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Also, He Himself forbids the [employment of] the force of the sword saying, The worldly princes lord it over them, etc., but not so shall it be with you. Further, Paul says, Whom God did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, etc. Also Peter says, Christ has suffered (not ruled) and left us an example, that ye should follow His steps.

Finally it will be observed that it is not appropriate for a Christian to serve as

a magistrate because of these points: The government magistracy is according to the flesh, but the Christians' is according to the Spirit; their houses and dwelling remain in this world, but the Christians' are in heaven; their citizenship is in this world, but the Christians' citizenship is in heaven; the weapons of their conflict and war are carnal and against the flesh only, but the Christians' weapons are spiritual, against the fortification of the devil. The worldlings are armed with steel and iron, but the Christians are armed with the armor of God, with truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God. In brief, as is the mind of Christ toward us, so shall the mind of the members of the body of Christ be through Him in all things, that there may be no schism in the body through which it would be destroyed. For every kingdom divided against itself will be destroyed. Now since Christ is as it is written of Him, His members must also be the same, that His body may remain complete and united to its own advancement and upbuilding.

*Seventh*, We are agreed as follows concerning the oath: The oath is a confirmation among those who are quarreling or making promises. In the Law it is commanded to be performed in God's Name, but only in truth, not falsely. Christ, who teaches the perfection of the Law, prohibits all swearing to His [followers], whether true or false, -- neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by Jerusalem, nor by our head, -- and that for the reason which He shortly thereafter gives, For you are not able to make one hair white or black. So you see it is for this reason that all swearing is forbidden: we cannot fulfill that which we promise when we swear, for we cannot change [even] the very least thing on us.

**1.** Now there are some who do not give credence to the simple command of God, but object with this question: Well now, did not God swear to Abraham by Himself (since He was God) when He promised him that He would be with him and that He would be his God if he would keep His commandments, -- why then should I not also swear when I promise to someone?

Answer: Hear what the Scripture says: God, since He wished more abundantly to show unto the heirs the immutability of His counsel, inserted an oath, that by two immutable things (in which it is impossible for God to lie) we might have a strong consolation. Observe the meaning of this Scripture: What God forbids you to do, He has power to do, for everything is possible for

Him. God swore an oath to Abraham, says the Scripture, so that He might show that His counsel is immutable. That is, no one can withstand nor thwart His will; therefore He can keep His oath. But we can do nothing, as is said above by Christ, to keep or perform [our oaths]: therefore we shall not swear at all [nichts schitweren].

**2.** Then others further say as follows: It is not forbidden of God to swear in the New Testament, when it is actually commanded in the Old, but it is forbidden only to swear by heaven, earth, Jerusalem and our head.

Answer: Hear the Scripture, He who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by Him who sitteth thereon. Observe: it is forbidden to swear by heaven, which is only the throne of God: how much more is it forbidden [to swear] by God Himself! Ye fools and blind, which is greater, the throne or Him that sitteth thereon?

**3.** Further some say, Because evil is now [in the world, and] because man needs God for [the establishment of] the truth, so did the apostles Peter and Paul also swear.

Answer: Peter and Paul only testify of that which God promised to Abraham with the oath. They themselves promise nothing, as the example indicates clearly. Testifying and swearing are two different things. For when a person swears he is in the first place promising future things, as Christ was promised to Abraham Whom we a long time afterwards received. But when a person bears testimony he is testifying about the present, whether it is good or evil, as Simeon spoke to Mary about Christ and testified, Behold this [child] is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against.

Christ also taught us along the same line when He said, Let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. He says, Your speech or word shall be yea and nay. [However] when one does not wish to understand, he remains closed to the meaning. Christ is simply Yea and Nay, and all those who seek Him simply will understand His Word. Amen.

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Dear brethren and sisters in the Lord: These are the articles of certain brethren who had heretofore been in error and who had failed to agree in the

true understanding, so that many weaker consciences were perplexed, causing the Name of God to be greatly slandered. Therefore there has been a great need for us to become of one mind in the Lord, which has come to pass. To God be praise and glory!

Now since you have so well understood the will of God which has been made known by us, it will be necessary for you to achieve perseveringly, without interruption, the known will of God. For you know well what the servant who sinned knowingly heard as his recompense.

Everything which you have unwittingly done and confessed as evil doing is forgiven you through the believing prayer which is offered by us in our meeting for all our shortcomings and guilt. [This state is yours] through the gracious forgiveness of God and through the blood of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Keep watch on all who do not walk according to the simplicity of the divine truth which is stated in this letter from [the decisions of] our meeting, so that everyone among us will be governed by the rule of the ban and henceforth the entry of false brethren and sisters among us may be prevented.

Eliminate from you that which is evil and the Lord will be your God and you will be His sons and daughters.

Dear brethren, keep in mind what Paul admonishes Timothy when he says, The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a people of His own, zealous of good works. Think on this and exercise yourselves therein and the God of peace will be with you.

May the Name of God be hallowed eternally and highly praised, Amen. May the Lord give you His peace, Amen.

The Acts of Schleithem on the Border [Canton Schaffhausen, Switzerland], on Matthias' [Day],\* Anno MDXXVII.

# DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH, 1527

## DISCIPLINE OF THE BELIEVERS: HOW A CHRISTIAN IS TO LIVE

(*Ordnung der Gemein, wie ein Christ leben soll*)

### INTRODUCTION

(missing in the *Geschicht-Buch*)

Since the almighty God and heavenly Father is permitting His eternal and allpowerful Word to be proclaimed to all creatures in these most perilous time (Col.1) and has called us at this time out of pure grace into His marvelous light (1 Pet.3) to one body, one spirit, and one faith, united in the bonds of love (Eph.4;1 Cor.1) to which we have all agreed, in order that our calling be found worthy, not only with the word of the mouth but in the truth and power (2Thess.1; 1Thess.1; 1Cor.4; James 1), we have all in one another's presence openly agreed to regulate everything in the best possible way. For the improvement of our brotherhood [*Gemein*, so translated throughout], for the praise and honor of the Lord, and for the service of all the needs, we have unanimously agreed that this *Ordnung* shall be kept among us by all the brethren and sisters. When however, a brother or sister is able to produce a better *Ordnung* it shall be accepted from him at any time. (1 Cor.14).

### FIRST ARTICLE

And beginning: when the brethren are together they shall sincerely ask God for grace that He might reveal His divine will and help to note it (Ps.86,118) and when the brethren part they shall thank God and pray for all the brethren and sisters of the entire brotherhood (1Thess. 1 and 5; 2Thess. 1 and 2; 2Cor. 1; Col.1,3,4).

### SECOND ARTICLE

In the second place: we shall sincerely and in a Christian spirit admonish one another in the Lord to remain constant (Heb.10:1; Acts 14,15,18; Col. 2). To meet often, at least four or five times, and if possible...even at midweek [prayer meetings?] (1Cor. 11,14; Acts 1,2,9.11.20; Heb.10; 2Cor. 6; Matt.18).

### THIRD ARTICLE

In the third place: when a brother or sister leads a disorderly life it shall be

punished: if he does so publicly [He} shall be kindly admonished before all the brethren (Gal. 2,6; 1Cor.5; 2Thess.3); if it is secret it shall be punished in secret, according to the dommand of Christ (Matt.18).

#### **FOURTH ARTICLE**

In the fourth place: every brother and sister shall yield himself in God to the brotherhood completely with body and life, and hold in common all gifts received of God (Acts 2 and 4; 1Cor. 11,12; 2Cor. 8 and 9), [and] contribute to the common need so that brethren and sisters will always be helped (Rom. 12); needy members shall receive from the brotherhood as among the Christians at the time of the apostles (Acts 2,4,5; 1Cor. 11,12; Eph. 4; Prov.5; Matt. 8,15,16,17,19; Luke 3,6,8,9,10,12,14,18; 1John 1,2,3,4; Mark 3,10,12; Gal. 6; Heb. 12; Dan. 4,8; 1Tim. 1; 1Cor. 14,16; Rom. 6,18; James 1; Phil.2).

#### **FIFTH ARTICLE**

The elders [*Vorsteher*] and preachers chosen from the brotherhood shall with zeal look after the needs of the poor, and with zeal in the Lord according to the command of the Lord extend what is needed for the sake of and instead of the brotherhood (Gal. 2; 2Cor. 8,9; Rom. 15; Acts 6).

#### **SIXTH ARTICLE**

In the sixth place: a decent conduct (*ehrbarer Wandel*) shall be kept among them (Rom. 12,13; Phil. 1,2; Phil. 1,2; 1Pet. 2,3; 1Cor. 1,3; Gal. 5; Eph. 5) before everyone (Titus 3; Matt. 5; 1Pet. 3) and no one shall carelessly conduct himself before the brotherhood both with words or deeds (Rom. 1,6; 2Tim. 2), nor before those who are “outside” (1Thess. 5; 1Pet. 3).

#### **SEVENTH ARTICLE**

In the seventh place: in the meeting one is to speak and the others listen and judge what is spoken, and not two or three stand together (1Cor.14). No one shall curse or swear (Matt. 5; Rom. 3; James 5) nor shall idle gossip be carried on, so that the meek may be spared (1Cor.15; Eph. 5; Col. 3; 2Tim. 2; Psalm 118). [*Geschicht-Buch* here citets only Ecclesiasticus 23].

#### **EIGHTH ARTICLE**

In the ninth place: what is officially done among the brethren and sisters in the brotherhood [*Geschicht-Buch*: “or is judged”] shall not be made public before the world. The good-hearted [an interested but not yet converted or

committed] person, before he comes to the brethren in the brotherhood shall be taught [*GeschichtBuch*: “the Gospel”] (Mark 16; Rom.1; Col.1). When he has learned [*Geschicht-Buch*: “understood”] and bears a sincere desire for it, and if he agrees to the content of the Gospel, he shall be received by the Christian brotherhood as a brother or a sister, that is, as a fellow member of Christ (Matt. 7; Prov. 19,29; Col. 4; Rom. 14; 2Cor. 6; 1Cor. 10; 1Tim. 6; Matt.10). But this shall not be made public before the world to spare the conscience and for the sake of the purpose (1Cor. 9,10; Matt. 15).

### **TENTH ARTICLE<sup>11</sup>**

In the tenth place: all the brethren and sisters after they have committed themselves, shall accept and bear with patience all that He sends us [*Geschicht-Buch*: “accept with gratitude and bear with patience”] (Rom. 6; John 13; Matt. 16; Luke 9; 1Pet. 4; 2Cor. 12), and [shall] not let themselves be easily frightened by every wind and cry. [The *Geschicht-Buch* adds as a marginal note: “to be ready for cross and suffering.”]

