

The Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference



The Eternal Word: A Lutheran Confession for the Twenty-First Century

Article VI.

The Church's Mission

TO THE READER

The sixth triennial convention of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference was held at Kyiv, Ukraine, June 3–5, 2008. Those of our worldwide fellowship who gathered there focused attention on the church’s mission under the theme “Make Known God’s Manifold Wisdom.”

Rev. Yuriy Fizer of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church presented an essay on *Holy Scripture: The Source of Our Outreach Message*. Rev. Egil Edvardsen of the Lutheran Confessional Church (Norway) provided the essay *Justification: The Theme of Our Outreach Message*. Rev. Igor Logvinov of Concord Evangelical Lutheran Church (Russia) offered an essay entitled *The Holy Spirit: The Enabler of Our Outreach Message*. Rev. Takeshi Nidaira of the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church (Japan) submitted the essay *Christology: The Focus of Our Outreach Message*. Rev. Segundo Gutierrez of the Peruvian Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church put forth an essay on *Eschatology: The Urgency of Our Outreach Message*.

The essays prompted spirited discussion at the convention and then later were reviewed and edited into the unified document you have before you by the CELC’s Commission on Theology, chaired by Prof. Lyle Lange (WELS, USA). The Commission’s membership included Dr. John Brenner (WELS, USA), Rev. Andreas Drechsler (ELFK, Germany), Rev. Davison Mutentami (LCCA–Zambia), Rev. Takeshi Nidaira (LECC, Japan), and Prof. Gaylin Schmeling (ELS, USA).

It is our prayer that Article VI dealing with the church’s mission will be another uplifting addition to the doctrinal series, *The Eternal Word: A Lutheran Confession for the Twenty-First Century*, and that all who study it will be better equipped for the privilege of participating in the mission of our God. To Him alone be the glory!

Rev. Daniel Koelpin, President
Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference

**THE ETERNAL WORD: A LUTHERAN CONFESSION
FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

ARTICLE VI

**MAKE KNOWN GOD'S MANIFOLD WISDOM
(THE CHURCH'S MISSION)**

I. HOLY SCRIPTURE: THE SOURCE OF OUR OUTREACH MESSAGE

1. We believe, teach, and confess that the Bible is the only source and standard for the Christian's faith and life.
 - From Adam to Moses, the first gospel promise (Genesis 3:15) was the basis for people's faith.
 - Once Moses had written the first five books of the Bible, God directed his people to the written record of his revelation (Deuteronomy 4:2; Joshua 1:7, 23:6; Isaiah 8:20).
 - Jesus cited the Old Testament Scriptures as authoritative to establish doctrine (Luke 24:44).
 - Jesus asserted that what he said established what we should believe and how we should live (John 6:63, 68, 69, 12:48-50).
 - Jesus promised his apostles he would send them the Holy Spirit to bring to mind all he said and to help them to write it accurately (John 14:16, 16:13, 14; 2 Timothy 3:16,17).
 - The words of Christ, as they have come down to us in the four Gospels, the Epistles, and the Revelation of St. John, together with the Old Testament, are the only source of salvation and the sole authority to establish doctrine and to direct Christian living.
 - The Lutheran Confessions reflect this teaching of Scripture.

The rule is this: The Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel (SA II II:15).

We believe, teach, and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with [all] teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament alone (FC Ep Rule and Standard: 1).

The Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas shall and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong (FC Ep Rule and Standard: 7).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That Jesus gave an oral revelation (Tradition) to Peter and the apostles, which they passed on to future generations through the episcopal hierarchy and which can be used to establish doctrine (Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy).
- That God continues to give special revelations which interpret Scripture or add to Scripture (Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Islam).
- That reason alone, guided by scientific research, can establish spiritual truth (Modernism).
- That there is no absolute truth (Post-Modernism, Existentialism).
- That the Bible is human speculation about God, and only nature can give us information about God (Deism).

