



# REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 23

SEPTEMBER 13, 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*

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And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick. And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers. And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick. Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold. And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it. And the tongs thereof, and the snuffdishes thereof, shall be of pure gold. Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels. And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.

—Exodus 25:31–40 (See also 37:17–24.)

### The Golden Candlestick

**T**he fourth article of furniture in the tabernacle would be the golden candlestick. Like the table of shewbread and the altar of incense, the golden candlestick would be in the holy place, or the sanctuary (Heb. 9:2). It would be set on the south side of the holy place, which means that it would be on the priests' left as they entered.

The candlestick would be made of pure gold, and its design was very beautiful. It would stand on a base of gold and would have a total of seven small bowls that served as lamps. A central shaft would come out of the base with a bowl at its top. Out of that central shaft would come three branches on each side that curved upward until they met the level of the central bowl, and each of these branches also would have a bowl on top. The result would be a perfectly symmetrical and graceful arrangement of seven bowls in a row. The bowls of the candlestick would be filled with oil and lit so that the candlestick would illuminate the sanctuary of the tabernacle.

The central shaft and the branches of the candlestick would be decorated with golden knops and flowers made from the same gold as the candlestick itself. At four places along the central shaft, golden petals would burst forth from a golden knop, or bud. The same would be true at three places along each branch. These would add to the beauty of the candlestick, making it look like a flourishing and fruitful tree.

The golden candlestick was a symbol of the church. Jesus explained this symbolism when he appeared to John in a vision in the midst of “seven golden candlesticks,” which were “the seven churches” (Rev. 1:20). A candlestick is a good symbol for the church, for just as a candlestick gives light, so the church shines as a light in this world with the glory of God's holiness and grace in Jesus Christ. Jesus, who is the light of the world (John 8:12), makes his people the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). Among the crooked and perverse nation of darkness, God's people “shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

The oil that burned to give light was a symbol of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The church has no light of herself but is dark and dead. The Spirit of Christ brings to the church all of the blessings of salvation that our savior purchased for us by his death. The Spirit makes us alive (John 6:63) and fruitful (Gal. 5:22). When the church shines with the light of her Lord, it is a testimony of God's power by his Spirit. "Not by might, nor by

power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 4:6).

By God's decree the candlestick was to stand in the sanctuary of the tabernacle of God. This was God's promise that his church would always have a place before his presence and in his dwelling. Redeemed by Christ and filled with his Spirit, the church is a lovely, shining, golden testimony of the grace of God, in whose house we dwell.

—AL

## THE CANONS OF DORDT

### Translation Comparison: Head Five, Rejection of Errors

Corrected Translation	Current Translation	Original Latin
<b>Rejection of Errors concerning the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints.</b>		<b>Rejectio Errorum circa Doctrinam de Perseverantia Sanctorum.</b>
The orthodox doctrine having been explained, the synod rejects the errors of those:	The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod <i>rejects</i> the errors of those:	<i>Exposita doctrina orthodoxa, Synodus rejicit errores eorum:</i>
Error 1: Who teach that the perseverance of the truly faithful is not the effect of election, or a gift of God acquired by the death of Christ, but is a condition of the new covenant, which man, before his decisive election and justification (as they speak), must fulfill by his free will.	Error 1: Who teach that the perseverance of the true believers is not a fruit of election, or a gift of God gained by the death of Christ, but a condition of the new covenant, which (as they declare) man before his decisive election and justification must fulfill through his free will.	I. Qui docent, 'Perseverantiam vere fidelium non esse effectum electionis, aut donum Dei morte Christi partum, sed esse conditionem novi fœderis, ab homine ante sui electionem ac justificationem' (ut ipsi loquuntur) 'peremptoriam, libera voluntate præstandam.' Nam sacra Scriptura testatur eam ex electione sequi, et vi mortis, resurrectionis et intercessionis Christi electis donari. Rom. 11:7: <i>Electio assecuta est, reliqui occalluerunt.</i> Item, Rom. 8:32: <i>Qui proprio Filio non pepercit, sed pro omnibus nobis tradidit ipsum, quomodo non cum eo nobis omnia donabit? Quis intentabit crimina adversus electos Dei? Deus est qui justificat. Quis est qui condemnet? Christus in est qui mortuus est,</i>
Rejection: For holy scripture testifies that perseverance follows from election and that it is given to the elect by the death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ. <i>The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded</i> (Rom. 11:7). Likewise: <i>He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay</i>	Rejection: For the Holy Scripture testifies that this follows out of election, and is given the elect in virtue of the death, the resurrection, and intercession of Christ: <i>But the elect obtained it and the rest were hardened</i> (Rom. 11:7). Likewise: <i>He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the</i>	

