

Making sense of the ‘Word of God’ and ‘fundamental doctrines’: The questions and Formula in Church of Scotland ordination and setting-apart

Brian Drummond

Brian Drummond is an independent researcher based in Edinburgh, and can be contacted at drummond.work@phonecoop.coop



1. Introduction, context and outline

The Church of Scotland (the ‘Church’) is currently reviewing the role of the Westminster Confession of Faith (‘WCF’) as its subordinate standard.¹ Among other things, this review is considering ‘the wording and terms of reference of the Formula of subscription used in services of ordination’ and setting-apart.² (Currently the same Formula is signed by ministers, elders and deacons when they are ordained, and by readers when they are set apart.) Any change in this area is likely to involve the Barrier Act procedure, and so is unlikely to happen before 2025.³

For those being ordained or set apart in the meantime, this article considers how to make sense of references to the ‘Word of God [...] contained in the scriptures’ and the ‘fundamental doctrines [...] contained in the Confession’ in the existing Formula, and related questions. The

¹ Report of the Theological Forum to the Church of Scotland General Assembly, May 2021, https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/80303/10-Theological-Forum.pdf; Report of the Theological Forum to the Church of Scotland General Assembly, May 2022, https://churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/93374/theological-forum.pdf.

² Theological Forum, May 2021, 5.

³ Theological Forum, May 2022, 9.



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relevant history and research suggests that ‘contained in’ has different meanings in these two expressions. Thus, the entire scriptures make up the ‘Word of God’, but only some of the WCF makes up the ‘fundamental doctrines’. In fact ‘fundamental doctrines’ means the aggregate of (a) some but not all of the WCF doctrines, together with (b) some doctrines on which the WCF is silent. The following two sections outline the thinking that leads to this conclusion, by considering, respectively, the second and third of the eight questions put to ministers, deacons and readers.⁴ The fourth section considers the first sentence of the Formula signed by ministers, elders, deacons and readers. The final section concludes and makes some practical recommendations.



2. Question 2: Do you believe the Word of God, which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to be the supreme rule of faith and life?

The context here makes it clear that ‘Word of God’ means the ‘Word of God written’.⁵ The wording of this question echoes the wording of the first of the 1926 Articles Declaratory,⁶ and reflects the view that the ‘Word of God [...] has three forms: the Word made flesh, the written Word, and the proclaimed Word’.⁷ The wording ‘which is contained in’ is used here to differentiate the written Word from two other forms of the Word. Grammatically, ‘which’ is here is a restrictive relative pronoun:⁸ it ‘restricts’ the antecedent ‘Word of God’ to the *written* Word of God, rather ‘restricting’ the extent to which the scriptures are the Word of God. Thus, ‘which is contained in’ does not suggest that the written Word is distinct from, or forms only part of, ‘the scriptures of the Old and New

⁴ The single question put to elders has, as its first clause, the first 10 words of the third question put to ministers, deacons and readers – see section 3 below.

⁵ Westminster Confession of Faith [‘WCF’], chap. 1, para. II.

⁶ The first, second and fifth Articles Declaratory are set out in full in Theological Forum, May 2021, 8.

⁷ Report of the Panel on Doctrine to the 1973 General Assembly, as cited in the Report of the Panel on Doctrine to the 1998 General Assembly, 1.2.1, https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/39246/1998_Panel_on_Doctrine.pdf.

⁸ J. C. Nesfield, *English Grammar Past and Present* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1905), 43, 44.



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Testaments'. The words 'contained in' here have the sense 'identically equal to' or 'the entirety of', rather than the sense 'found within', 'included in' or 'some but not all of'.

This appears to have been the understanding of the drafters of the Articles Declaratory, who 'did not recognise' any 'operative distinction between the Word of God and the text of Scripture'.⁹ This view that the entirety of the Bible is the Word of God appears to have been dominant at least until 1960: 'the church universally and unhesitatingly affirms scripture to *be* the word of God' (emphasis added).¹⁰ It is also consistent with the WCF.¹¹

Among those writing since 1990, however, 'the distinction between the Word of God and the text of Scripture is viewed – almost universally – to be a foundational element of the constitution of the Church of Scotland'.¹² This recent widespread view takes 'contained in' as implying that the written Word is 'some but not all of' the text of the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.¹³

This post-1990 view was examined in a 2016 article which concluded that it is 'both historically dubious and theologically untenable'.¹⁴ In terms of history, a closer examination of the minutes of a 1910 committee meeting, cited in support of the post-1990 view, has shown that they offer little, if any, support for it.¹⁵ In terms of theology, the post-1990 view offers no clear criteria for judging which parts of scripture represent the Word of God.¹⁶ Why then has this recent, apparently misfounded, view, of what 'contained in' implies, in the context of references to the written

⁹ Liam Jerrold Fraser, "The Kirk, The Word, and the Text of Scripture", *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 34, no. 1 (2016): 76.