2. We believe, teach, and confess that Scripture interprets itself.

- Jesus is the center of Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:2).
- The Bible was given by inspiration of God, and thus contains a factual record of God's dealings with the world (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).
- God performs miracles (Matthew 19:26). Therefore, Scripture contains references to the supernatural.
- Scripture must be interpreted in its historical setting according to its grammar and syntax (historical-grammatical method), in its immediate context, and in the light of the rest of Scripture. No interpretation of a figurative section of Scripture can contradict the statements of a clear, literal section of Scripture.

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That Scripture must be interpreted in the light of so-called "enlightened reason" (Gnosticism, Calvinism, allegorizing, the historical-critical method, demythologizing).
- That only the church or a special group of leaders can properly interpret Scripture (Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, cults).

3. We believe, teach, and confess that we have the inspired Word of God in written form in the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

- Jesus put his stamp of approval on the Old Testament (Luke 24:44) and sent his Holy Spirit to enable the apostles to write, approve, and collect the books of the New Testament.
- As the books were written, believers recognized them as the Word of God, and the books were circulated, studied, collected, and archived. There are references to this process within Scripture itself (Deuteronomy 17:18-20, 31:9,26; 2 Kings 22 and 23; Nehemiah 8:1; Proverbs 25:1; Daniel 9:1, 2; Luke 24:44; Romans 3:21; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Timothy 4:13; 2 Peter 3:15, 16; etc.).
- Throughout history, and still today, the books of Scripture have commended themselves to believing readers as the Word of God (John 10:27). These books have the internal

testimony of the Holy Spirit. While the church did not invent or validate the self-authenticating writings of Scripture (*autopisticity*), the history of the early church shows it accepted as canonical the apostolic writings of the New Testament together with the canon of the Old Testament.

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That the apocryphal books of the intertestamental period (accepted by Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy) are equal to the canon of Scripture.
 - That the Old Testament and the New Testament pseudepigrapha, which modern biblical critics use to challenge the message of the canonical books, have the same validity as the canonical books.
 - That the church has established the canon of Scripture.
4. We believe, teach, and confess that the Bible is the Word of God.
- Though the Bible speaks of God’s creating and preserving word (Genesis 1:3; Deuteronomy 8:3, 4; Hebrews 1:3), this is not the primary use of the expression “Word of God” in Scripture.
 - Though the Bible speaks of Jesus as the Word (John 1:1, 14), this use of the expression is rare in Scripture.
 - The most common use of the expression “Word of God” in the Bible is to refer to what God tells us in Scripture (Isaiah 1:10).
 - The Old Testament prophets spoke of their writings as the “Word of God” (Deuteronomy 31:24; Joshua 1:7, 23:6; 2 Samuel 23:2, 3; Isaiah 1:10; Jeremiah 1:2; Ezekiel 3:16; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:3; Obadiah 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Micah 1:1; Nahum 1:14; Habakkuk 2:2; Zephaniah 1:1; Malachi 1:1).
 - Jesus and the writers of the New Testament speak of the Old Testament as God’s Word (Mark 7:13; Matthew 1:22, 2:15-17; Acts 28:25; Romans 1:2; Hebrews 1:1).
 - The New Testament speaks of itself as the Word of God (Hebrews 1:1, 2; John 16:13, 14; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That the Bible merely contains God’s Word.
- That the Bible contains man’s words about God, not God’s Word to men.
- That only what pertains to the gospel or to Christ or salvation is God’s Word, and the rest is man’s words about God, material that assists the spreading of the gospel.
- That it is not possible to equate the Bible with the Word of God.
- That it is bibliolatry if we say the Bible is God’s Word.
- That the expression “Word of God” applies only to Jesus and not to the Bible.
- That we need to look behind the words of the Bible to find the hidden message of God.
- That the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the four Gospels are the result of an evolutionary development of oral traditions which were put together by later editors.

