

Dordrecht Confession of Faith: a GAMEO Source Document

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I. Of God and the Creation of all Things

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

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

And when He had finished His works, and had ordained and prepared them, each in its nature and properties, good and upright, according to His pleasure, He created the first man, the father of us all, Adam; whom He formed of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living soul, created by God in His own image and likeness, in

righteousness and holiness, unto eternal life. He regarded him above all other creatures, endowed him with many high and glorious gifts, placed him in the pleasure garden or Paradise, and gave him a command and prohibition; afterwards He took a rib from Adam, made a woman therefrom, and brought her to him, joining and giving her to him for a helpmate, companion, and wife; and in consequence of this He also caused, that from this one man Adam, all men that dwell upon the whole earth have descended. [Genesis 1:27](#); [Genesis 2:7, 17-18, 22](#).

II. Of the Fall of Man

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

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

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

IV. The Advent of Christ into This World, and the Reason of His Coming

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

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

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

We furthermore believe and confess with the Scriptures, that, when He had finished His course, and accomplished the work for which He was sent and came into the world, He was, according to the providence of God, delivered into the hands of the unrighteous; suffered under the judge, Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, was buried, and on the third day, rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven; and that He sits on the right hand of God the Majesty on high, whence He will come again to judge the quick and the dead. [Luke 22:53; Luke 23:1; Luke 24:6, 7, 51.](#)

And that thus the Son of God died, and tasted death and shed His precious blood for all men; and that He thereby bruised the serpent's head, destroyed the works of the devil, annulled the handwriting and obtained forgiveness of sins for all mankind; thus becoming the cause of eternal salvation for all those who, from Adam unto the end of the world, each in his time, believe in, and obey Him. [Genesis 3:15; 1 John 3:8; Colossians 2:14; Romans 5:18.](#)

V. The Law of Christ, i.e., the Holy Gospel or the New Testament

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

VI. Of Repentance and Reformation of Life

We believe and confess, that, since the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, and, therefore, prone to all unrighteousness, sin, and wickedness, the first lesson of the precious New Testament of the Son of God is repentance and reformation of life, and that, therefore, those who have ears to hear, and hearts to understand, must bring forth genuine fruits of repentance, reform their lives, believe the Gospel, eschew evil and do good, desist from unrighteousness, forsake sin, put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness: for, neither [baptism](#), supper, church, nor any other outward ceremony, can without faith, regeneration, change or renewing of life, avail anything to please God or to obtain of Him any consolation or promise of salvation; but we must go to God with an upright heart, and in perfect faith, and believe in Jesus Christ, as the Scripture says, and testifies of Him; through which faith we obtain forgiveness of sins, are sanctified, justified, and made children of God, yea, partake of His mind, nature, and image, as being born again of God from above, through incorruptible seed. [Genesis 8:21](#); [Mark 1:15](#); [Ezekiel 12:2](#); [Colossians 3:9-10](#); [Ephesians 4:22-24](#); [Hebrews 10:22, 23](#); [John 7:38](#).

VII. OF Holy Baptism

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

VIII. Of the Church of Christ

We believe in, and confess a visible church of God, namely, those who, as has been said before, truly repent and believe, and are rightly baptized; who are one with God in heaven, and rightly incorporated into the communion of the saints here on earth. These we confess to be the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, who are declared to be the bride and wife of Christ, yea, children and heirs of everlasting life, a tent, tabernacle, and habitation of God in the Spirit, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, of which Jesus Christ Himself is declared to be the cornerstone (upon which His church is built). This church of the living God, which He has acquired, purchased, and redeemed with His own precious blood; with which, according to His promise, He will be and remain always, even unto the end of the world, for consolation and protection, yea, will dwell and walk among them, and preserve them, so that no floods or tempests, nay, not even the gates of hell, shall move or prevail against them-this church, we say, may be known by their Scriptural faith, doctrine, love, and godly conversation, as, also, by the fruitful observance, practice, and maintenance of the true [ordinances](#) of Christ, which He so highly enjoined upon His disciples. [1 Corinthians 12](#); [1 Peter 2:9](#); [John 3:29](#); [Revelation 19:7](#); [Titus 3:6-7](#); [Ephesians 2:19-21](#); [Matthew 16:18](#); [1 Peter 1:18-19](#); [Matthew 28:20](#); [2 Corinthians 6:16](#); [Matthew 7:25](#).