any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Rom. 8:32–35).

Error 2: Who teach that God certainly provides the believing man with sufficient powers to persevere and is ready to preserve these in him if he will do his duty; nevertheless, even when all those things have been furnished that are necessary to persevere in faith and that God is pleased to use to preserve faith, it still always depends upon the choice of man's will whether he will persevere or not persevere.

Rejection: For this view consists of obvious Pelagianism; and while it pretends to make men free, it makes them robbers of God's honor, contrary to the unanimous teaching of the gospel throughout, which takes away from man every reason for boasting and assigns the praise for this benefit to divine grace alone; and it is contrary to the testimony of the apostle: *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ* (I Cor. 1:8).

Error 3: Who teach that true believers and the regenerated not only can fall completely and finally from justifying faith, as well as from grace and salvation, but also that it is not uncommon for them actually to fall from these and to be lost forever.

charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Rom. 8:32–35).

Error 2: Who teach that God does indeed provide the believer with sufficient powers to persevere, and is ever ready to preserve these in him, if he will do his duty; but that though all things which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God will use to preserve faith are made use of, it even then ever depends on the pleasure of the will whether it will persevere or not.

Rejection: For this idea contains an outspoken Pelagianism, and, while it would make men free, it makes them robbers of God's honor, contrary to the prevailing agreement of the evangelical doctrine, which takes from man all cause of boasting, and ascribes all the praise for this favor to the grace of God alone; and contrary to the apostle, who declares: *That it is God, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye be unreprouvable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Cor. 1:8).

Error 3: Who teach that the true believers and regenerate not only can fall from justifying faith and likewise from grace and salvation wholly and to the end, but indeed often do fall from this and are lost forever.

imo qui etiam resurrexit, qui etiam sedet ad dexteram Dei, qui etiam intercedit pro nobis: Quis nos separabit a dilectione Christi?

II. Qui docent, 'Deum quidem hominem fidelem sufficientibus ad perseverandum viribus instruere, ac paratum esse eas in ipso conservare si officium faciat: positis tamen illis omnibus, quæ ad perseverandum in fide necessaria sunt, quæque Deus ad conservandam fidem adhibere vult, pendere semper a voluntatis arbitrio, ut perseveret, vel non perseveret.' Haec enim sententia manifestum Pelagianismum continet; et homines, dum vult facere liberos, facit sacrilegos, contra perpetuum evangelicæ doctrinae consensum, quæ omnem gloriandi materiam homini adimit, et hujus beneficii laudem soli divinæ gratiæ transcribit; et contra Apostolum testantem: *Deum esse qui confirmabit nos usque in finem inculpato in die Domini nostri Jesu Christi*. I Cor. 1:8.

III. Qui docent, 'Vere credentes et regenitos non tantum posse a fide justificante, item gratia, et salute totaliter et finaliter excidere, sed etiam reipsa non raro ex iis excidere, atque in æternum perire.' Nam hæc opinio ipsam justificationis ac regenerationis gratiam,

Rejection: For this position renders void the very grace of justification and regeneration, and the continuous protection of Christ, contrary to the express words of the apostle Paul: *While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him* (Rom. 5:8–9); and contrary to the apostle John: *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God* (1 John 3:9); and, in fact, contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: *I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand* (John 10:28–29).