¹⁰ H. J. Witherspoon and J. M. Kirkpatrick, *A Manual of Church Doctrine According to the Church of Scotland*, 2nd ed., revised and enlarged by T. F. Torrance and Ronald Selby Wright (London: Oxford University Press, 1960; first edition 1920), 58.

¹¹ WCF chap. 1, paras. II and IV; Witherspoon and Kirkpatrick, *Church Doctrine*, 56.

¹² Fraser, "The Kirk", 71.

¹³ Victor Pogue, "The Word of God, which is Contained in the Scriptures", *Theology in Scotland* 6, no. 2 (1999): 63.

¹⁴ Fraser, 75–76.

¹⁵ Fraser, 74–75.

¹⁶ Fraser, 77.



Word, become so popular? One possibility is that it achieves consistency with the sense which 'contained in' is generally accepted as having, in references to the WCF in the Articles Declaratory, questions and Formula. That sense is discussed in the following section.



3. Question 3: Do you believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith contained in the Confession of Faith of this Church?

Question 3 echoes the wording of the second and fifth 1926 Articles Declaratory. Here, 'contained in' has the sense 'found among the doctrines in', 'included in the doctrines in' or 'those among all the fundamental doctrines which are found among', rather than the sense 'identically equal to' or 'comprising the entirety of'. Thus 'contained in' here takes a very different sense to the sense which the previous section argued it should take in question 2.

This understanding follows from the relevant history. The 1879 United Presbyterian Church Declaratory Act, point 7, states 'liberty of opinion is allowed on such points in the [Westminster] Standards, not entering into the substance of the faith'.¹⁷ The 1892 Free Church Declaratory Act recognises diversity of opinion 'on such points in the [Westminster] Confession as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith'.¹⁸ Both of these Acts were incorporated into the 1929 Church Constitution.¹⁹ This constituted a 'formal dissociation of the church from the WCF in the late Victorian period'.²⁰ Despite this formal dissociation, individual views

¹⁷ James T. Cox, ed. *Practice and Procedure in the Church of Scotland*, 4th ed. (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1948), 385–86; the full 1879 Act is also at <https://theologyinteralia.net/2019/11/28/the-united-presbyterian-church-scotland-declaratory-act/>.

¹⁸ Cox, *Practice and Procedure*, 386–87; the full 1892 Act is also at <https://www.fpchurch.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/a-catechism-of-the-history-and-principles-of-the-free-presbyterian-church-of-scotland/fp-catechism-appendix-2-free-church-of-scotland-declaratory-act-1892/>.

¹⁹ Cox, 338.

²⁰ David Fergusson, "A Subordinate Standard: Where Next?" *Theology in Scotland* 26(S) (2019), 49; consistent comments are made in Alexander C. Cheyne, "The Place of the Confession Through Three Centuries", in *The Westminster Confession in the Church Today: Papers Prepared for the Church of Scotland*



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differed and so, when drafting the second 1926 Article Declaratory, ‘nobody sought to specify the substance of the faith that was “contained” in the WCF’.²¹

In this context it is clear that ‘fundamental doctrines’ cannot refer to all the doctrines in the WCF.²² (Indeed tracing the history of the phrase back to 1647 suggests that it might not originally have done so.²³) It is this conclusion that makes ‘liberty of opinion, or of pastoral conscience, a hallmark of our Presbyterian identity’.²⁴ It can also be seen as consistent with the text of the WCF itself, which is seen by some to acknowledge that it is unreasonable to require assent to all of its doctrines.²⁵

In this context, it is, therefore, necessary to identify which doctrines the Church considers to be fundamental.²⁶ The fifth 1926 Article Declaratory states that the ‘Church has the inherent right [...] to declare the sense in which it understands its Confession of Faith’. There appear to be three such declarations:²⁷

- a) the 1879 United Presbyterian Church Declaratory Act,²⁸
- b) the 1892 Free Church Declaratory Act,²⁹ and
- c) the 1986 Church of Scotland Declaratory Act.³⁰

Panel on Doctrine, ed. Alasdair I. C. Heron (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1982), 27.