### **ELEVENTH ARTICLE**

When brethren and sisters are together, being one body and one bread in the Lord and of one mind, then they shall keep the Lord's Supper as a memorial of the Lord's death (Matt. 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; 1Cor. 11), whereby each one shall be admonished to become conformed to the Lord in the obedience of the Father (Phil. 2,3; 1Pet. 2,4; Rom. 8; 1John 2--Obedience: Rom. 2; Phil. 2; 2Cor. 2,10; 2Thess. 1; 1Pet.1).

### **TWELFTH ARTICLE<sup>12</sup>**

In the twelfth place: as we have taught and admonished the brethren and sisters we shall always watch and wait for the Lord that we may be worthy to enter [the kingdom] with Him when He comes, and to escape or flee from the evil that will come to the world. Amen. (Matt. 25; Luke 21; 1Thess. 5; 1Pet. 5; 2Pet. 3; Rom. 2).

God be merciful to me. I commend my spirit and your spirit with our brother in Christ into the hand of the eternal Father. Amen.

<sup>11</sup> Reveals the threat of persecution standing over the group and challenges members of the brotherhood to claim the attitude of the suffering church.

<sup>12</sup> The eschatological emphasis appeared later in stronger expression in Jacob Hutter.

# Ridemann's Rechenschaft, 1540

## **I. DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE SPIRIT**

An assembly of children of God who have separated themselves from all unclean things is the church. It is gathered together, has being, and is kept by the Holy Spirit. Sinners may not be members unless and until they have repented of their sins. The essence of the church is its bearing of the Light; it is a lantern of righteousness in a world of unbelief, darkness, and blindness. It is a pillar and ground of the truth, which is conformed, ratified, and brought to pass in her by the Holy Spirit. The “power and key” to forgive sins which was received by Christ from the Father is given to the church as a whole and not to individual persons. In its nature the church is spiritual, but concretely it is known as the pure sacred community. Church assembly and community are equated together.

## **II. DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION**

Redemption means the working of the Spirit in the individual and his preparation for entrance into the church. It is the Spirit of Christ that leads into the church. (“The Christ of Ridemann is the inwardly experienced and fought-for Christ.”) The work of Christ in man means a complete conversion and rebirth. Salvation and redemption consists in the liberation from the dominion of sin. Apart from Christ there is no goodness. Salvation also is a new covenant. God has cast out from our heart evil, sin, and the lust to sin, and we are to seek, love, hear, and keep His Word.

## **III. DOCTRINE OF FAITH**

Faith is a real divine power which renews man and makes him like God in nature, ardent in love and in keeping His commandments.

## **IV. DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM**

Baptism means the entrance into the covenant of grace of God and the incorporation into the Church of Christ. The “right and necessary” sequence is preaching, faith, rebirth, and baptism. Children cannot be baptized in the right way because they are not reborn through preaching, faith, and the Spirit.

## **V. DOCTRINE OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE LORD'S TABLE**

The Supper is a sign of the community of Christ's body, in that each member

thereby declares himself to be of the one mind, heart, and Spirit of Christ. It is an act of remembrance at which God's children become aware again of the grace which they have received. Only a true member of Christ may participate. The unity of the fellowship of the Lord's Table must already exist prior to the celebrating.

## **VI. DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN**

The inheritance that we have from our Father Adam is inclination to sin. Original sin means that all of us have by nature a tendency toward evil and have pleasure in sin. This inheritance removes, devours, and consumes all that is good and of God in man; so that none may attain it again except to be born again.

## **VII. THE FORMULA FOR BAPTISM**

The baptizer first testifies to the baptizand and asks if he believes in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The baptizand confesses. He then is asked if he desires to yield himself to God to live for Him and His church. If so, he is told to kneel before God and church, and water is poured upon him. If baptism cannot be performed before the entire church, the baptizer may perform the ordinance alone.

# The Dordrecht Confession of Faith

Adopted April 21, 1632, by a Dutch Mennonite  
Conference held at Dordrecht, Holland.

## I. Of God and the Creation of All Things

Since we find it testified that without faith it is impossible to please God, and that he that would come to God must believe that there is a God, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him; therefore, we confess with the mouth, and believe with the heart, with all the pious, according to the holy Scriptures, in one eternal, almighty, and incomprehensible God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and in none more, nor in any other; before whom no God was made or existed, nor shall there be any after Him: for of Him, and through Him, and in Him, are all things; to Him be praise and honor forever and ever, Amen. Heb. 11:6; Deut. 6:4; Gen. 17:1; Isa. 46:8; 1John 5:7; Rom. 11:36.

Of this same one God, who worketh all in all, we believe and confess that He is the Creator of all things visible and invisible; that He, in six days, created, made, and prepared, heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; and that He still governs and upholds the same and all His works through His wisdom, might, and the word of His power. 1Cor. 12:6; Gen. 1; Acts 14:15.

And when He had finished His works, and had ordained and prepared them, each in its nature and properties, good and upright, according to His pleasure, He created the first man, the father of us all, Adam; whom He formed of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living soul, created by God in His own image and likeness, in righteousness and holiness, unto eternal life. He regarded him above all other creatures, endowed him with many high and glorious gifts, placed him in the pleasure garden or Paradise, and gave him a command and prohibition; afterwards He took a rib from Adam, made a woman therefrom, and brought her to him, joining and giving her to him for a helpmate, companion, and wife; and in consequence of this He also caused, that from this one man Adam, all men that dwell upon the whole earth have descended. Gen. 1:27; 2:7, 17, 18, 22.