Error 4: Who teach that true believers and the regenerated can sin the sin unto death, or against the Holy Spirit.

Rejection: Seeing that the same apostle John, after having made mention in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, verses 16 and 17, of those who sin unto death, and having forbidden to pray for them, immediately adds this in verse 18: *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not* (meaning a sin of that kind); *but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not* (1 John 5:18).

Error 5: Who teach that no certainty of future perseverance can be had in this life without a special revelation.

Rejection: For this conception makes powerless the grace, justification, regeneration, and continued keeping by Christ, contrary to the express words of the apostle Paul: *That, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him* (Rom. 5:8, 9). And contrary to the apostle John: *Whosoever is begotten of God doth no sin, because his seed abideth in him; and he can not sin, because he is begotten of God* (1 John 3:9). And also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: *I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand* (John 10:28, 29).

Error 4: Who teach that true believers and regenerate can sin the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit.

Rejection: Since the same apostle John, after having spoken in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, verses 16 and 17, of those who sin unto death, and having forbidden to pray for them, immediately adds to this in verse 18: *We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not* (meaning a sin of that character), *but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the evil one toucheth him not* (1 John 5:18).

Error 5: Who teach that without a special revelation we can have no certainty of future perseverance in this life.

et perpetuam Christi custodiam irritam reddit, contra diserta Apostoli Pauli verba, Rom. 5:8, 9: *Si Christus pro nobis mortuus est, quum adhuc essemus peccatores, multo igitur magis, jam justificati in sanguine ejus, servabimur per ipsum ab ira.* Et contra Apostolum Johannem, 1 John 3:9: *Omnis qui natus est ex Deo, non dat operam peccato: quia semen ejus in eo manet, nec potest peccare, quia ex Deo genitus est.* Nec non contra verba Jesu Christi, John 10:28, 29: *Ego vitam æternam do ovibus meis, et non peribunt in æternum, nec rapiet eas quisquam de manu mea; Pater meus, qui mihi eas dedit, major est omnibus, nec ullus potest eas rapere de manu Patris mei.*

IV. Qui docent, ‘Vere fideles ac regenitos posse peccare peccato ad mortem, vel in Spiritum Sanctum.’ Quum idem Apostolus Johan, Ep. I. cap. V. postquam vers. 16, 17 peccantium ad mortem meminisset, et pro iis orare vetuisset, statim ver. 18 subjungat: *Scimus quod quisquis natus est ex Deo, non peccat* (nempe illo peccati genere), *sed qui genitus est ex Deo, conservat seipsum, et malignus ille non tangit eum.*

V. Qui docent, ‘Nullam certitudinem futuræ perseverantiæ haberi posse in hac vita, absque speciali revelatione.’ Per hanc enim

Rejection: For by this doctrine the solid comfort of true believers in this life is taken away, and the doubting of the papists is again introduced into the church. Indeed, holy scripture throughout derives this assurance not from a special and extraordinary revelation but from the marks peculiar to the children of God and from the unshakably firm promises of God. So especially the apostle Paul: *Nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom. 8:39). And John: *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us* (1 John 3:24).

Error 6: Who teach that the doctrine of the assurance of perseverance and salvation, from its own character and nature, is a “pillow” for the flesh and is injurious to piety, good conduct, prayers, and other holy exercises; but that, on the contrary, it is praiseworthy to be in doubt about perseverance and salvation.

Rejection: For these show themselves to be ignorant of the efficacy of divine grace and of the operation of the indwelling Holy Spirit; and they contradict the apostle John, who asserts the opposite in express words: *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that*

Rejection: For by this doctrine the sure comfort of the true believers is taken away in this life, and the doubts of the papist are again introduced into the church, while the Holy Scriptures constantly deduce this assurance, not from a special and extraordinary revelation, but from the marks proper to the children of God and from the constant promises of God. So especially the apostle Paul: *No creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom. 8:39). And John declares: *And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us* (1 John 3:24).