²¹ David Fergusson, “The Westminster Confession in the Church of Scotland Today: Introduction”, *Theology in Scotland* 26(S) (2019), 1.

²² The same view appears in *Theological Forum*, May 2022, 4.

²³ John K. S. Reid, “Confessional Subscription: A Personal View”, in Heron, *Westminster Confession*, 137–38.

²⁴ Alison Elliot, “A Question of Identity”, *Theology in Scotland* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 26.

²⁵ WCF, chap. 20, para. II; George M. Dale, “A Personal View,” in Heron, 108.

²⁶ Francis Lyall, “The Westminster Confession: The Legal Position”, in Heron, 69; Douglas M. Murray, “A Personal View”, in Heron, 115, 119, 121, 123.

²⁷ The contents of all three are outlined in Fergusson, “Subordinate Standard”, 46–48.

²⁸ See note 17 above.

²⁹ See note 18 above.

³⁰ The full 1986 Act is at

https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/1823/1986_act_05.pdf.



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Both (a) and (b) were incorporated into the 1929 Church Constitution.³¹ The three offer limited help in identifying which doctrines the Church considers to be fundamental. They do so by highlighting some WCF doctrines which the Church does *not* consider fundamental.³²

More positively, the first 1926 Article Declaratory sets out at least some of the doctrines which the Church views as fundamental.³³ That said, the final clause of the final sentence of that Article strongly suggests that there exist other ‘fundamental doctrines’. Recent work which quotes in full the first Article Declaratory and appears to imply that the ‘fundamental doctrines’ are restricted to those specifically mentioned therein, is silent on the implications of its final clause.³⁴

Two other statements have recently been highlighted:³⁵

- i. the 1935 ‘statement of faith’ which was ‘cordially’ commended by the General Assembly in 1935 to ‘the ministers and members of the Church as an outline of the main articles of Christian belief’;³⁶ and
- ii. the 1992 ‘statement of Christian faith’ authorized for use in worship and teaching by the General Assembly of 1992.³⁷

These also help clarify what the Church means by ‘fundamental doctrines’ in this context.

The structure and timing of the 1935 statement in particular seems to make it a particularly suitable aid to understanding question 3. Its structure

³¹ Cox, 338.

³² Dale, “Personal View,” 110; Fergusson, “Subordinate Standard,” 48.

³³ Dale, “Personal View,” 114; Lyall, “Westminster Confession,” 70; Murray, “Personal View,” 121; Roderick Pettigrew, “The Recent Debate in the Church of Scotland”, in Heron, 72, 83.

³⁴ Theological Forum, May 2022, 5.

³⁵ Their background and significance are discussed in Fergusson, “Subordinate Standard”, 50–54, and Theological Forum, May 2021, 10; Theological Forum, May 2022, however, makes no reference at all to the 1935 statement.

³⁶ The full 1935 statement is available (subject to some OCR errors) at https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/word_doc/0018/81126/1935-Short-Statement-of-Churchs-Faith.docx, and is reproduced with those errors corrected at Appendix A.

³⁷ The 1992 statement is available part way down the page at <https://churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-faith/statements-of-the-churchs-faith>.



is reminiscent of the WCF itself, and the fact that it was introduced within six years of the 1929 Union, suggests that it may reflect the views of those agreeing the basis of that Union. Further, it was presented to the 1935 Assembly with 'confidence that in all substantial respects the document, as it now stands, has received the approval of a large majority of the [61] Presbyteries from which returns came'.³⁸ For some reason, however, it has generally been overlooked until very recently. It appears to have played no part in most of the discussions on this subject over the last six decades.³⁹

Although the 1992 statement is in the form of a Creed rather than a confession,⁴⁰ it was the result of a process initiated in an attempt to clarify what the Church considered to be the 'fundamental doctrines' of its faith.⁴¹



4. Formula: I believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith contained in the Confession of Faith of this Church.