## II. Of the Fall of Man

We believe and confess, according to the holy Scriptures, that these our first

parents, Adam and Eve, did not continue long in this glorious state in which they were created, but that they, seduced by the subtlety and deceit of the serpent, and the envy of the devil, transgressed the high commandment of God and became disobedient to their Creator; through which disobedience sin has come into the world, and death by sin, which has thus passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, and, hence, brought upon themselves the wrath of God, and condemnation; for which reason they were of God driven out of Paradise, or the pleasure garden, to till the earth, in sorrow to eat of it, and to eat their bread in the sweat of their face, till they should return to the earth, from which they were taken; and that they, therefore, through this one sin, became so ruined, separated, and estranged from God, that they, neither through themselves, nor through any of their descendants, nor through angels, nor men, nor any other creature in heaven or on earth, could be raised up, redeemed, or reconciled to God, but would have had to be eternally lost, had not God, in compassion for His creatures, made provision for it, and interposed with His love and mercy. Gen. 3:6; 4Esd. 3:7; Rom. 5:12, 18; Gen. 3:23; Ps. 49:8; Rev. 5:9; John 3:16.

### **III. Of the Restoration of Man Through the Promise of the Coming Christ**

Concerning the restoration of the first man and his posterity we confess and believe, that God, notwithstanding their fall, transgression, and sin, and their utter inability, was nevertheless not willing to cast them off entirely, or to let them be forever lost; but that He called them again to Him, comforted them, and showed them that with Him there was yet a means for their reconciliation, namely, the immaculate Lamb, the Son of God, who had been foreordained thereto before the foundation of the world, and was promised them while they were yet in Paradise, for consolation, redemption, and salvation, for themselves as well as for their posterity; yea, who through faith, had, from that time on, been given them as their own; for whom all the pious patriarchs, unto whom this promise was frequently renewed, longed and inquired, and to whom, through faith, they looked forward from afar, waiting for the fulfillment, that He by His coming, would redeem, liberate, and raise the fallen race of man from their sin, guilt; and unrighteousness. John 1:29; 1Pet. 1:19; Gen. 3:15; 1John 3:8; 2:1; Heb. 11:13, 39; Gal. 4:4.

#### **IV. Of the Coming of Christ into This World, and the Purpose for Which He Came**

We believe and confess further, that when the time of the promise, for which all the pious forefathers had so much longed and waited, had come and was fulfilled, this previously promised Messiah, Redeemer, and Saviour, proceeded from God, was sent, and, according to the prediction of the prophets, and the testimony of the evangelists, came into the world, yea, into the flesh, was made manifest, and the Word, Himself became flesh and man; that He was conceived in the virgin Mary, who was espoused to a man named Joseph, of the house of David; and that she brought Him forth as her first-born son, at Bethlehem, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger. John 4:25; 16:28; 1Tim. 3:16; John 1:14; Matt. 1:23; Luke 2:7.

We confess and believe also, that this is the same whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, without beginning of days, or end of life; of whom it is testified that He Himself is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last; that He is the same, and no other, who was foreordained, promised, sent, and came into the world; who is God's only, first and own Son; who was before John the Baptist, before Abraham, before the world; yea, who was David's Lord, and the God of the whole world, the first-born of every creature; who was brought into the world, and for whom a body was prepared, which He yielded up as a sacrifice and offering, for a sweet savor unto God, yea, for the consolation, redemption, and salvation of all mankind. John 3:16; Heb. 1:6; Rom. 8:32; John 1:30; Matt. 22:43; Col. 1:15; Heb. 10:5.

But as to how and in what manner this precious body was prepared, and how the Word became flesh, and He Himself man, in regard to this we content ourselves with the statement pertaining to this matter which the worthy evangelists have left us in their accounts, according to which we confess with all the saints, that He is the Son of the living God, in whom alone consist all our hope, consolation, redemption, and salvation, which we neither may nor must seek in any other. Luke 1:31, 32; John 20:31; Matt. 16:16.

We furthermore believe and confess with the Scriptures, that, when He had finished His course, and accomplished the work for which He was sent and came into the world, He was, according to the providence of God, delivered into the hands of the unrighteous; suffered under the judge, Pontius Pilate;

was crucified, dead, was buried, and on the third day, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven; and that He sits on the right hand of God the Majesty on high, whence He will come again to judge the quick and the dead. Luke 22:53; 23:1; 24:6, 7, 51.

And that thus the Son of God died, and tasted death and shed His precious blood for all men; and that He thereby bruised the serpent's head, destroyed the works of the devil, annulled the handwriting and obtained forgiveness of sins for all mankind; thus becoming the cause of eternal salvation for all those who, from Adam unto the end of the world, each in his time, believe in, and obey Him. Gen. 3:15; I John 3:8; Col. 2:14; Rom. 5:18.

### **V. Of the Law of Christ, i.e., the Holy Gospel or the New Testament**

We also believe and confess that before His ascension He instituted His New Testament, and, since it was to be and remain an eternal Testament, that He confirmed and sealed the same with His precious blood, and gave and left it to His disciples, yea, charged them so highly with it, that neither angel nor man may alter it, nor add to it nor take away from it; and that He caused the same, as containing the whole counsel and will of His heavenly Father, as far as is necessary for salvation to be proclaimed in His name by His beloved apostles, messengers, and ministers whom He called, chose, and sent into all the world for that purpose-among all peoples, nations, and tongues; and repentance and remission of sins to be preached and testified of; and that He accordingly has therein declared all men without distinction, who through faith, as obedient children, heed, follow, and practice what the same contains, to be His children and lawful heirs; thus excluding no one from the precious inheritance of eternal salvation, except the unbelieving and disobedient, the stiff-necked and obdurate, who despise it, and incur this through their own sins, thus making themselves unworthy of eternal life. Jer. 31:31; Heb. 9:15-17; Matt. 26:28; Gal. 1:8; 1Tim. 6:3; John 15:15; Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Rom. 8:17; Acts 13:46.