Error 6: Who teach that the doctrine of the certainty of perseverance and of salvation, from its own character and nature, is a cause of indolence and is injurious to godliness, good morals, prayers, and other holy exercises, but that on the contrary it is praiseworthy to doubt.

Rejection: For these show that they do not know the power of divine grace and the working of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And they contradict the apostle John, who teaches the opposite with express words in his first epistle: *Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is.*

doctrinam vere fidelium solida consolatio in hac vita tollitur, et pontificiorum dubitatio in Ecclesiam reducitur. Sacra vero Scriptura passim hanc certitudinem, non ex speciali et extraordinaria revelatione, sed ex propriis filiorum Dei signis, et constantissimis Dei promissionibus petit. Imprimis Apostolus Paulus, Rom. 8:39: *Nulla res creata potest nos separare a charitate Dei, quæ est in Christo Jesu, Domino nostro.* Et Johannes, Epist. I. 3:24: *Qui servat mandata ejus, in eo manet, et ille in eo: et per hoc novimus ipsum in nobis manere, ex Spiritu quem dedit nobis.*

VI. Qui docent, ‘Doctrinam de perseverantiæ ac salutis certitudine, ex natura et indole sua, esse carnis pulvinar, et pietati, bonis moribus, precibus aliisque sanctis exercitiis noxiam; contra vero de ea dubitare, esse laudabile.’ Hi enim demonstrant se efficaciam divinæ gratiæ, et inhabitantis Spiritus S. operationem ignorare: et contradicunt Apostolo Johanni contrarium disertis verbis affirmanti, 1 John 3:2, 3: *Dilecti mei, nunc filii Dei sumus; sed nondum patefactum est id quod erimus: scimus autem fore, ut quum ipse patefactus fuerit, similes ei simus, quoniam videbimus eum, sicuti est. Et quisquis habet hanc spem in eo, purificat seipsum, sicut et ille purus est.* Hi præterea sanctorum tam Veteris quam Novi Testamenti exemplis

*hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure* (1 John 3:2–3). Besides this, these are refuted by the examples of the saints in both the Old and New Testaments, who, though they were assured of their perseverance and salvation, were nevertheless constant in prayers and other pious exercises.

Error 7: Who teach that the faith of those who believe merely for a time does not differ from justifying and saving faith except only in duration.

Rejection: For Christ himself in Matthew 13:20ff. and Luke 8:13ff. clearly establishes a threefold difference, besides that of duration, between temporary and true believers, when he says that those receive the seed in stony ground, but these in good ground, or a good heart; those are without root, but these have a firm root; those are devoid of fruit, but these faithfully, or perseveringly, bring forth their fruit in varying measure.

Error 8: Who teach that it is not absurd that a man whose first regeneration has been extinguished should a second time, or even more frequently yet, be born again.

Rejection: For by this doctrine these deny the incorruptibility of the seed of God, by which we are born again, against the testimony of the apostle Peter: *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible* (1 Pet. 1:23).

*And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure* (1 John 3:2, 3). Furthermore, these are contradicted by the example of the saints, both of the Old and the New Testament, who though they were assured of their perseverance and salvation were nevertheless constant in prayers and other exercises of godliness.

Error 7: Who teach that the faith of those who believe for a time does not differ from justifying and saving faith except only in duration.

Rejection: For Christ Himself, in Matt. 13:20, Luke 8:13, and in other places, evidently notes, besides this duration, a threefold difference between those who believe only for a time and true believers, when He declares that the former receive the seed in stony ground, but the latter in the good ground or heart; that the former are without root, but the latter have a firm root; that the former are without fruit, but that the latter bring forth their fruit in various measure with constancy and steadfastness.

Error 8: Who teach that it is not absurd that one having lost his first regeneration is again and even often born anew.