On the same basis as outlined for question 3, 'fundamental doctrines' cannot here refer to all the doctrines in the WCF, and the first Article Declaratory and 1935 and 1992 statements help to identify the fundamental doctrines referred to in the Formula. On that basis it might appear needless to discuss it separately. There are, however, at least two reasons for so doing.

1. While the questions asked need only be answered 'to the satisfaction of the Presbytery', the Formula must be 'signed'.⁴² Thus, while there may be scope for non-standard answers to be given to the questions,⁴³ there appears to be no scope for anything other than the standard Formula to be signed.

³⁸ Report of the Committee on the Restatement of the Church's Faith to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 1935, reproduced as part of the online version of the 1935 Statement: see footnote 36 above.

³⁹ For example, it is not mentioned by any of the authors contributing to Heron, *Westminster Confession*.

⁴⁰ For the distinction, see Murray, "Personal View," 118; and Theological Forum, May 2021, 6.

⁴¹ Theological Forum, May 2021, 9.

⁴² Cox, 345.

⁴³ Pogue, "Word of God", 63; David J. Randall, *A Sad Departure: Why We Could Not Stay in the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2015), 39.



2. The understanding of Formula suggested by the analysis in the previous section is strengthened by the specific history of the Formula, and in particular the Church of Scotland Act on the Formula (1910), subsequently incorporated into the 1929 Church Constitution.⁴⁴ At that stage the full Formula was changed to read 'I hereby subscribe the Confession of Faith, declaring that I accept it as the Confession of this Church, and that I believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith contained therein'.⁴⁵ The only reasonable reading of this version of the Formula is that a distinction is being drawn between the WCF in its entirety, which is accepted as the Confession of the Church, and some of the doctrines in the WCF, which are considered to be fundamental and believed by the person signing the Formula.⁴⁶



5. Conclusions and practical recommendations

References to the 'Word of God, which is contained in the scriptures' are specifying the *written* Word (rather than the *incarnate* Word) and were not intended to restrict the extent to which the *entire* scriptures are that written Word. There is, however, powerful historical evidence to suggest that references to 'fundamental doctrines [...] contained in the Confession', were intended to specify only some of the doctrines in the WCF, those which the Church considers to be fundamental. The 1935 statement gives extensive guidance on what doctrines are considered to be fundamental. Less extensive guidance is given in the 1992 statement, and in the first 1926 Article Declaratory.

Thus, to the extent that the WCF reflects the doctrines in the 1935 and 1992 Statements, and those in the first Article Declaratory, the Formula signifies belief in them. In practice, therefore, those required to sign it can do at least two things in advance. First, they can read the 1935 and 1992 Statements, and the first Article Declaratory, and confirm that they believe all the doctrines set out therein. Second, they can read and consider the WCF, together with the Declaratory Acts of 1879, 1892 and 1986. This

⁴⁴ Cox, 338, 384.

⁴⁵ Cox, 384.

⁴⁶ J. H. S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 385; Lyall, "Westminster Confession", 69.



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second action will allow those planning to sign the Formula to benefit, both from the light the WCF and Declaratory Acts shed on the doctrines in the 1935 and 1992 Statements and the first Article Declaratory, and from an awareness of the other doctrines in the WCF.

Appendix: 1935 statement

SHORT STATEMENT OF THE CHURCH'S FAITH

THE PREAMBLE

This Short Statement seeks to express in outline the main articles of the Church's Faith for the instruction of learners and for the help and guidance of believers.

The Church's Faith is the unchanging Gospel of God's holy love made manifest in Jesus Christ. It is declared in the Scriptures by prophets and apostles, and is attested both in the creeds of the Universal Church and in the Confessions of the Church Reformed. From age to age it been handed down within the Church, and confirmed in the experience of believers. As God's revelation of His nature and purpose, it is its own evidence and authority, and truth is known to believers through the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

The Church welcomes the knowledge brought to light by scientific inquiry into all the facts of nature and history in the assurance that all true understanding of these facts will serve to show forth the glory of God.

The Church has the right, as duty may require, to set forth the Faith in the form of confessional statements, but always with fidelity to the Scriptures and the testimony of the Universal Church. No such confessional statement can express the whole truth of God.