### **VI. Of Repentance and Reformation of Life**

We believe and confess, that, since the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and, therefore, prone to all unrighteousness, sin, and wickedness, the first lesson of the precious New Testament of the Son of God is repentance and reformation of life, and that, therefore, those who have ears

to hear, and hearts to understand, must bring forth genuine fruits of repentance, reform their lives, believe the Gospel, eschew evil and do good, desist from unrighteousness, forsake sin, put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness: for, neither baptism, supper, church [membership], nor any other outward ceremony, can without faith, regeneration, change or renewing of life, avail anything to please God or to obtain of Him any consolation or promise of salvation; but we must go to God with an upright heart, and in perfect faith, and believe in Jesus Christ, as the Scripture says, and testifies of Him; through which faith we obtain forgiveness of sins, are sanctified, justified, and made children of God, yea, partake of His mind, nature, and image, as being born again of God from above, through incorruptible seed. Gen. 8:21; Mark 1:15; Ezek. 12:2; Col. 3:9, 10; Eph. 4:22, 24; Heb. 10:22, 23; John 7:38.

## **VII. Of Holy Baptism**

Concerning baptism we confess that all penitent believers, who, through faith, regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, are made one with God, and are written in heaven, must, upon such Scriptural confession of faith, and renewing of life, be baptized with water, in the most worthy name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, according to the command of Christ, and the teaching, example, and practice of the apostles, to the burying of their sins, and thus be incorporated into the communion of the saints; henceforth to learn to observe all things which the Son of God has taught, left, and commanded His disciples. Acts 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20; Rom. 6:4; Mark 16:16; Matt. 3:15; Acts 8:16; 9:18; 10:47; 16:33; Col. 2:11, 12.

## **VIII. Of the Church of Christ**

We believe in, and confess a visible church of God, namely, those who, as has been said before, truly repent and believe, and are rightly baptized; who are one with God in heaven, and rightly incorporated into the communion of the saints here on earth. These we confess to be the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, who are declared to be the bride and wife of Christ, yea, children and heirs of everlasting life, a tent, tabernacle, and habitation of God in the Spirit, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which Jesus Christ Himself is declared to be the cornerstone (upon which His church is built). This church of the living God, which He

has acquired, purchased, and redeemed with His own precious blood; with which, according to His promise, He will be and remain always, even unto the end of the world, for consolation and protection, yea, will dwell and walk among them, and preserve them, so that no floods or tempests, nay, not even the gates of hell, shall move or prevail against them-this church, we say, may be known by their Scriptural faith, doctrine, love, and godly conversation, as, also, by the fruitful observance, practice, and maintenance of the true ordinances of Christ, which He so highly enjoined upon His disciples. 1Cor. 12; 1Pet. 2.9; John 3.29; Rev. 19.7; Titus 3:6, 7; Eph. 2:19-21; Matt. 16.18; 1Pet. 1.18, 19; Matt. 28.20; 2Cor. 6:16; Matt. 7:25.

### **IX. Of the Election, and Offices of Teachers, Deacons, and Deaconesses in the Church**

Concerning the offices and elections in the church, we believe and confess, that, since without offices and ordinances the church cannot subsist in her growth, nor continue in building, therefore the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as a husbandman in His house, has instituted, ordained, enjoined, and commanded His offices and ordinances, how everyone is to walk therein, and give heed to and perform His work and calling, as is meet, even as He Himself, as the faithful, great, chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, was sent, and came into the world, not to bruise, break, or destroy the souls of men, but to heal and restore them, to seek the lost, to break down the middle wall of partition, to make of twain one, and thus to gather of Jews, Gentiles, and all nations, one flock, for a church in His name, for which-that no one should err or be lost-He Himself laid down His life, thus ministering to their salvation, and liberating and redeeming them, (mark) wherein no one else could help or assist them. Eph. 4:10-12; 1Pet. 2:25; Matt 12:19 18:11 Eph. 2:14; Gal. 3:28; John 10:9, 11, 15; Ps. 49:8.

And that He, moreover, before His departure, left His church supplied with faithful ministers, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, whom He before, through the Holy Ghost, had chosen with prayer and supplication; that they might govern the church, feed His flock, and watch over, protect, and provide for it, yea, do in all things, as He had done before them, had taught, by example shown, and charged them, to teach to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them. Luke 10:1; 6:12, 13; John 2:15.

That the apostles, likewise, as faithful followers of Christ, and leaders of the

church, were diligent in this respect, with prayer and supplication to God, through the election of brethren, to provide every city, place, or church, with bishops, pastors, and leaders, and to ordain such persons thereto, who would take heed unto themselves, and unto the doctrine and flock, who were sound in faith, pious in life and conversation, and of good report without as well as in the church; that they might be an example, light, and pattern in all godliness and good works, worthily administering the Lord's ordinances--baptism and supper--and that they might everywhere (where such could be found) appoint faithful men who would be able to teach others also, as elders, ordaining them by the laying on of hands in the name of the Lord, and provide for all the wants of the church according to their ability; so that, as faithful servants, they might husband well their Lord's talent, get gain with it, and, consequently, save themselves and those who hear them. 1Tim. 3:1; Acts 23:24; Titus 1:5; 1Tim. 4:16; Titus 2:1, 2; 1Tim. 3:7; 2Tim. 2:2; 1Tim. 4:14; 5:2; Luke 19:13.

