



# REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 22

SEPTEMBER 6, 2025

*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:  
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;  
he shall set me up upon a rock.  
—Psalm 27:5*

# CONTENTS

- 
- 3 MEDITATION  
The Table of Shewbread
- 
- 4 THE CANONS OF DORDT  
-Translation Comparison: Head 5  
-Fifth Head of Doctrine: Of the Perseverance of the Saints
- 
- 12 HERMAN HOEKSEMA'S *BANNER* ARTICLES  
Article 126: The New King and His Kingdom: Circumcision, a Sign of the Covenant
- 



Editor: Rev. Andrew Lanning  
*From the Ramparts* Editor: Dewey Engelsma

See [reformedpavilion.com](http://reformedpavilion.com) for all contact and subscription information.

Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about. And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about. And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them. And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway.

—Exodus 25:23–30 (See also 37:10–16.)

### The Table of Shewbread

**T**he third item of furniture that would be placed in the tabernacle was the table of shewbread. Whereas the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat would be kept in the inner sanctum of the most holy place, the table of shewbread would be one of three pieces of furniture in the holy place, along with the altar of incense and the golden candlestick. The table of shewbread would be made of the same fine shittim wood, or acacia wood, as the ark of the covenant. Also like the ark, the table would be overlaid with pure gold. A raised rim of gold would grace the edge of the table like a crown, with another raised rim of gold around the border like another crown. This would add to the beauty of the table and make it fit for a king, and it would also keep all of the settings in place upon the table. The table of shewbread would be set on the north side of the holy place, which means that it would have been on the right side as the priests would enter the sanctuary.

The table of shewbread would be furnished with beautiful serving ware and dishes made of pure gold, with gorgeous plates upon which the bread would be set. There would also be covers for the bread, along with other vessels or vials with their own covers.

The main feature of the table of shewbread was the shewbread. The shewbread was ordinary bread that the priests would bake (Lev. 24:5–9). The priests would bake twelve loaves, setting them in two stacks of six loaves each—one stack of six on the left side of the table and one stack of six on the right side of the table. The shewbread must be set on the table on the sabbath day and left there for the entire week. On the following sabbath day, the priests would eat the shewbread and replace it with new shewbread to be left out for that week. On the top of each stack of shewbread, the priests would place frankincense in a vessel. This was one of two places in the holy place where frankincense was offered, the other being the altar of incense.

Although the shewbread was ordinary bread, it was made special by being set before the face of God in the holy place. The word *shewbread* means *bread of the presence* or *bread of the face* because it was set before God. “And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway” (Ex. 25:30).

What was the meaning of the table of shewbread? It was God’s dinner table. After all, the tabernacle was God’s house, and a house needs a dinner table. The dinner table is where the

family comes together for fellowship and for nourishment. So it was in God's house. The table of shewbread was furnished for a meal of fellowship between God and his people. Each of the twelve tribes had its place at that table, represented by the twelve loaves of bread. The priests, representing the people, would come into the sanctuary on the sabbath day

and commune with God and be nourished at his covenant table.

Through the blood of Christ, we come into God's sanctuary and commune with him, being nourished by the bread of life (John 6:35) and having the promise of Christ "that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom" (Luke 22:30).

—AL

## THE CANONS OF DORDT

### Translation Comparison: Head Five

#### *Corrected Translation*

##### **Fifth Head of Doctrine: Of the Perseverance of the Saints**

Article 1. Whom God, according to his purpose, calls to the communion of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, them he also certainly delivers from the dominion and slavery of sin, but not altogether from the flesh and from the body of sin in this life.

Article 2. Hence spring daily sins of infirmity, and spots adhere even to the best works of the saints, which furnish them with constant matter for humbling themselves before God, for fleeing to Christ crucified for refuge, for mortifying the flesh more and more by the Spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of piety, and for longing after the goal of perfection; till at length being set free from the body of this death they shall reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

Article 3. On account of these remains of indwelling sin, and the temptations of the world and of Satan besides, those who

#### *Current Translation*

##### **Fifth Head of Doctrine: Of the Perseverance of the Saints**

Article 1. Whom God calls, according to His purpose, to the communion of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit He delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life; though not altogether from the body of sin, and from the infirmities of the flesh, so long as they continue in this world.