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

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

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

That the apostles, likewise, as faithful followers of Christ, and leaders of the church, were diligent in this respect, with prayer and supplication to God, through the election of brethren, to provide every city, place, or church, with bishops, pastors, and leaders, and to ordain such persons thereto, who would take heed unto themselves, and unto the doctrine and flock, who

were sound in faith, pious in life and conversation, and of good report without as well as in the church; that they might be an example, light, and pattern in all godliness and good works, worthily administering the Lord's [ordinances](#) -- baptism and supper -- and that they might everywhere (where such could be found) appoint faithful men who would be able to teach others also, as elders, ordaining them by the laying on of hands in the name of the Lord, and provide for all the wants of the church according to their ability; so that, as faithful servants, they might husband well their Lord's talent, get gain with it, and, consequently, save themselves and those who hear them. [1 Timothy 3:1](#); [Acts 23:24](#); [Titus 1:5](#); [1 Timothy 4:16](#); [Titus 2:1-2](#); [1 Timothy 3:7](#); [2 Timothy 2:2](#); [1 Timothy 4:14](#); [1 Timothy 5:2](#); [Luke 19:13](#).

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

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

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

X. Of the Holy Supper

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

XI. Of the Washing of the Saints' Feet

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

XII. Of the State of Matrimony

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

In this manner the Apostle Paul also taught and permitted matrimony in the church, and left it free for every one to be married, according to the original order, in the Lord, to whomsoever one may get to consent. By these words, *in the Lord*, there is to be understood, we think, that even as the patriarchs had to marry among their kindred or generation, so the believers of the New Testament have likewise no other liberty than to marry among the chosen generation and spiritual kindred of Christ, namely, such, and no others, who have previously become united with the church as one heart and soul, have received one baptism, and stand in one communion, faith, doctrine and practice, before they may unite with one another by marriage. Such are then joined by God in His church according to the original order; and this is called, marrying in the Lord. [2 Corinthians 7:2](#); [1 Corinthians 9:5](#); [Genesis 24:4](#); [Genesis 28:2](#); [1 Corinthians 7:39](#).

XIII. Of the Office of the Secular Authority

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

XIV. Of Revenge

As regards revenge, that is, to oppose an enemy with the sword, we believe and confess that the Lord Christ has forbidden and set aside to His disciples and followers all revenge and retaliation, and commanded them to render to no one evil for evil, or cursing for cursing, but to put the sword into the sheath, or, as the prophets have predicted, to beat the swords into ploughshares. [Matthew 5:39, 44](#); [Romans 12:14](#); [1 Peter 3:9](#); [Isaiah 2:4](#); [Micah 4:3](#); [Zechariah 9:8-9](#).

From this we understand that therefore, and according to His example, we must not inflict pain, harm, or sorrow upon any one, but seek the highest welfare and salvation of all men, and even, if necessity require it, flee for the Lord's sake from one city or country into another, and suffer the spoiling of our goods; that we must not harm any one, and, when we are smitten, rather turn the other cheek also, than take revenge or retaliate. [Matthew 5:39](#).

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

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

XV. Of the Swearing of Oaths

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

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

We also believe in, and confess, a ban, Separation, and Christian correction in the church, for amendment, and not for destruction, in order to distinguish that which is pure from the impure: namely, when any one, after he is enlightened, has accepted the knowledge of the truth, and been incorporated into the communion of the saints, sins again unto death, either through willfulness, or through presumption against God, or through some other cause, and falls into the unfruitful works of darkness, thereby becoming separated from God, and forfeiting the kingdom of God, that such a one, after the deed is manifest and sufficiently known to the church, may not remain