That they should also see diligently to it, particularly each among his own over whom he has the oversight, that all places be well provided with deacons (to look after and care for the poor), who may receive the contributions and alms, in order to dispense them faithfully and with all propriety to the poor and needy saints. Acts 6:3-6.

And that also honorable aged widows should be chosen and ordained deaconesses, that they with the deacons may visit, comfort, and care for, the poor, feeble, sick, sorrowing and needy, as also the widows and orphans, and assist in attending to other wants and necessities of the church to the best of their ability. 1Tim. 5:9; Rom. 16:1; Jas. 1:27.

Furthermore, concerning deacons, that they, especially when they are fit, and chosen and ordained thereto by the church, for the assistance and relief of the elders, may exhort the church (since they, as has been said, are chosen thereto), and labor also in the Word and in teaching; that each may minister unto the other with the gift he has received of the Lord, so that through mutual service and the assistance of every member, each in his measure, the body of Christ may be improved, and the vine and church of the Lord continue to grow, increase, and be built up, according as it is proper.

## **X. Of the Holy Supper**

We also confess and observe the breaking of bread, or Supper, as the Lord

Christ Jesus before His suffering instituted it with bread and wine, and observed and ate with His apostles, commanding them to observe it in remembrance of Him; which they accordingly taught and practiced in the church, and commanded that it should be kept in remembrance of the suffering and death of the Lord; and that His precious body was broken, and His blood shed, for us and all mankind, as also the fruits hereof, namely, redemption and eternal salvation, which He purchased thereby, showing such great love toward us sinful men; whereby we are admonished to the utmost, to love and forgive one another and our neighbor, as He has done unto us, and to be mindful to maintain and live up to the unity and fellowship which we have with God and one another, which is signified to us by this breaking of bread. Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Acts 2:42; 1Cor. 10:16; 11:23.

### **XI. Of the Washing of the Saints' Feet**

We also confess a washing of the saints' feet, as the Lord Christ not only instituted, enjoined and commanded it, but Himself, although He was their Lord and Master, washed His apostles' feet, thereby giving an example that they should likewise wash one another's feet, and do as He had done unto them; which they accordingly, from this time on, taught believers to observe, as a sign of true humility, and, especially, to remember by this feet washing, the true washing, whereby we are washed through His precious blood, and made pure after the soul. John 13:4-17; 1Tim. 5:10.

### **XII. Of the State of Matrimony**

We confess that there is in the church of God an honorable state of matrimony, of two free, believing persons, in accordance with the manner after which God originally ordained the same in Paradise, and instituted it Himself with Adam and Eve, and that the Lord Christ did away and set aside all the abuses of marriage which had meanwhile crept in, and referred all to the original order, and thus left it. Gen. 1:27; Mark 10:4.

In this manner the Apostle Paul also taught and permitted matrimony in the church, and left it free for every one to be married, according to the original order, in the Lord, to whomsoever one may get to consent. By these words, in the Lord, there is to be understood, we think, that even as the patriarchs had to marry among their kindred or generation, so the believers of the New Testament have likewise no other liberty than to marry among the chosen generation and spiritual kindred of Christ, namely, such, and no others, who

have previously become united with the church as one heart and soul, have received one baptism, and stand in one communion, faith, doctrine and practice, before they may unite with one another by marriage. Such are then joined by God in His church according to the original order; and this is called, marrying in the Lord. 2Cor. 7:2; 1Cor. 9:5; Gen. 24:4; 28:2; 1Cor. 7:39.

### **XIII. Of the Office of the Secular Authority**

We believe and confess that God has ordained power and authority, and set them to punish the evil, and protect the good, to govern the world, and maintain countries and cities, with their subjects, in good order and regulation; and that we, therefore, may not despise, revile, or resist the same, but must acknowledge and honor them as the ministers of God, and be subject and obedient unto them, yea, ready for all good works, especially in that which is not contrary to the law, will, and commandment of God; also faithfully pay custom, tribute, and taxes, and to render unto them their dues, even also as the Son of God taught and practiced, and commanded His disciples to do; that we, moreover, must constantly and earnestly pray to the Lord for them and their welfare, and for the prosperity of the country, that we may dwell under its protection, earn our livelihood, and lead a quiet, peaceable life, with all godliness and honesty; and, furthermore, that the Lord would recompense unto them, here, and afterwards in eternity, all benefits, liberty, and favor which we enjoy here under their praiseworthy administration. Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1Pet. 2:17; Matt. 22:21; 17:27; 1Tim. 2:1.

### **XIV. Of Revenge**

As regards revenge, that is, to oppose an enemy with the sword, we believe and confess that the Lord Christ has forbidden and set aside to His disciples and followers all revenge and retaliation, and commanded them to render to no one evil for evil, or cursing for cursing, but to put the sword into the sheath, or, as the prophets have predicted, to beat the swords into ploughshares. Matt. 5:39, 44; Rom. 12:14; 1Pet. 3:9; Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3; Zech. 9:8, 9.

From this we understand that therefore, and according to His example, we must not inflict pain, harm, or sorrow upon any one, but seek the highest welfare and salvation of all men, and even, if necessity require it, flee for the

Lord's sake from one city or country into another, and suffer the spoiling of our goods; that we must not harm any one, and, when we are smitten, rather turn the other cheek also, than take revenge or retaliate. Matt. 5:39.

And, moreover, that we must pray for our enemies, feed and refresh them whenever they are hungry or thirsty, and thus convince them by well-doing, and overcome all ignorance. Rom. 12:19, 20.