Rejection: For these deny by this doctrine the incorruptibleness of the seed of God, whereby we are born again, contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: *Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible* (1 Pet. 1:23).

perseverantia et salute essent certi, in precibus tamen, aliisque pietatis exercitiis, assidui fuerunt.

VII. Qui docent, 'Fidem temporariorum a justificante et salvifica fide non differre nisi sola duratione.' Nam Christus ipse Matt. 13:20 et Luke 8:13 ac deinceps, triplex præterea inter temporarios et veros fideles discrimen manifesto constituit, quum illos dicit semen recipere in terra petrosa, hos in terra bona, seu corde bono: illos carere radice, hos radicem firmam habere: illos fructibus esse vacuos, hos fructum suum diversa mensura, constanter seu perseveranter proferre.

VIII. Qui docent, 'Non esse absurdum, hominem priore regeneratione extincta, iterato, imo saepius renasci.' Hi enim per hanc doctrinam negant seminis Dei, per quod renascimur, incorruptibilitatem: adversus testimonium Apostoli Petri, Epist. I, 1:23: *Renati non ex semine corruptibili, sed incorruptibili.*

Error 9: Who teach that Christ never prayed for the unfailing perseverance of believers in faith.

Rejection: For they contradict Christ himself when he says of Simon Peter: *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not* (Luke 22:32); and John the evangelist when he attests that Christ prayed not only for the apostles but also for all those who would believe through their word: *Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me; and: I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil* (John 17:11, 15, 20).

Error 9: Who teach that Christ has in no place prayed that believers should infallibly continue in faith.

Rejection: For they contradict Christ Himself, who says: *I have prayed for thee* (Simon), *that thy faith fail not* (Luke 22:32); and the evangelist John, who declares that Christ has not prayed for the apostles only, but also for those who through their word would believe: *Holy Father, keep them in thy name, and: I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one* (John 17:11, 15, 20).

IX. Qui docent, ‘Christum nunquam rogasse pro infallibili credentium in fide perseverantia.’ Contradicunt enim ipsi Christo, dicenti, Luke 22:32: *Ego rogavi pro te, Petre, ne deficiat fides tua*; et Evangelistæ Johanni, testanti, John 17:20, Christum non tantum pro apostolis, sed etiam pro omnibus, per sermonem ipsorum credituris, orasse, ver. 11: *Pater sancte, conserva eos in nomine tuo*; Et ver. 15: *Non oro ut eos tollas e mundo, sed ut conserves eos a malo*.



## Fifth Head of Doctrine, Rejection of Errors

**Rejection of Errors concerning the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints.** The orthodox doctrine having been explained, the synod rejects the errors of those:

**Error 1:** Who teach that the perseverance of the truly faithful is not the effect of election, or a gift of God acquired by the death of Christ, but is a condition of the new covenant, which man, before his decisive election and justification (as they speak), must fulfill by his free will.

**Rejection:** For holy scripture testifies that perseverance follows from election and that it is given to the elect by the death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ. *The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded* (Rom. 11:7). Likewise: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* (Rom. 8:32–35).

**Error 2:** Who teach that God certainly provides the believing man with sufficient powers to persevere and is ready to preserve these in him if he will do his duty; nevertheless, even when all those things have been furnished that are necessary to persevere in faith and that God is pleased to use to preserve faith, it still always depends upon the choice of man's will whether he will persevere or not persevere.

**Rejection:** For this view consists of obvious Pelagianism; and while it pretends to make men free, it makes them robbers of God's honor, contrary to the unanimous teaching of the gospel throughout, which takes away from man every reason for boasting and assigns the praise for this benefit to divine grace alone; and it is contrary to the testimony of the apostle: *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ* (I Cor. 1:8).

**Error 3:** Who teach that true believers and the regenerated not only can fall completely and finally from justifying faith, as well as from grace and salvation, but also that it is not uncommon for them actually to fall from these and to be lost forever.