in the congregation of the righteous, but, as an offensive member and open sinner, shall and must be separated, put away, reprov'd before all, and purg'd out as leaven; and this for his amendment, as an example, that others may fear, and to keep the church pure, by cleansing her from such spots, lest, in default of this, the name of the Lord be blasphemed, the church dishonored, and offense given to them that are without; and finally, that the sinner may not be condemn'd with the world, but become convinc'd in his mind, and be mov'd to sorrow, repentance, and reformation. [Jeremiah 59:2](#); [1 Corinthians 5:5, 13](#); [1 Timothy 5:20](#); [1 Corinthians 5:6](#); [2 Corinthians 10:8](#); [1 Corinthians 13:10](#).

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

XVII. Of Shunning the Separated

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

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

Therefore, we must not count them as enemies, but admonish them as brethren, that thereby they may be brought to a knowledge of and to repentance and sorrow for their sins, so that they may become reconcil'd to God, and consequently be received again into the church, and that love may continue with them, according as is proper. [2 Thessalonians 3:15](#).

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

Finally, concerning the resurrection of the dead, we confess with the mouth, and believe with the heart, according to Scripture, that in the last day all men who shall have died, and fallen asleep, shall be awak'd and quicken'd, and shall rise again, through the incomprehensible power of God; and that they, together with those who then will still be alive, and who shall be chang'd in

the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trump, shall be placed before the judgment seat of Christ, and the good be separated from the wicked; that then everyone shall receive in his own body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil; and that the good or pious, as the blessed, shall be taken up with Christ, and shall enter into life eternal, and obtain that joy, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, to reign and triumph with Christ forever and ever. [Matthew 22:30-31](#); [Daniel 12:12](#); [Job 19:26-27](#); [Matthew 25:31](#); [John 5:28](#); [2 Corinthians 5:10](#); [1 Corinthians 15](#); [Revelation 20:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:15](#); [1 Corinthians 2:9](#).

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

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

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

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

And was signed by the mutually united:

Dortrecht: Isaac de Koning, and in the name of our minister Jan Jacobs, Jans Cobrijss, Jacuis Terwen, Claes Dircksg., Mels Gijsbertsz, Adriaen Cornelissz

Middleburg: Bastiaen Willemsen, Jan Winkelmans

Vlissingen: Oillaert Willeborts, Jacob Pennen, Lieven Marijnesz.

Amsterdam: Tobias Govertsz., [Pieter Jansz Moyer](#), Abraham Dircksz., David ter Haer., Pieter Jansz van Singel

Haerlem: Jan Doom., Piter Grijspert, Dirck Wonteresz Kolenkamp, Pieter Joosten

Bommel: Willem Jansz. van Exselt, Gijsbert Spiering

Rotterdam: Balten Centen Schoenmaker, M. Michielsz., Israel van Halmael, Hendrick Dircksz Apeldoren, Andries Lucken Jr.

From the Upper Part of the Country: Peter van Borsel., Antony Hansz.

Krevelt Do: Harmen op den Graf, Weylm Kreynen

Zeeland: Cornelis de Moir, Isaac Claesz.

Schiedam: Cornelis Bom., Lambrecht Paeldink

Leyden: Mr. C. de Korink, Jan Weyns

Blockziel: Claes Claessen, Pieter Peters

Ziericzee: Anthonis Cornelissz., Pieter Janz Timmerman

Utrecht: Herman Segers, Jan Hendricksen Hooghvelt, Daniel Horens, Abraham Spronk, Williem van Broekhuysen

Gorcum: Jacob van der Heyde Sebrechts., Jan Jansz. V. K.