5. We believe, teach, and confess that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.
- God “breathed” into the writers of the Bible what he wanted them to proclaim (2 Timothy 3:16).
 - God supplied the divine impulse to write Scripture (2 Peter 1:21; Exodus 17:14; Jeremiah 36:2; Ezekiel 3:10, 11; Revelation 1:19).
 - God gave the sacred writers the message they were to proclaim (1 Peter 1:10, 11).
 - God gave the sacred writers the words they were to use to convey the message they were to proclaim (1 Corinthians 2:13; Psalm 82:6 and John 10:35; Psalm 110:1 and Matthew 22:43, 44).
 - The Bible teaches the “plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture” (2 Timothy 3:16).
 - God used the vocabularies and abilities of the writers. Yet, what they wrote by inspiration was God’s Word.

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That God dictated the Bible to the prophets and the apostles in a mechanical way.
 - That the Bible is the product of an evolutionary development, where various oral traditions were gradually copied and later edited into the books of the Bible.
 - That only the gospel statements of the Bible are inspired.
6. We believe, teach, and confess that the Bible is without error.
- God gave every word of the Bible by inspiration. The Bible does not contain any errors (1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16).
 - Jesus accepted the accounts of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4-6), Jonah (Matthew 12:39, 40), Noah and the flood (Matthew 24:37-39) as factual.
 - God cannot lie (Titus 1:2).
 - God’s Word is objectively true (Romans 3:3, 4).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That if the possibility of error is excluded from the Bible, the humanity of the writers would be destroyed.
 - That inerrancy pertains only to the gospel and not to “peripheral” matters in the Bible.
 - That inerrancy means that the sacred writers were truthful in what they wrote, but what they wrote was encased in fallible human words.
 - That the Bible is infallible in that it always achieves its purpose, but not in the sense that it is errorless.
7. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus Christ—crucified for our sins and raised again for our justification—is the focal point of all Scripture.
- The first gospel promise focused on Jesus (Genesis 3:15).

- The only way to salvation for the Old Testament believer was through faith in Jesus, the coming Savior (Genesis 15:6; Isaiah 53; Habakkuk 2:4; Acts 10:43).
- Jesus is the only way to salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).
- Paul and the other apostles focused all of their teaching on Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:1–3).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That the chief purpose of the Bible is to be a manual for holy living or a golden rule.
 - That the Bible has no unifying theme but is merely a record of human and diverse speculation about God.
8. We believe, teach, and confess that the two chief doctrines of the Bible are the law and the gospel.
- The law tells us that God expects perfection of us (Matthew 5:48).
 - The law tells us what we are to do and what we are not to do (Romans 13:10).
 - The law tells us that we do not measure up to its demands (Romans 3:23).
 - The law tells us that we deserve God’s condemnation because of our sins (Galatians 3:10).
 - The law cannot empower sanctified living (Romans 3:20).
 - The gospel tells us the good news of what God has done for our salvation (John 3:16).
 - The gospel alone can save us (Acts 4:12), give us faith, preserve that faith (Romans 1:16), and empower sanctified living (Galatians 2:20).
 - God gave us the gospel in baptism to create faith (Titus 3:5) and in the Lord’s Supper to sustain faith (1 Corinthians 11:23-34).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That the law was given to save us.
 - That the Law of Moses was the chief message of the Old Testament.
 - That what the law commands it must also empower.
 - That the gospel can be interjected into the law to soften its message.
 - That the golden rule (Do unto others as you would have them do unto you) is the chief message of the Bible.
 - That the gospel is a set of conditions we must meet for salvation.
 - That baptism and the Lord’s Supper do not give forgiveness but are merely rites we are to observe to symbolize what Jesus has done for us.
9. We believe, teach, and confess that God wills for us to share the message of Christ with all people.
- The Old Testament prophets proclaimed the message that the Savior was intended for all people (Acts 10:43).