I. GOD

There is one God, eternal and almighty, Creator and Upholder of all things, Father of all men, only Ruler and Judge of the world; holy, righteous, wise,



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and loving, who will triumph in His glorious purpose over all evil.

II. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to be the Saviour of mankind. Who being the very Son of God, for us men and for our salvation became man in Jesus Christ. In perfect obedience to the will of God and in love towards men He lived on earth and died for our sins; by the power of God He was raised from the dead and is now exalted Lord over all, ever living to make intercession for us. He is present always with His people, and will come again to be the Judge of the living and the dead.

The Lord Jesus Christ has perfectly revealed the Father, and is the only Mediator between God and man. In Him, the incarnate Son, suffering for the sins of men and bearing their sorrows, God speaks to men His word of forgiveness and eternal life, and calls them to repentance, faith, and obedience.

By faith the Church of all ages confesses Him to be Lord, and worships Him together with the Father.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the Lord and the Giver of Life. By the power of the Holy Spirit God has ever been present in the lives of men, seeking them for Himself, inspiring every right desire and every effort after truth and beauty. By the same power God brings them to Himself through Jesus Christ that they may acknowledge their sin, receive His forgiveness, and become His sons and heirs of eternal life. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit given by Christ the fellowship of the Church is created, and its members receive a new power to grow into likeness of their Lord, to overcome sin, to love one another, and to labour and pray for the triumph of His kingdom.

IV. THE HOLY TRINITY

The Church, knowing God through Jesus Christ His Son, and through the working of His Spirit in the world and in the lives of believers, confesses and adores one God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



V. REVELATION AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

God is made known by His revelation of Himself, in nature, in conscience, and in history, so that never in any nation has He left Himself [without] witness. In Jesus Christ, in whom His purpose of redemption is fulfilled, He has manifested Himself fully, so that in Christ men are brought face to face with the Father.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain the Word of God given by inspiration. They record, and bear witness to, the unfolding of His gracious purpose. They are given for the knowledge of His ways, for reconciliation with Him, and for life according to His will. For the understanding of the Holy Scriptures the Church welcomes every aid provided by linguistic, literary, and historical research. The authority of the Scriptures depends on their effectual truth made sure to faith by the Holy Spirit, not on their scientific or historical accuracy or their verbal inerrancy; and through them the same Spirit speaks to the Church, which acknowledges them as revealing the mind and will of God to every generation, and accepts them as the supreme rule of faith and life.

VI. CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

God has created all things by His holy, loving, and almighty power. As Creator He is above all His works and in them all, upholding them in being and guiding their course.

In His infinite wisdom God governs all things and overrules all events for perfectly wise and loving ends. He has every human life in His gracious and holy keeping.

VII. MAN AND SIN

God created man a spiritual being in His own likeness, for fellowship with Him and obedience to His will, giving to him freedom and responsibility; and man's true nature and destiny are brought to light in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sin, which [is] disobedience to God's law of righteousness and love, corrupts the sinner's nature and brings him under God's condemnation. All men are sinful, and by their sin alienated from God.



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Owing to their sinfulness, shown in their choice of evil, men are unable to fulfil the Divine purpose for which they were created, except as they receive the forgiveness and mighty help of God in Christ.

The existence of sin is a mystery, and is contrary to the will of God.

VIII. SALVATION IN CHRIST

God is love, and seeks to win all men to Himself, that they may be one with Him. By reason of their sin they have turned from communion with God; yet in Jesus Christ God has taken upon Him to save by forgiving their sin freely and reconciling them to Himself.

This salvation the eternal Son of God has wrought by becoming in nature one with man, being tempted like man yet without sin, and by offering Himself willingly for sin in the death of the Cross. Therein He has shown the exceeding evil of sin, condemning it once for all, and has manifested His redeeming love to the uttermost.

Jesus Christ, whom God raised from the dead, by His Cross and Resurrection draws all men to Himself, intercedes continually for His people, and by the gift of His Spirit enables them to overcome sin. Through His wondrous grace, those who believe on Him learn increasingly to love what He loves and to do what is pleasing to Him.

IX. THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY

It is the revealed will of God that men through Jesus Christ should come into fellowship with Him and thereby with one another. This fellowship is embodied in the Catholic or Universal Church, which consists of all those, together with their children, who confess their faith in Christ and profess obedience to Him. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church, which is His Body, and to His will alone it is subject.