Article 2. Hence spring daily sins of infirmity, and hence spots adhere to the best works of the saints, which furnish them with constant matter for humiliation before God and flying for refuge to Christ crucified; for mortifying the flesh more and more by the spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of piety; and for pressing forward to the goal of perfection, till being at length delivered from this body of death they are brought to reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

Article 3. By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and the temptations of sin and of the world, those who are converted

#### *Original Latin*

##### **Quintum Doctrinae Caput, de Perseverantia Sanctorum.**

##### *Articulus Primus.*

Quos Deus secundum propositum suum, ad communionem Filii sui Domini nostri Jesu Christi, vocat, et per Spiritum Sanctum regenerat, eos quidem et a peccati dominio et servitute, non autem a carne, et corpore peccati, penitus in hac vita liberat.

II. Hinc quotidiana infirmitatis peccata oriuntur, et optimis etiam sanctorum operibus nævi adhærescunt: quæ illis perpetuam sese coram Deo humiliandi, ad Christum crucifixum confugiendi, carnem magis ac magis per Spiritum precum et sancta pietatis exercitia mortificandi, et ad perfectionis metam suspirandi, materiam suggerunt; tantisper dum hoc mortis corpore soluti, cum Agno Dei in cœlis regnent.

III. Propter istas peccati inhabitantis reliquias, et mundi insuper ac Satanæ tentationes, non possent conversi in ista

are converted could not persevere in that grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who mercifully confirms them in the grace once conferred, and powerfully preserves them in the same, even unto the end.

Article 4. However, although the power of God that confirms and preserves true believers in grace is greater than that it can be overcome by the flesh, nevertheless those who are converted are not always so actuated and moved by God that they cannot by their own fault in certain particular acts draw back from the leading of grace, be seduced by the lusts of the flesh, and indulge in them. Wherefore, they must constantly watch and pray that they be not led into temptation. When they do not thus, not only can they be cruelly carried away by the flesh, by the world, and by Satan into sins, even grievous and dreadful ones, but sometimes even are so carried away by the righteous permission of God. This the melancholy falls of David, of Peter, and of other saints described in holy scripture demonstrate.

Article 5. Moreover, by such enormous sins they very highly offend God, incur the guilt of death, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, most grievously wound the conscience, and sometimes lose the sense of favor for a time; until, on their returning to a life of serious repentance, God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them.

could not persevere in a state of grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who, having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.

Article 4. Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God, as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, so as to be seduced by and comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer, that they be not led into temptation. When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins by Satan, the world, and the flesh, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually fall into these evils. This the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in Holy Scripture demonstrates.

Article 5. By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God's favor for a time, until, on their returning into the right way of serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them.

gratia perstare, si suis viribus permetterentur. Sed fidelis est Deus, qui ipsos in gratia semel collata misericorditer confirmat, et in eadem usque ad finem potenter conservat.

IV. Etsi autem illa potentia Dei vere fideles in gratia confirmantis et conservantis, major est, quam quæ a carne superari possit; non semper tamen conversi ita a Deo aguntur et moventur, ut non possint in quibusdam actionibus particularibus a ductu gratiæ, suo vitio, recedere, et a carnis concupiscentiis seduci, iisque obsequi. Quapropter ipsis perpetuo est vigilandum et orandum, ne in tentationes inducantur. Quod cum non faciunt, non solum a carne, mundo, et Satana, in peccata etiam gravia et atrocia abripi possunt, verum etiam interdum justa Dei permissione abripiuntur. Quod tristes Davidis, Petri, aliorumque sanctorum lapsus, in sacra Scriptura descripti, demonstrant.

V. Talibus autem enormibus peccatis Deum valde offendunt, reatum mortis incurrunt, Spiritum S. contristant, fidei exercitium interrumpunt, conscientiam gravissime vulnerant, sensum gratiæ nonnunquam ad tempus amittunt: donec per seriam resipiscentiam in vitam revertentibus paternus Dei vultus rursum affulgeat.

