

THE TWENTY FOUR ARTICLES OF THE FAITH

(These Articles of the Faith were adopted by the Presbyterian Church of England in 1890 and by the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa in 1897).

1. OF GOD.

We believe in, and adore, one living and true God, who is Spirit, personal, infinite, and eternal, present in every place, the almighty Author and sovereign Lord of all; most blessed, most holy, and most free; perfect in wisdom, justice, truth and love; to us most merciful and gracious; unto whom only we must cleave, whom only we must worship and obey. To Him be glory for ever. Amen.

2. OF THE TRINITY.

We acknowledge, with the ancient Church, the mystery of the Holy Trinity as revealed in Scripture, and believe that in the unity of the ever blessed Godhead there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of one substance, equal in power and glory.

3. OF CREATION.

We believe that Almighty God, for His own holy and loving ends, was pleased in the beginning to create the heavens and the earth, by the Son, the Eternal Word; and, through progressive stages, to fashion and order this world, giving life to every creature; and to make man in His own image that he might glorify and enjoy God, occupying and subduing the earth and having dominion over the creatures, to the praise of his Maker's name.

4. OF PROVIDENCE.

We believe, that God the Creator upholds all things by the Word of His power, preserving and providing for all His creatures, according to the laws of their being; and that He, through the presence and energy of His Spirit in nature and history, disposes and governs all events for His own high design; yet is He not in any wise the author or approver of sin, neither are the freedom and responsibility of man taken away, nor have any bounds been set to the sovereign liberty of Him who worketh when and where and how He pleaseth.

5. OF THE FALL.

We believe and confess that our first father, Adam, the representative head as well as common ancestor of mankind, transgressed the commandment of God through temptation of the devil, by which transgression he fell from his original state of innocence and communion with God; and so all mankind, being in him, have come under just condemnation, are subject to the penalty of death, and inherit a sinful nature, estranged from God, from which proceed all actual transgressions; and we acknowledge that out of this condition no man is able to deliver himself.

6. OF SAVING GRACE.

We believe and proclaim that God, who is rich in mercy as well as of perfect justice, was moved by His great love to man to hold forth from the first a promise of redemption, which from age to age He confirmed and unfolded, and that, in the fullness of time, He accomplished His gracious purpose by sending His Son to be the Saviour of the world; wherefore our salvation out of sin and misery is ever to be ascribed to free and sovereign grace.

7. OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

We believe in and confess with the ancient Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man by taking to Himself a true body and soul, yet without sin, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary; so that he is both God and

Man, two whole perfect and distinct natures, the divine and the human, being inseparably joined together in one person, that He might be the Mediator between God and man, by whom alone we must be saved.

8. OF THE WORK OF CHRIST.

We believe that the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, being anointed with the Holy Spirit to proclaim and set up the Kingdom of God among men, did by His perfect life on earth, through words and deeds of grace, and by His death upon the cross, declare the Father, whose image He is; and did fully satisfy divine justice, and obtain for us forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, and the gift of eternal life, through His obedience on our behalf to the law and will of His Father, even unto death, wherein, bearing our sins, He offered Himself up a sacrifice without spot to God.

9. OF THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

We believe that Jesus Christ, being for our offences crucified, dead, and buried, saw no corruption, but was raised again on the third day, in whose risen life we live anew, and have the pledge of a blessed resurrection; that in the same body in which He rose He ascended into heaven, where, as our High Priest, He maketh continual intercession for us; and that He sitteth at the right hand of God, Head of the Church, clothed with authority and power as Lord over all.

10. OF THE GOSPEL.

We hold fast and proclaim that God, who willeth that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, has, by His Son our Saviour, given commission to the Church to preach unto all nations the Gospel of His grace, wherein He freely offers to all men forgiveness and eternal life, calling on them to turn from sin, and to receive and rest by faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

11. OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who worketh freely as He will, without whose quickening grace there is no salvation, and whom the Father never withholds from any who ask for Him; and we give thanks that He has in every age moved on the hearts of men; that He spake by the prophets; that through our exalted Saviour He was sent forth in power to convict the world of sin, to enlighten the minds of men in the knowledge of Christ, and to persuade and enable them to obey the call of the Gospel; and that He abides with the Church, dwelling in every believer as the Spirit of truth, of holiness and of comfort.

12. OF ELECTION AND REGENERATION.

We humbly own and believe that God the Father, before the foundation of the world, was pleased of His sovereign grace to choose unto Himself in Christ a people, whom He gave to the Son, and to whom the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life by a secret and wonderful operation of His power, using as His ordinary means, where years of understanding have been reached, the truths of His Word in ways agreeable to the nature of man; so that being born from above, they are the children of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

13. OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

We believe that every one who through the grace of the Holy Spirit repents and believes the Gospel, confessing and forsaking his sins, and humbly relying upon Christ alone for salvation, is freely pardoned and accepted as righteous in the sight of God, solely on the ground of Christ's perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice.