- Jesus commissioned his church to share the good news of salvation with all people (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Romans 10:14, 15).
- It is the nature of Christians to share their faith with others (Acts 4:20).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That the main work of the church is to provide for the temporal welfare of people (Social Gospel, Liberation Theology).
 - That we do not need to spread the gospel because God will carry out his election apart from the means of grace.
10. We believe, teach, and confess that God works through the means of grace to convert people and keep them in the faith.
- God has promised that his Holy Spirit will work through the preaching of the gospel and baptism to bring people to faith (Romans 1:16; Titus 3:5).
 - God has promised to nourish and strengthen our faith through the preaching of the gospel, baptism, and the Lord's Supper (Psalm 19:9, 10; Titus 3:5; Matthew 26:28).
 - God assures us the preaching of his Word will carry out his purpose for the salvation of souls (Isaiah 55:10, 11).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That the growth of the church depends on sociological or psychological strategies rather than on the means of grace.
- That the efficacy of the gospel depends on our ability to persuade people to accept Christ.

II. JUSTIFICATION: THE THEME OF OUR OUTREACH MESSAGE

1. We believe, teach and confess that
- justification is forensic in nature because it does not mark a change in the sinner's nature but in his status before God, i.e. he is declared righteous in God's sight (2 Corinthians 5:19);
 - justification is objective in nature because it rests solely on the work of God and not on something in us (it is based not on our merit but only on the perfect life and death of Christ (Romans 3:24);
 - justification is universal in nature because Jesus died for the sins of the whole world and the whole world was declared righteous in Christ (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2; Romans 4:25; 2 Corinthians 5:19);
 - justification is subjective in nature because it is apprehended individually by faith in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

2. We believe, teach, and confess that the doctrine of justification is the most important doctrine in the Bible.

- The biblical doctrine concerning how a person is justified or declared righteous before God is the doctrine on which the church stands and falls.
- Justification by grace alone, through faith alone, for Christ's sake alone gives all credit for man's salvation to God.
- It is of great importance to proclaim this doctrine to the world, because only through hearing the good news that God has forgiven all sins will people find peace with God.

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That justification is completed by good works.
- That the mission of Jesus was to make the world a better place (liberal theology, liberation theology).

3. We believe, teach, and confess that the doctrine of objective justification is universal and therefore defines our mission field: the whole world.

- All men are by nature born with sin and therefore under the wrath and condemnation of God (John 3:6; Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23).
- The Bible teaches a universal justification, i.e. that God in Christ has declared all men not guilty (Romans 3:24).
- Christ kept the law of God on behalf of all people (Romans 5:18, 19).
- The sins of all human beings were laid on Christ. Jesus died for all people, i.e. all sinners of all times (John 1:29).
- Because Christ made a complete atonement for the sins of all human beings, God has forgiven all sins (1 John 2:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 5:19).
- The atoning sacrifice of Jesus brings perfect and eternal reconciliation (Hebrews 9:12, 26-28).
- The Scriptures make three important points concerning the doctrine of justification:
 - a. God is the one who reconciled the world to himself. It is he who is not counting sins against men (2 Corinthians 5:19).
 - b. The cause of justification is not something in man but solely Christ and his complete work of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:21).
 - c. God justified the whole world because of Christ's universal atonement (Romans 5:18, 19; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21).
- God's act of reconciliation applies to every person, whether he lived before Christ, at the time of Christ, or after Christ.
- Objective justification is a fact regardless whether one ever comes to faith or not (Romans 4:5, 5:10, 12, 18).
- God wants all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 33:11).
- God's grace is universal (Titus 2:11; John 3:16).