Article 6. For God, who is rich in mercy, by reason of his unchangeable purpose of election, does not utterly withdraw the Holy Spirit from his own, even in their melancholy falls; neither does he suffer them to sink so far down that they fall out of the grace of adoption and the state of justification, or that they commit the sin unto death (or, against the Holy Spirit) and, being entirely forsaken by him, plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

Article 7. For, in the first place, in these falls he preserves in them his incorruptible seed, by which they are regenerated, lest it should perish or be cast out. And then by his word and Spirit he certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, that they should wholeheartedly grieve after God over the sins committed; that they should through faith, with a contrite heart, seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator; that they, being reconciled, should again feel the favor of God; that they should through faith adore his mercies; and that henceforth they should more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Article 8. Thus, it is not by their own merits or strength but of God's free mercy that they neither fall away completely from faith and grace, nor continue in their backslidings to the end and perish. With respect to themselves, this not only could easily happen, but also undoubtedly would happen;

Article 6. But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people, even in their melancholy falls; nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death; nor does He permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

Article 7. For, in the first place, in these falls He preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing, or being totally lost; and again, by His Word and Spirit, certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator, may again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore His mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Article 8. Thus, it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy, that they do not totally fall from faith and grace, nor continue and perish finally in their backslidings; which with respect to themselves is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen; but with respect to God,

VI. Deus enim, qui dives est misericordia, ex immutabili electionis proposito, Spiritum Sanctum, etiam in tristibus lapsibus, a suis non prorsus aufert, nec eousque eos prolabi sinit, ut gratia adoptionis, justificationis statu excidant, aut peccatum ad mortem, sive in Spiritum Sanctum committant, et ab eo penitus deserti in exitium æternum sese præcipitent.

VII. Primo enim in istis lapsibus conservat in illis semen illud suum immortale, ex quo regeniti sunt, ne illud pereat aut excutiat. Deinde per verbum et Spiritum suum, eos certo et efficaciter renovat ad pœnitentiam, ut de admissis peccatis ex animo secundum Deum doleant, remissionem in sanguine Mediatoris, per fidem, contrito corde, expetant, et obtineant, gratiam Dei reconciliati iterum sentiant, miserationes per fidem ejus adorent, ac deinceps salutem suam cum timore et tremore studiosius operentur.

VIII. Ita non suis meritis, aut viribus, sed ex gratuita Dei misericordia id obtinent, ut nec totaliter fide et gratia excidant, nec finaliter in lapsibus maneat aut pereant. Quod quoad ipsos non tantum facile fieri posset, sed et indubie fieret; respectu autem Dei fieri omnino non potest: eum nec



but with respect to God, it is utterly impossible: his counsel cannot be changed; his promise cannot fail; the calling according to his purpose cannot be revoked; the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ cannot be rendered void; and the sealing of the Holy Spirit cannot be annulled or blotted out.

Article 9. Of this preservation of the elect to salvation, and of the perseverance of true believers in faith, believers themselves can be sure and are sure, according to the measure of faith, whereby they assuredly believe that they are and ever shall remain true and living members of the church, and that they have the remission of sins and life everlasting.

Article 10. Accordingly, this assurance does not come from any private revelation made alongside or without the word, but from faith in the promises of God, which he has most abundantly revealed in his word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which *itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God* (Rom. 8:16); and finally from a serious and holy desire for a good conscience and for good works. And if the elect of God in this world should be deprived of this solid comfort that they shall obtain the victory, and of this infallible earnest of eternal glory, they would be of all men most miserable.

Article 11. Scripture meanwhile testifies that believers in this life

it is utterly impossible, since His counsel cannot be changed, nor His promise fail, neither can the call according to His purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated.

Article 9. Of this preservation of the elect to salvation, and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers for themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they arrive at the certain persuasion that they ever will continue true and living members of the church, and that they experience forgiveness of sins, and will at last inherit eternal life.

Article 10. This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to, or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit, that we are children and heirs of God (Rom. 8:16); and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort, that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge or earnest of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.

Article 11. The Scripture moreover testifies that believers

consilium ipsius mutare, promissio excidere, vocatio secundum propositum revocari, Christi meritum, intercessio, et custodia irrita reddi nec Spiritus Sancti obsignatio frustranea fieri aut deleri possit.

IX. De hac electorum ad salutem custodia, vereque fidelium in fide perseverantia, ipsi fideles certi esse possunt, et sunt pro mensura fidei, qua certo credunt se esse et perpetuo mansuros vera et viva Ecclesiae membra, habere remissionem peccatorum, et vitam æternam.