Finally, that we must do good and commend ourselves to every man's conscience; and, according to the law of Christ, do unto no one that which we would not have done to us. 2Cor. 4:2; Matt. 7:12.

### **XV. Of the Swearing of Oaths**

Concerning the swearing of oaths we believe and confess that the Lord Christ has set aside and forbidden the same to His disciples, that they should not swear at all, but that yea should be yea, and nay, nay; from which we understand that all oaths, high and low, are forbidden, and that instead of them we are to confirm all our promises and obligations, yea, all our declarations and testimonies of any matter, only with our word yea, in that which is yea, and with nay, in that which is nay; yet, that we must always, in all matters, and with everyone, adhere to, keep, follow, and fulfill the same, as though we had confirmed it with a solemn oath. And if we do this, we trust that no one, not even the Magistracy itself, will have just reason to lay a greater burden on our mind and conscience. Matt. 5:34, 35; Jas. 5:12; 2Cor. 1:17.

### **XVI. Of the Ecclesiastical Ban, or Separation from the Church**

We also believe in, and confess, a ban, separation, and Christian correction in the church, for amendment, and not for destruction, in order to distinguish that which is pure from the impure: namely, when any one, after he is enlightened, has accepted the knowledge of the truth, and been incorporated into the communion of the saints, sins again unto death, either through willfulness, or through presumption against God, or through some other cause, and falls into the unfruitful works of darkness, thereby becoming separated from God, and forfeiting the kingdom of God, that such a one, after the deed is manifest and sufficiently known to the church, may not remain in the congregation of the righteous, but, as an offensive member and open sinner, shall and must be separated, put away, reprov'd before, and purged out as leaven; and this for his amendment, as an example, that others may

fear, and to keep the church pure, by cleansing her from such spots, lest, in default of this, the name of the Lord be blasphemed, the church dishonored, and offense given to them that are without; and finally, that the sinner may not be condemned with the world, but become convinced in his mind, and be moved to sorrow, repentance, and reformation. Jer. 59:2; 1Cor. 5:5, 13; 1Tim. 5:20; 1Cor. 5:6; 2Cor. 10:8; 13:10.

Further, concerning brotherly reproof or admonition, as also the instruction of the erring it is necessary to exercise all diligence and care, to watch over them and to admonish them with all meekness, that they may be bettered, and to reprove, according as is proper, the stubborn who remain obdurate; in short, the church must put away from her the wicked (either in doctrine or life), and no other. Jas. 5:19; Titus 3:10; 1Cor. 5:13.

### **XVII. Of Shunning the Separated**

Concerning the withdrawing from, or shunning the separated, we believe and confess, that if any one, either through his wicked life or perverted doctrine, has so far fallen that he is separated from God, and, consequently, also separated and punished by the church, the same must, according to the doctrine of Christ and His apostles, be shunned, without distinction, by all the fellow members of the church, especially those to whom it is known, in eating, drinking, and other similar intercourse, and no company be had with him that they may not become contaminated by intercourse with him, nor made partakers of his sins; but that the sinner may be made ashamed, pricked in his heart, and convicted in his conscience, unto his reformation. 1Cor. 5:9-11; 2Thess. 3:14.

Yet, in shunning as well as in reproof, such moderation and Christian discretion must be used, that it may conduce, not to the destruction, but to the reformation of the sinner. For, if he is needy, hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, or in any other distress, we are in duty bound, necessity requiring it, according to love and the doctrine of Christ and His apostles, to render him aid and assistance; otherwise, shunning would in this case tend more to destruction than to reformation.

Therefore, we must not count them as enemies, but admonish them as brethren, that thereby they may be brought to a knowledge of and to repentance and sorrow for their sins, so that they may become reconciled to God, and consequently be received again into the church, and that love may

continue with them, according as is proper. 2Thess. 3:15.

### **XVIII. Of the Resurrection of the Dead, and the Last Judgment**

Finally, concerning the resurrection of the dead, we confess with the mouth, and believe with the heart, according to Scripture, that in the last day all men who shall have died, and fallen asleep, shall be awaked and quickened, and shall rise again, through the incomprehensible power of God; and that they, together with those who then will still be alive, and who shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trump, shall be placed before the judgment seat of Christ, and the good be separated from the wicked; that then everyone shall receive in his own body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil; and that the good or pious, as the blessed, shall be taken up with Christ, and shall enter into life eternal, and obtain that joy, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, to reign and triumph with Christ forever. And ever. Matt. 22:30, 31; Dan. 12:12; Job 19:26, 27; Matt. 25:31; John 5:28; 2Cor. 5:10; 1Cor. 15; Rev. 20:12; 1Thess. 4:15; 1Cor. 2:9.

And that, on the other hand, the wicked or impious, as accursed, shall be cast into outer darkness, yea, into the everlasting pains of hell, where their worm shall not die, nor their fire be quenched, and where they, according to holy Scripture, can nevermore expect any hope, comfort, or redemption. Mark 9:44; Rev. 14:11.

May the Lord, through His grace, make us all worthy and meet, that this may befall none of us; but that we may thus take heed unto ourselves, and use all diligence, that on that day we may be found before Him unspotted and blameless in peace. Amen.

These, then, as has been briefly stated before, are the principal articles of our general Christian faith, as we teach and practice the same throughout in our churches and among our people; which, in our judgment, is the only true Christian faith, which the apostles in their time believed and taught, yea, testified with their life, confirmed with their death, and, some of them, also sealed with their blood; wherein we in our weakness with them and all the pious, would fain abide, live, and die, that we 'may afterwards obtain salvation with them through the grace of the Lord.