- His grace extends even to those who ultimately perish (Romans 14:15; 1 Corinthians 8:11).
- Faith is the means to receive forgiveness and salvation (Mark 16:16).
- Reconciliation is a total change in all men's status before God.
- God has acquitted all sinners because Christ has paid the penalty in their place.
- Man has in no way contributed to his own justification.
- By nature the sinner has no knowledge of his justification.
- If a sinner is to benefit from the fact that he is justified by God, it must be revealed to him (Romans 10:14).
- The gospel of God's free forgiveness in Christ is foreign to men's way of thinking.
- The Holy Spirit operates through the gospel.
- The gospel creates faith in the heart of those who hear it (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10).
- Believers have the responsibility to proclaim this message (2 Corinthians 5:19, 20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8).
- The preaching of repentance and the promise of the gospel pertain to all men (Luke 24:47; John 3:16, 1:29, 6:51; 1 John 1:7, 2:2; Matthew 11:28; Romans 11:32; FC SD XI:28).
- The doctrine of universal justification gives great confidence to share the gospel with all people.

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That justification concerns not all people but only those who ultimately come to faith.
 - That there is a limited atonement, i.e. only for a certain part of mankind (Calvinism, Westminster Confession).
 - That there is a double predestination (Calvinism).
 - That there is salvation apart from faith in Christ (Universalism).
 - That the Holy Spirit works faith apart from the means of grace (Enthusiasm).
4. We believe, teach, and confess that the doctrine of justification proclaims salvation by grace alone (forensic justification).
- All human beings lack the righteousness which God demands (Romans 5:18; Ephesians 2:3).
 - The Lutheran Confessions reflect this teaching of Scripture: "Also, they teach that since the fall of Adam all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence; and that this disease or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through baptism and the Holy Ghost" (AC II:1, 2).
 - Justification does not imply a change in the sinner's nature but a change in the sinner's status.
 - The Greek word *dikaioo*, "justify" means "to declare righteous; to acquit."

- We are acquitted, not because we are not guilty, but because Christ fulfilled the law as our representative (Galatians 4:4, 5) and paid the penalty for our sin as our substitute (Isaiah 53:5).
- Justification by grace alone is emphasized in Scripture by means of three different expressions: “freely,” “by his grace,” “through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That man by nature is not totally depraved and corrupted by sin (Pelagianism, Semi-pelagianism, Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Arminianism).
 - That human beings can earn God’s favor (*opinio legis*, world religions, Islam, civic righteousness).
 - That God’s grace is not an attitude in God but a quality he grants to us (infused grace, prevenient grace).
 - That human beings can contribute to their salvation (work righteousness).
 - That justification is not a change in status but in nature (effective justification).
 - That there are conditions attached to the gospel (decision theology, *intuitu fidei*).
5. We believe, teach, and confess that the doctrine of justification proclaims an accomplished fact (objective justification).
- Immediately before Jesus died on the cross of Calvary he said: “It is finished!” (John 19:30).
 - With that he proclaimed that the work of salvation was completed.
 - Nothing remains to be done for the salvation of all people.
 - Jesus’ vicarious life, suffering and death is the perfect sacrifice for the transgressions of all people.
 - There is no more need for sacrifices (Hebrews 10:10-14).
 - There is no need for man to do anything to complete justification (Hebrews 10:18).
 - Objective justification is a reality, whether we believe it or not.
 - Justification is complete and the hope of eternal life is certain.
 - The Lutheran Confessions confirm the biblical doctrine:

In order, therefore, that troubled hearts may have a firm, sure consolation, also, that due honor be given to the merit of Christ and the grace of God, the Scriptures teach that the righteousness of faith before God consists alone in the gracious reconciliation or the forgiveness of sins, which is presented to us out of pure grace, for the sake of the only merit of the Mediator, Christ, and is received through faith alone in the promise of the gospel. In like manner, too, in justification before God faith relies neither upon contrition nor upon love or other virtues, but upon Christ alone, and in Him upon His complete obedience by which He has fulfilled the Law for us, which is imputed to believers for righteousness. (FC SD III:30)
 - Since Jesus said “It is finished” forgiveness is a completed fact.