X. Ac proinde hæc certitudo non est ex peculiari quadam revelatione præter aut extra verbum facta, sed ex fide promissionum Dei, quas in verbo suo copiosissime in nostrum solatium revelavit: ex testimonio *Spiritus Sancti testantis cum spiritu nostro nos esse Dei filios et hæredes*. Rom. 8:16. Denique ex serio et sancto bonæ conscientiae et bonorum operum studio. Atque hoc solido obtinendæ victoriæ solatio, et infallibili æternæ gloriæ arrha, si in hoc mundo electi Dei destituerentur, omnium hominum essent miserrimi.

XI. Interim testatur Scriptura fideles in hac vita cum variis

are assailed by various doubts of the flesh, and that under grievous temptations they do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, the father of all consolation, will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, *but will with the temptation also make a way to escape* (1 Cor. 10:13). And by the Holy Spirit he again awakens in them the assurance of persevering.

Article 12. However, this assurance of persevering is so far from rendering true believers proud and carnally secure that, on the contrary, it is the true root of humility, of filial reverence, of true piety, of patience in every struggle, of fervent prayers, of steadfastness under the cross and in confessing the truth, and of solid joy in God; and the consideration of this benefit is an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as is evident from the testimonies of scripture and the examples of the saints.

Article 13. Not even in those who are restored from a fall does the renewed confidence of perseverance produce licentiousness or harm to piety; but rather, a much greater care for diligently keeping the ways of the Lord, which were before ordained that they who walk therein may hold fast the assurance of their perseverance; lest, for their abuse of his fatherly kindness, the face of the

in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they are not always sensible of this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.

Article 12. This certainty of perseverance, however, is so far from exciting in believers a spirit of pride, or of rendering them carnally secure, that, on the contrary, it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God; so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as appears from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

Article 13. Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness or a disregard to piety in those who are recovering from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which He hath ordained, that they who walk therein may maintain an assurance of persevering; lest, by abusing His fatherly kindness, God should

carnis dubitationibus conflictari, et in gravi tentatione constitutos hanc fidei plerophoriam, ac perseverantiæ certitudinem, non semper sentire. Verum Deus, Pater omnis consolationis, *supra vires tentari eos non sinit, sed cum tentatione præstat evasionem*. 1 Cor. 10:13. Ac per Spiritum Sanctum perseverantiæ certitudinem in iisdem rursum excitat.

XII. Tantum autem abest, ut hæc perseverantiæ certitudo vere fideles superbos, et carnaliter securos reddat, ut e contrario humilitatis, filialis reverentiæ, veræ pietatis, patientia in omni lucta, precum ardentium, constantiæ in cruce et veritatis confessione, solidique in Deo gaudii vera sit radix: et consideratio istius beneficii sit stimulus ad serium et continuum gratitudinis et bonorum operum exercitium, ut ex Scripturæ testimoniis et sanctorum exemplis constat.

XIII. Neque etiam in iis, qui a lapsu instaurantur, lasciviam aut pietatis injuriam procreat rediviva perseverantiæ fiducia; sed multo majorem curam de viis Domini sollicite custodiendis, quæ præparatæ sunt ut in illis ambulando perseverantiæ suæ certitudinem retineant, ne propter paternæ benignitatis abusum propitii Dei facies (cujus contemplatio piis vita dulcior, subductio morte



favorable God (the beholding of which is to the pious sweeter than life, the hiding whereof is more bitter than death) should be turned away from them once again, and thus they should fall into more grievous torment of soul.

Article 14. Moreover, just as it hath pleased God to begin this his work of grace in us by the preaching of the gospel, so he preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing, reading, meditation, exhortations, threats, and promises of the same gospel, as well as by the use of the sacraments.

Article 15. This doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and true believers, and the assurance thereof—which doctrine God hath most abundantly revealed in his word and engraves upon the hearts of the faithful, for the glory of his name and for the comfort of pious souls—the flesh indeed does not understand; Satan hates it; the world ridicules it; the ignorant and hypocrites abuse it; and the spirits of error assault it. But the bride of Christ hath always most tenderly loved it as a treasure of inestimable worth, and hath steadfastly defended it; and God, against whom neither counsel can avail nor strength prevail, will see to it that she may continue to do so in time to come. Now, to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

turn away His gracious countenance from them, to behold which is to the godly dearer than life, the withdrawing whereof is more bitter than death, and they in consequence hereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience.