Aernhem: Cornelis Jansz., Dirck Reuderson

Context of this Confession



*Title page of
1st North
American
English edition.
ME 1, photo
page 37, no. 2*

Written in the first draft by Adriaan Cornelisz, elder of the Flemish Mennonite congregation in the Dutch city of Dordrecht, this confession of faith, containing 18 articles, was adopted April 21, 1632, and signed by 51 Flemish and Frisian Mennonite preachers as a basis of union. The official (Dutch) title reads: *Voorstellinghe van de principale articulen onses algemeynen Christelijcken Geloofs, ghelijck de selve in onse Gemeynthe doorgaens geleert ende beleeft worden*. On Feb. 4, 1660, six preachers and seven deacons from [Alsace](#), in a meeting held at Ohnenheim in Rappoltstein, adopted the Dordrecht Confession "as our own." Later it was adopted by the Mennonites in the [Palatinate](#) and North [Germany](#); the Swiss Mennonites never accepted it, perhaps because it teaches shunning (Article 17) which only the Swiss Amish practiced, not the Swiss Mennonites. Probably through the influence of the Dutch Mennonites of Germantown, Pa., the Mennonites of southeastern [Pennsylvania](#), of the [Franconia](#) and [Lancaster Conferences](#) (MC) adopted the Dordrecht Confession in 1725. The more conservative Mennonite bodies in North America, including the [Mennonite Church](#) (MC) prior to 1963, recognize it as their official articles of faith, but its personal acceptance is not required either for baptism or [ordination](#). Historically this symbol has been much used as an instrument of catechetical instruction in preparation for baptism.

The language of the Dordrecht Confession is simple and direct, not literary or philosophical in character; it abounds in Scriptural quotations, and follows the general emphases of evangelical Protestant thought except that it teaches the baptism of believers only, the washing of the saints' feet, earnest [church discipline](#), the shunning of the excommunicated, the nonswearing of oaths, marriage within the same church, strict nonresistance, and in general places more emphasis on true Christianity involving being Christian and obeying Christ rather than merely holding to a correct system of doctrine.

A number of documents pertaining to the origin and adoption of the Dordrecht Confession of Faith are found in the [Amsterdam Mennonite Archives](#) (*Inv. Arch. Amst.* I, Nos. 569, 583-92). The confession was printed as early as 1633 (*Confessie ende Vredehandelinge tot Dordrecht anno 1632*, Haarlem, 1633), and was reprinted in Dutch at least three times, but only one copy of the 1633 edition is extant. A reprint is found in the introduction to the first part of T. J. van Braght's *Martyrs' Mirror* (Amsterdam, 1660; also Dutch *Martyrs' Mirror* of 1685 and the German and English translations). Shortly after this it was printed together with other confessions, in *Algemeene Belydenissen* (Amsterdam, 1665, reprints 1700, 1739). The oldest German translation, Tieleman Tielen van Sittert, appeared at Amsterdam in 1664, entitled *Christliches Glaubensbekenntnus* (reprints in Europe at Amsterdam, 1691; n.p., 1686, 1711, 1742; Basel, 1822; Zweibrücken, 1854; Mümpelgart, 1855; Regensburg, 1876). A French translation, entitled *Confession de Foi Chrétienne, des Chrétiens sans défense, connus surtout dans les Pais-bas sous le Nom des Mennonites*, appeared in 1771 (n.p.) reprinted in 1862 (n.p.). There are numerous editions in English. The oldest, *The Christian confession of the faith of the harmless Christians, in the Netherlands known by the name of Mennonists*, was printed at [Amsterdam](#) in 1712 at the request of the Pennsylvania churches. It was reprinted in Philadelphia, Pa. (1727), New Market, Va. (1810), Niagara, Ont. (1811), Doylestown, Pa. (1844), West Chester, Pa. (1835), Skippackville, Pa. (1830), Elkhart, Ind. (1890, 1895, 1900, 1906, 1914, 1917, 1925, and in numerous combinations). See also S. F. Coffman, ed., *Mennonite Confession of Faith . . . with reference texts printed in full . . .* (Scottdale, 1930) and *idem*, ed., *Mennonite Church polity, a statement of practices in church government together with Mennonite Confession of Faith . . .* (Scottdale, 1944).

The translation used here was done by Joseph Sohm in 1886 from the Dutch to English and is the text that appears in the current English-language editions of the *Martyrs' Mirror*. Another popular translation was made from the German translation of the original Dutch and can be seen in the S.F. Coffman text mentioned above.

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Commentary written 1956 by JCW

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