14. OF SONSHIP IN CHRIST.

We believe that those who receive Christ by faith are united to Him, so that they are partakers in His life, and receive of His fullness; and that they are adopted into the family of God, are made heirs with Christ, and have His Spirit abiding in them, the witness to their sonship, and the earnest of their inheritance.

15. OF THE LAW AND NEW OBEDIENCE.

We believe and acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ has laid His people by His grace under new obligation to keep the perfect law of God, and has by precept and example enlarged our knowledge of that law, and illustrated the spirit of filial love in which the divine will is to be obeyed; and we bless God that the obedience of Christians, though in this life always imperfect, yet being the fruit of their union to Christ is accepted for His sake and well-pleasing to God.

16. OF SANCTIFICATION AND PERSEVERANCE.

We believe that the Holy Spirit dwelling in all Christ's people purifies their hearts, enabling them to do freely and cheerfully that which the will of God requires, so that in measure as they surrender themselves to the Spirit of Christ, and follow the guidance of His Word, they receive strength for daily service, and grow in holiness after the image of their Lord; or if, departing from God through unwatchfulness and neglect of prayer, any of them lapse into spiritual languor, or fall into grievous sins, yet by the mercy of God who abideth faithful they are not cast off, but are chastened for their backsliding, and through repentance restored to His favour, so that they perish not.

17. OF THE CHURCH.

We acknowledge one holy catholic Church, the innumerable company of saints of every age and nation, who being united by the Holy Spirit to Christ their head, are one body in Him, and have communion with their Lord and with one another; further, we receive it as the will of Christ that His Church on earth should exist as a visible and sacred brotherhood, consisting of those who profess faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, together with their children, and organized for the confession of His name, the public worship of God, the upbuilding of the saints, and the proclamation of the Gospel; and we acknowledge, as a part, more or less pure, of this universal brotherhood, every particular Church throughout the world which professes this faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him as Divine Lord and Saviour.

18. OF CHURCH ORDER AND FELLOWSHIP.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the sole Head of His Church, has appointed its worship, teaching, discipline and government to be administered according to His will revealed in Holy

Scripture, by officers chosen for their fitness, and duly set apart to their office; and although the visible Church, even in its purest branch, may contain unworthy members, and is liable to err, yet believers ought not lightly to separate themselves from its communion, but are to live in fellowship with their brethren; which fellowship is to be extended, as God gives opportunity, to all who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

19. OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

We believe that God, who manifests Himself in creation and providence, and especially in the spirit of man, has been pleased to reveal His mind and will for our salvation at successive periods and in various ways; and that this revelation has been, so far as needful, committed to writing by men inspired of the Holy Spirit, in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which are therefore to be devoutly studied by all as God's written Word or message to mankind; and we reverently acknowledge the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures to be the Supreme Judge in questions of faith and duty.

20. OF THE SACRAMENTS.

We acknowledge Baptism and The Lord's Supper, the two Sacraments instituted by Christ, to be of perpetual obligation, as signs and seals of the new covenant, ratified in His precious blood; through the observance of which His Church is to confess her Lord and to be visibly distinguished from the rest of the world: Baptism with water into the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is the sacrament of admission into the Church and into the covenant of grace. In it are not only set forth but also conferred upon those who come to faith in Christ union with Christ, regeneration by the Spirit, the remission of sins and engagement to be the Lord's; and The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of communion with Christ and with His people, in which bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Him and of His sacrifice on the cross, and in which they who in faith receive the same do, after a spiritual manner, partake of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, to their comfort, nourishment, and growth in grace.

21. OF THE SECOND ADVENT.

We assuredly believe that on a day known only to God, the Lord Jesus Christ will suddenly come again from heaven with power and great glory; and we look for this second appearing of our Saviour as the blessed hope of His Church for which we ought always to wait in sober watchfulness and diligence, that we may be found ready at His coming.

22. OF THE RESURRECTION.

We believe that the souls of the righteous enter at death upon a state of rest and felicity at home with the Lord; that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, through the power of the Son of God; and that the bodies of all who are fallen asleep in Christ, as well as of the faithful who are alive at His coming, shall be fashioned anew and conformed to the body of His glory.

23. OF THE LAST JUDGEMENT.

We believe that God will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ before whom all men must appear, who shall separate the righteous from the wicked, make manifest the secrets of the heart, and render to every man according to the deeds which he hath done in the body, whether good or evil, when the wicked shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

24. OF THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

Finally, we believe in and desire the life everlasting in which the redeemed shall receive their inheritance of glory in the kingdom of their Father, and be made fully blessed in the presence and service of God, whom they shall see and enjoy for ever and ever.

Amen