Article 14. And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments.

Article 15. The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and the certainty thereof, which God hath most abundantly revealed in His Word, for the glory of His name and the consolation of pious souls, and which He impresses upon the hearts of the faithful. Satan abhors it; the world ridicules it; the ignorant and hypocrite abuse, and heretics oppose it; but the spouse of Christ hath always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it, as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her to continue this conduct to the end. Now, to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be honor and glory forever. Amen.

acerbior) denuo ab ipsis avertatur, et sic in graviores animi cruciatus incident.

XIV. Quemadmodum autem Deo placuit, opus hoc suum gratiæ per prædicationem Evangelii in nobis inchoare; ita per ejusdem auditum, lectionem, meditationem, adhortationes, minas, promissa, nec non per usum sacramentorum illud conservat, continuat, et perficit.

XV. Hanc de vere credentium ac sanctorum perseverantia, ejusque certitudine, doctrinam, quam Deus ad nominis sui gloriam, et piarum animarum solatium, in verbo suo abundantissime revelavit, cordibusque fidelium imprimit, caro quidem non capit, Satanas odit, mundus ridet, imperiti et hypocritæ in abusum rapiunt, spiritusque erronei oppugnant; sed sponsa Christi ut inæstimabilis pretii thesaurum tenerrime semper dilexit, et constanter propugnavit: quod ut porro faciat procurabit Deus, adversus quem nec consilium valere, nec robur ullum prævalere potest. Cui soli Deo, Patri, Filio, et Spiritui Sancto sit honor et gloria in sempiternum. Amen.

## Fifth Head of Doctrine: Of the Perseverance of the Saints

**Article 1.** Whom God, according to his purpose, calls to the communion of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, them he also certainly delivers from the dominion and slavery of sin, but not altogether from the flesh and from the body of sin in this life.

**Article 2.** Hence spring daily sins of infirmity, and spots adhere even to the best works of the saints, which furnish them with constant matter for humbling themselves before God, for fleeing to Christ crucified for refuge, for mortifying the flesh more and more by the Spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of piety, and for longing after the goal of perfection; till at length being set free from the body of this death they shall reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

**Article 3.** On account of these remains of indwelling sin, and the temptations of the world and of Satan besides, those who are converted could not persevere in that grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who mercifully confirms them in the grace once conferred, and powerfully preserves them in the same, even unto the end.

**Article 4.** However, although the power of God that confirms and preserves true believers in grace is greater than that it can be overcome by the flesh, nevertheless those who are converted are not always so actuated and moved by God that they cannot by their own fault in certain particular acts draw back from the leading of grace, be seduced by the lusts of the flesh, and indulge in them. Wherefore, they must constantly watch and pray that they be not led into temptation. When they do not thus, not only can they be cruelly carried away by the flesh, by the world, and by Satan into sins, even grievous and dreadful ones, but sometimes even are so carried away by the righteous permission of God. This the melancholy falls of David, of Peter, and of other saints described in holy scripture demonstrate.

**Article 5.** Moreover, by such enormous sins they very highly offend God, incur the guilt of death,

grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, most grievously wound the conscience, and sometimes lose the sense of favor for a time; until, on their returning to a life of serious repentance, God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them.

**Article 6.** For God, who is rich in mercy, by reason of his unchangeable purpose of election, does not utterly withdraw the Holy Spirit from his own, even in their melancholy falls; neither does he suffer them to sink so far down that they fall out of the grace of adoption and the state of justification, or that they commit the sin unto death (or, against the Holy Spirit) and, being entirely forsaken by him, plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

**Article 7.** For, in the first place, in these falls he preserves in them his incorruptible seed, by which they are regenerated, lest it should perish or be cast out. And then by his word and Spirit he certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, that they should wholeheartedly grieve after God over the sins committed; that they should through faith, with a contrite heart, seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator; that they, being reconciled, should again feel the favor of God; that they should through faith adore his mercies; and that henceforth they should more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

**Article 8.** Thus, it is not by their own merits or strength but of God's free mercy that they neither fall away completely from faith and grace, nor continue in their backslidings to the end and perish. With respect to themselves, this not only could easily happen, but also undoubtedly would happen; but with respect to God, it is utterly impossible: his counsel cannot be changed; his promise cannot fail; the calling according to his purpose cannot be revoked; the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ cannot be rendered void; and the sealing of the Holy Spirit cannot be annulled or blotted out.