Thus done and finished in our united churches, in the city of Dordrecht, the 21<sup>st</sup> of April, 1632, new style.

[Signers given in Van Braght: Martyrs' Mirror, page 44.]

### **ADOPTION BY THE ALSATIAN MENNONITES, 1660**

We, the undersigned, ministers of the word of God, and elders of the church in Alsace, hereby declare and make known, that being assembled this 4<sup>th</sup> of February in the year of our Lord 1660, at Ohnenheim in the principality of Rappoltstein, on account of the Confession of Faith, which was adopted at the Peace Convention of the Taufles-gesinnten which are called the Flemish, in the city of Dort, on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of April in the year 1632, and which was printed at Rotterdam by Franciscus von Hochstraten, Anno 1658; and having examined the same, and found it in agreement with our judgment, we have entirely adopted it as our own.

[Signers given in Wenger: Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1949), page 227.]

### **ADOPTION BY THE MENNONITES OF AMERICA, 1725**

We the hereunder written Servants of the Word of God, and Elders in the Congregation of the People called, Mennonists, in the Province of Pennsylvania, do acknowledge, and herewith make known, That we do own the afore-going Confession, Appendix, and Menno's Excusation, to be according to our Opinion: and also have took the same to be wholly ours.

[Signers given in Wenger: History of the Mennonites of the Franconia Conference (Telford, Pa.: Franconia Mennonite Historical Society, 1937), page 318.]

Declaration  
Of several of the People called  
ANABAPTISTS,  
In and about the CITY of LONDON.

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We being misrepresented to the Nation,

1. As such, as are opposite to Magistracy.
2. That we would destroy the Publick Ministry of the Nation, who differ from us in some things about Religion.
3. That we do countenance the people called Quakers, in their irregular practise.
4. That we endeavour a Toleration of miscarriages in things Ecclesiastical and Civil, under pretence of Liberty of Conscience,
5. That we design to murder and destroy those who differ from us in matters of Religion, thereby endeavouring to make us odious to some people fearing God, And also to incense the rude Multitude against us, to provoke them (if possible) to destroy us.

To the first: Though we cannot answer in justification of every individual person that is of our Profession in matters of Religion, yet we can say this, and prove it to all the world, that it hath been our profession, and is our practise, to be obedient to Magistracy in all things Civil, and willing to live peaceably, under whatever Government is, and shall be established in this Nation: for we do believe, and declare, Magistracy to be an ordinance of God, and ought to be obeyed in all lawful things.

To the second: As for the public Ministers of the Nation, who differ from us in the matter of Baptizing Infants, and some things in Church-Government; We are so far from endeavouring to destroy them, that we judge, they ought to have the Liberty of their Consciences therein; and that it is our duty to stand by them, and preserve them (so much as in us lies) from all injury and violence.

To the third: Concerning the people called Quakers, it is well known to all, (that are not wilfully ignorant) there are none more opposite to their irregular

practices then we are: nor are there any, that they have exprest more Contradiction to, (in matters of Religion) then against us; though their provocations therein, hath not put us (in the least) on a desire of depriving them their just Liberty, while they live morally honest, and peaceable in the Nation.

To the forth: Whereas we are further charged with endeavouring an universal Toleration of all miscarriages, both in things Religious and Civil, under pretense of Liberty of Conscience; it is in both respects notoriously false. And we do before the Lord, that shall judge both quick and dead, yea, before Angels and men, declare our utter detestation of such a Toleration; for in matters Civil, we desire there may not be the least Toleration of miscarriage in any, much less in our selves.

Nor do we desire, in matters of Religion, that Popery should be tolerated, the blood of many thousands of the people of God, having been barbarously shed, by the Professors thereof; or any persons tolerated, that worship a false god; nor any that speak contemptuously and reproachfully of our Lord Jesus Christ; nor any that deny the holy Scriptures, contained in the books of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God: And yet, we are not against tolerating of Episcopacy, Presbytery, or any stinted form, provided they do compel any others to a compliance therewith, or a conformity thereunto: for whatever Composers of any form of worship, may possibly erre; it is derogating from God, and his holy Word, and injurious to men, to compel any to practice thereof.

To the last: For as much as we are charged, with designs, to murder or to destroy those that differ from us in matters of Religion; We do not only abhor and detest it, as a cursed practice; but we hope, have approved our selves, both in this City and in this Nation, to the contrary; notwithstanding the great provocation of some, who have endeavoured our ruine: for all we desire, is just liberty to men, as men; that every man may be preserved in his own just rights, and the Christians may be preserved as Christians, though of different Apprehensions in some things of Religion; in the prosecution whereof, our lives shall be dear unto us, when we are thereunto lawfully called. The designs of our Adversaries in these Calumnies, are, to misrepresent us to some people fearing God, and also, to incense the rude Multitude against us, purposely to provoke them (if possible) to destroy us.

We hope, hereby, it will appear to them that fear God, that we are no such persons, as our Adversaries have represented us, And for their incensing the rude Multitude against us, it is no more, than some others did to our Master; and it is not for the Disciples, to expect better usage then their Lord: and we do not find, the rude Multitude ever joyned with him, nor do we expect, they should favour us: it is enough to us, we have his Promise, that if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him.

This we think meet to Declare, to undeceive those, who through the unchristian actions and expressions of some persons, have been, and are, prejudiced against us.

LONDON,

Printed for Livewell Chapman, at the Crown in Popes-Head-Alley, 1659.