**Rejection:** For this position renders void the very grace of justification and regeneration, and the continuous protection of Christ, contrary to the express words of the apostle Paul: *While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him* (Rom. 5:8–9); and contrary to the apostle John: *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God* (I John 3:9); and, in fact, contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: *I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand* (John 10:28–29).

**Error 4:** Who teach that true believers and the regenerated can sin the sin unto death, or against the Holy Spirit.

**Rejection:** Seeing that the same apostle John, after having made mention in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, verses 16 and 17, of those who sin unto death, and having forbidden to pray for them, immediately adds this in verse 18: *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not* (meaning a sin of that kind); *but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not* (I John 5:18).

**Error 5:** Who teach that no certainty of future perseverance can be had in this life without a special revelation.

**Rejection:** For by this doctrine the solid comfort of true believers in this life is taken away, and the doubting of the papists is again introduced into the church. Indeed, holy scripture throughout derives this assurance not from a special and extraordinary revelation but from the marks

peculiar to the children of God and from the unshakably firm promises of God. So especially the apostle Paul: *Nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom. 8:39). And John: *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us* (I John 3:24).

**Error 6:** Who teach that the doctrine of the assurance of perseverance and salvation, from its own character and nature, is a “pillow” for the flesh and is injurious to piety, good conduct, prayers, and other holy exercises; but that, on the contrary, it is praiseworthy to be in doubt about perseverance and salvation.

**Rejection:** For these show themselves to be ignorant of the efficacy of divine grace and of the operation of the indwelling Holy Spirit; and they contradict the apostle John, who asserts the opposite in express words: *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure* (I John 3:2–3). Besides this, these are refuted by the examples of the saints in both the Old and New Testaments, who, though they were assured of their perseverance and salvation, were nevertheless constant in prayers and other pious exercises.

**Error 7:** Who teach that the faith of those who believe merely for a time does not differ from

justifying and saving faith except only in duration.

**Rejection:** For Christ himself in Matthew 13:20ff. and Luke 8:13ff. clearly establishes a threefold difference, besides that of duration, between temporary and true believers, when he says that those receive the seed in stony ground, but these in good ground, or a good heart; those are without root, but these have a firm root; those are devoid of fruit, but these faithfully, or perseveringly, bring forth their fruit in varying measure.

**Error 8:** Who teach that it is not absurd that a man whose first regeneration has been extinguished should a second time, or even more frequently yet, be born again.

**Rejection:** For by this doctrine these deny the incorruptibility of the seed of God, by which we are born again, against the testimony of the apostle Peter: *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible* (I Pet. 1:23).

**Error 9:** Who teach that Christ never prayed for the unfailing perseverance of believers in faith.

**Rejection:** For they contradict Christ himself when he says of Simon Peter: *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not* (Luke 22:32); and John the evangelist when he attests that Christ prayed not only for the apostles but also for all those who would believe through their word: *Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me; and: I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil* (John 17:11, 15, 20).



## Article CXXVII: The New King and His Kingdom: Circumcision, a Sign of the Covenant (continued)

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

I think if we remember these things it will not be difficult to see the relation between the sign and the thing obsignated in the sacrament of circumcision. In the first place circumcision signified the spiritual circumcision of the heart. Itself was a cutting away of the flesh, but it pictured the cutting away of the old nature, the purifying and separation from the body of sin in the spiritual sense of the word. Only through this spiritual operation by the grace of God could the descendants of Abraham be friends of God, God's covenanters and his party in the world in the true sense of the word. In circumcision they bore in their flesh the sign that they were such spiritual children of God. It does not concern us just now what was the attitude the individual Israelites assumed over against this sign. Fact was that in the sign of circumcision all the people of Israel bore the mark that they were children of the Most High, the holy seed of God. This is plain from Scripture itself. In Rom. 2:28, 29 the apostle writes: “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God.” The meaning is evident. What Paul here writes is true not only of the spiritual Jew of the new dispensation, but also of every Israelite of the Old Testament times. True circumcision was that of the heart. It was the spiritual operation of God's grace upon the hearts of those that were by nature corrupt. Of this spiritual operation