**Article 9.** Of this preservation of the elect to salvation, and of the perseverance of true believers in faith, believers themselves can be sure and are sure, according to the measure of faith, whereby they assuredly believe that they are and ever shall remain true and living members of the church, and that they have the remission of sins and life everlasting.

**Article 10.** Accordingly, this assurance does not come from any private revelation made alongside or without the word, but from faith in the promises of God, which he has most abundantly revealed in his word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which *itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God* (Rom. 8:16); and finally from a serious and holy desire for a good conscience and for good works. And if the elect of God in this world should be deprived of this solid comfort that they shall obtain the victory, and of this infallible earnest of eternal glory, they would be of all men most miserable.

**Article 11.** Scripture meanwhile testifies that believers in this life are assailed by various doubts of the flesh, and that under grievous temptations they do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, the father of all consolation, will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, *but will with the temptation also make a way to escape* (I Cor. 10:13). And by the Holy Spirit he again awakens in them the assurance of persevering.

**Article 12.** However, this assurance of persevering is so far from rendering true believers proud and carnally secure that, on the contrary, it is the true root of humility, of filial reverence, of true piety, of patience in every struggle, of fervent prayers, of steadfastness under the cross and in confessing the truth, and of solid joy in God; and the consideration of this benefit is an incentive to the serious and constant practice of

gratitude and good works, as is evident from the testimonies of scripture and the examples of the saints.

**Article 13.** Not even in those who are restored from a fall does the renewed confidence of perseverance produce licentiousness or harm to piety; but rather, a much greater care for diligently keeping the ways of the Lord, which were before ordained that they who walk therein may hold fast the assurance of their perseverance; lest, for their abuse of his fatherly kindness, the face of the favorable God (the beholding of which is to the pious sweeter than life, the hiding whereof is more bitter than death) should be turned away from them once again, and thus they should fall into more grievous torment of soul.

**Article 14.** Moreover, just as it hath pleased God to begin this his work of grace in us by the preaching of the gospel, so he preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing, reading, meditation, exhortations, threats, and promises of the same gospel, as well as by the use of the sacraments.

**Article 15.** This doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and true believers, and the assurance thereof—which doctrine God hath most abundantly revealed in his word and engraves upon the hearts of the faithful, for the glory of his name and for the comfort of pious souls—the flesh indeed does not understand; Satan hates it; the world ridicules it; the ignorant and hypocrites abuse it; and the spirits of error assault it. But the bride of Christ hath always most tenderly loved it as a treasure of inestimable worth, and hath steadfastly defended it; and God, against whom neither counsel can avail nor strength prevail, will see to it that she may continue to do so in time to come. Now, to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.



## Article CXXVI: The New King and His Kingdom: Circumcision, a Sign of the Covenant

“And it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.”—Gen. 17:11

The first question that is to be considered as we are discussing the significance of the sacrament of circumcision is: What did it obsignate? Of what exactly was circumcision a sign?

The text quoted above tells us that it was a token of the covenant between God and Abraham and his seed.

It, therefore, was a sign of that relation between God and Abraham and his seed according to which God was their friend and they were friends of God.

According to this gracious covenant relationship which God had established between himself and them, Jehovah would be with Abraham and his seed. He would be their party. He would be on their side. He would be their shield and their exceeding great reward. He would bless them with all the blessings of salvation. He would, besides, bless them that blessed his covenant people and curse him that cursed them. Always and everywhere he would be their party and choose their side. The covenant included on God's part that he would cleanse Abraham and his seed from all their sin, sanctify them, deliver them from the curse of sin, receive them into his communion, and make them heirs of the world. Nothing less than this did the covenant of God with Abraham and his seed ultimately include. They should be heirs of the eternal Kingdom, which God had prepared for his people from the foundation of the world. Thus Paul interprets the promise that is given to Abraham in Rom. 4:13: “For the promise that he should be the heir of