There are many branches of the Church, differing in doctrine, in tradition, and in circumstance; yet through the union of all its true members with Jesus Christ, the Church is one. The boundaries of the true Church cannot be determined by men, but are known to the Lord alone.

The vocation of the Church is joyfully to bear witness to its Lord, to worship God in His Name, to build up its members in faith and righteousness and the spirit of unity, to proclaim His Gospel to the ends of



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the earth, to give loving service to mankind for His sake, and to watch and pray for the coming of His kingdom.

The Lord has committed to the Church the gifts of the Holy Scriptures, the Sacraments of the Gospel, and the Christian Ministry. The Ministry is an office within the Church for the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the care of souls, exercised by those who, obeying the call of Christ, are duly chosen and ordained thereto.

X. THE SACRAMENTS

Sacraments are holy ordinances appointed by Christ and committed by Him to the Church as tokens and pledges of God's saving love declared in His Word, and as effectual means through which He imparts His grace. In observing them the Church confesses its Lord before men and is visibly distinguished from the world. Their benefits are received by faith, and by them faith is quickened and confirmed.

The Sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

In the Sacrament of Baptism by water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the grace of God as cleansing from sin and imparting new life is visibly set forth and bestowed upon believers and upon their children, according to His promise. Baptism is the ordinance of admission to membership of the Church.

In the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion, bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Christ and His sacrifice upon the Cross, in faith in His real presence, and in joyful hope of His coming in glory. Therein Christ's gift of Himself and all His benefits is visibly set forth and bestowed upon believers, in such wise that they have communion with Him and with all the faithful of God.

XI. REPENTANCE AND FAITH

All who hear the Gospel are called to repent and believe. In repentance and faith – wrought in their hearts by the Word and the Holy Spirit – believers accept the judgment of God and embrace the gift of salvation offered in Christ. In repentance they turn from sin to God with shame and sorrow of heart, and with the purpose of obedience to His will; in faith they apprehend and rest upon His forgiving love set forth in Christ. Thus,



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by penitent faith alone, and not because of good works or holiness on their part, they are received into sonship and peace with God and made heirs of eternal life.

XII. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

All who receive the Gospel are enabled in the strength of God to live in fellowship with Him as His children, to obey the law of Christ, to grow in knowledge of God's love, and to trust His fatherly care in every trial and perplexity, thereby in their whole life showing themselves thankful to Him for all His gifts.

They are called to abide within the fellowship of the Church, to maintain its peace and unity, and to give diligent heed to worship, prayer, the hearing of the Word, and the Sacraments. They are likewise called to live as those who belong to the kingdom of God, and to seek His righteousness both in individual and social life, serving their fellow men in love for Christ's sake, relieving distress, combating ignorance, pride and covetousness, vice and disease, and every social injustice and public wrong, and striving that the will of God for the wellbeing and peace of men should be done over all the earth.

XIII. CHRISTIAN HOPE

The Gospel of Christ, crucified, risen and exalted, bears the promise of the ultimate triumph of good and of the everlasting blessedness of those who accept the mercy of God.

All souls are, after death, in the just and compassionate keeping of Almighty God.

God, who alone can read the heart, will judge all men by Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. Wickedness will not go unpunished, and those who reject the mercy of God will receive condemnation.

Those who accept His mercy live eternally in perfect fellowship with God and with one another, and joyfully serve Him in obedience and love, being made like to the Lord Jesus Christ. They see God face to face, and in the communion of saints are partakers with the Church on earth in all its labours and prayers.

At the last, Jesus Christ shall be manifested in the fulness of His power great glory. The whole creation of God shall be redeemed from all evil.



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The eternal purpose of God shall be accomplished, His kingdom shall come in its fulness, and He Himself shall be all in all.

These things, as all else in the Christian Faith, the Church holds in reverent submission to the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit, Who is truth; and it will ever humbly seek of Him enlightenment and grace both to unlearn error and also more fully to learn the mind and will of God, to Whom be glory for ever and ever.

FINAL DELIVERANCE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

[...] The General Assembly cordially commend the 'Short Statement of the Church's Faith' [...] to the ministers and members of the Church as an outline of the main articles of Christian belief suitable for the instruction of learners and for the help and guidance of believers. [...]