circumcision in the flesh was a sign. It signified that the body of sin was cut away. Hence, in the true sense that Israelite was circumcised who not only possessed the sign, but who was also spiritually circumcised and cleansed from the body of sin, liberated from the law of sin and death. It is for that reason that in this respect baptism is similar to circumcision. Paul literally calls baptism “circumcision made without hands.” In Col. 2:11, 12 he writes: “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism \* \* \* .” The meaning is plain. Circumcision was literally a cutting of the flesh of sin, of the spiritual operation of God's grace. And of this same operation also baptism is a sign. Physically the believers of Colosse were not circumcised, neither was there any need of this for them. But spiritually they were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, baptized as they were in Christ.

In the second place there is significance in the fact that it was the generative organ that was circumcised in the line of Abraham's seed. It was in his line that the holy seed was to be found. Abraham and his generations were to bring forth, to generate, the holy seed of God. But how was this possible? Surely not by nature. By nature also the line of Abraham's seed was under the curse of Adam's sin, organically connected with our first father, partaking of his root sin. It was not to be expected that the children of Adam should ever bring forth a holy seed of God. On the contrary, in the generations of Adam the children are conceived and born in sin. God's

grace, however, was to make the separation from the old root in Adam. If by nature it was impossible to bring forth the clean out of the unclean, by the wonder of God's grace this would be made possible. And this wonder of God's grace, which would produce a holy seed among those that were by nature children of the first Adam, was to become manifest in a continuous line of generations from Abraham, culminating in Christ. Not, of course, as if grace were a matter of generation. But, nevertheless, in such a way that from parent to child in a continuous line God would perform the spiritual operation of the circumcision of the heart. Again, not as if all were really Israelites in the spiritual sense that came from Abraham's loins. We will explain this when we trace the line of election running in the bed of the historical manifestation of God's covenant. But the fact remains that God had established his covenant with Abraham in the line of his generations. That according to this covenant Abraham would become the father of a holy seed of God is evident. That this could never be expected from Abraham and his generations by nature is plain. The circumcision of the generative organ is sign of the fact that Abraham in his generations is deemed worthy and enabled by the grace of God to become progenitor of the people of God, separated from the old root in Adam.

And, finally, circumcision stands, as a sign, related to the fact that the old dispensation looked forward, was the dispensation of the still unrealized promise, the period of hope and expectation. The holy line, having its sign in the

circumcision of the generative organ, would culminate in Christ, the seed of Abraham. He is, so to speak, the last and greatest product of circumcision, in whom the Old Testament sign comes to an end, in whom the hope of all the old dispensation is fully realized. The Church has brought forth the man-child. And, therefore, in him circumcision must come to an end. It looked forward to him. But after he is brought forth the holy line looks forward no more. They are circumcised no more, as if still they expected to bring forth the Great Seed of Abraham. But they are baptized as a token that they are ingrafted into him. Surely, that all righteousness may be fulfilled and that it may become evident that the Great Seed belongs to the seed of Abraham, Christ is still circumcised. But he must be positively the last. He is also baptized and belongs to the new dispensation as well as to the old. And thus the old and the new dispensation are one, even in their sign, with this difference, that in the circumcision of the generative organ the people of God possessed the sign of their expectation of the fulfillment of the promise; while in the sacrament of holy baptism the people of God of the new dispensation possess the sign of becoming one plant with him that has come. And thus, at the same time, the sign of circumcision becomes of great significance. It is not an empty symbol, without relation and analogy to the thing signified. It is much rather a beautiful manifestation of the wisdom and grace of God, who cares for his people and strengthens their faith according to the historical character of the period in which they live.

—Grand Rapids, Mich.