the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” Thus Paul conceives of the promise given to Abraham. Heir of the world he should be, with his seed. Nothing less than the eternal Kingdom was promised to Abraham, according to the holy apostle. Literally the promise was quite different. Literally God had promised Abraham the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; a great seed, innumerable as the stars in the heavens and as the sand that is by the seashore; kings to come forth from his loins, and all the nations of the earth to be blessed in him and his seed. But, after all, the real seed of Abraham is the spiritual seed that walks in the steps of their spiritual father, the believers, both from Jew and Greek, according to the Apostle Paul. The real land of Canaan is the heavenly, the Kingdom that is to come, of which the earthly Canaan is, after all, but type and shadow. It is with this in mind that Paul, without any argumentation, explains that the promise to Abraham and his seed was that they should be heirs of the world. The eternal Kingdom of Glory in Christ Jesus, the Great Seed of Abraham, was promised them. On God's part the covenant he had established with Abraham included all this. All the blessings of his salvation he would bestow on Abraham and his seed.

On the other hand, it was also included in this covenant, and in harmony with its relation of friendship between God and Abraham, that the latter should be God's party in the world. They, Abraham and his seed, should walk before him and be upright. They were to cling to him, love him with all their heart and mind and soul

and strength, confess him, and over against a world that knew not God they were to be manifestations of his grace. God was to be their friend and bless them with all the blessings of salvation, making them heirs of the world, and they were to be friends of God, clinging to him and manifesting the glory of his name in the world.

Of this covenant the sacrament of circumcision was a sign.

In order to understand, however, what was the relation between the sign and the thing obnoxious we must remember two more facts. In the first place, we must remember that this covenant was to run in the continuous line of Abraham's seed. Jehovah was not to have his covenant people among Israel today and among Moab or Ammon tomorrow. It was to follow the line of generations. The seed of the friends of God were to be found in the descendants of Abraham. Abraham was to be the progenitor of the holy seed of God. From generation to generation God was to have his people, those whom he would justify by faith and cleanse and sanctify unto himself as his people in the world, those that were to be heirs of the world, among the children of Abraham. If we are to understand the sign in circumcision with relation to the thing signified, it is necessary that this be borne in mind. Abraham and the generations following him had the promise that they would be the generators of the people of God, of the holy line of the seed of the woman. In the second place we must also remember that circumcision was the sign of God's covenant with his people in the old dispensation. It has no significance for the New Testament times. When the covenant of God lapses into its new historical development in the Church of the new dispensation, it is necessary that circumcision be displaced by holy baptism. Circumcision can only be understood as a sign of the covenant if we remember that it is decidedly old-dispensational. Now, what was characteristic of the old dispensation? It was that it looked forward. It stood in the sign of the promise. It was

characterized by the promise of God objectively, and by expectation subjectively. The saints of the old dispensation did not see the promise, that is, beholding the thing from afar they did not see its realization. Christ had not yet come. He had not yet fought the battle. He had not manifested himself as yet as the Great Seed of the woman, as the great seed of Abraham, as the glorious Son of David, as the Servant of Jehovah and the Friend of God par excellence. He in whom after all Abraham and his seed were friends of God, justified and cleansed, in whom they would be heir of the world, was still to come. And he was to be the Holy Seed in the unique sense of the word. The line of holy seed, as it was to proceed from Abraham's loins, was to culminate in Christ. From generation to generation that holy seed was to be found among the descendants of Abraham until it had brought forth the Christ, the Great King in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. The covenant established with Abraham in the old dispensation included the bringing forth of the Messiah. And the great expectation of Israel, of the people of God, of the covenant fathers and mothers was to bring forth that Great Seed. The sign of the Church of the old dispensation is for that reason the pregnant woman about to be delivered of a man-child as she is pictured in Rev. 12. And, therefore, would we understand circumcision as a sign we must remember:

- a. That it was a sign of the covenant between God and his people.
- b. That it was a sign of the covenant as it was to run in the line of Abraham's generations, so that generation upon generation became the progenitors of the Holy Seed of God.
- c. That it was a sign of the covenant in that period of history when all stands in the sign of expectation and looks forward to the Great Seed that was to come.

(To be continued)

—Grand Rapids, Mich.