- God has forgiven the world when he raised his Son from the dead (Romans 4:25).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That justification is not complete, but gradual (Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy).
 - That the hope of eternal life is uncertain.
 - That man is saved by faith *and* good works.
 - That the merit of Christ enables man to earn his own salvation.
 - That we demand certain conditions before one can be sure of his salvation (legalism, traditionalism).
6. We believe, teach and confess that we receive, as our very own, the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ (subjective justification).
- Through faith sinners receive what is promised in the gospel, namely forgiveness of all sins, eternal life and salvation (John 3:16).
 - The Lutheran dogmaticians have called faith “the receiving instrument” (*organon leptikon*).
 - The Lutheran dogmaticians have called the gospel, which is the means that God uses to give us faith, “the giving instrument” (*organon dotikon*).
 - Man by nature is *dead in transgressions and sins* (Ephesians 2:1), *spiritually blind* (1 Corinthians 2:14) and an *enemy of God* (Romans 8:7). He cannot by his own strength believe in Christ.
 - God must create faith in the human heart.
 - The Lutheran Confessions state: “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith” (SC II:6).
 - Faith is not a good work, which man must do to achieve justification.
 - Faith receives the justification; it doesn’t complete it.
 - Justification is already complete because of the work of Christ.
 - Faith in the salvation offered in the gospel is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).
 - Faith is worked by the Holy Spirit through the gospel in Word and sacraments.
 - The term subjective justification emphasizes that saving faith takes hold of God’s promises in the gospel and makes them one’s own.
 - The Lutheran Confessions express this truth: “For faith justifies, not for this cause and reason that it is so good a work and so fair a virtue, but because it lays hold of and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy Gospel” (FC SD III:13).
 - The doctrine of justification has an important consequence: We can proclaim forgiveness in Jesus’ name (Matthew 9:2, 22, 11:28).
 - To all penitent sinners we say: “God has forgiven all your sins. Because of our Lord Jesus Christ, his perfect life in your place, and his innocent suffering and death in your place, God has completely forgiven all your sins.”

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That faith is the reason for God's forgiveness.
 - That God is willing to forgive but does not forgive unless we first have repented of our sins and come to faith.
 - That faith is a work man must perform to complete justification.
 - That God will forgive us if we believe and make a decision for Christ (decision theology, common within many Arminian, evangelical, and Charismatic churches).
 - That we expect good works before or without saving faith (moralizing).
7. We believe, teach, and confess that the doctrine of justification for Christ's sake alone is the only message that can save the world.
- Christ directs his church to proclaim the gospel (Matthew 28:19, 20).
 - Jesus is the only way to salvation (John 14:6).
 - Jesus claims that he is the Truth and his Word is truth (John 17:17).
 - Salvation is found in no one else but Jesus (Acts 4:12; John 3:18).
 - Christ is the only true Savior because he is the only one who has atoned for all sins of all human beings.
 - The gospel is absolute truth, which is true for all people in all times.
 - Christianity is unique because it teaches salvation by grace, without human deeds (Romans 3:28; Ephesians 2:8, 9).
 - People find lasting comfort, peace and eternal life nowhere else but in God's promises (John 3:16).
 - Christianity is the one true religion because it gives us Jesus, who is the only way to heaven.

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That all religions lead to heaven.
 - That all religions worship the same God and only use different names for him (Interreligious dialogue, Roman Catholicism, World Council of Churches).
 - That it is not important what you believe as long as you are sincere in your beliefs (Postmodernism).
 - That Christian mission is not necessary because all human beings will be saved (Universalism).
 - That it is intolerant and pretentious to claim that there is only one truth.
8. We believe, teach, and confess that the doctrine of God's universal justification motivates our mission work.
- Christ gives us a clear command to reach out with the gospel message to all people (Mark 16:15).
 - A command in and of itself does not give us the right motivation to do mission work.
 - Christ's love compels us to obey the Great Commission (2 Corinthians 5:14).

- The certainty about objective justification for Christ’s sake motivates us.
- Christ gave up his life on the cross for all sins of all people.
- Christ bore our many sins on the cross because he loved us so much.
- This happy and comforting message has changed our outlook on life. We no longer see people as “male or female, slave or free, Jew or Gentile” (2 Corinthians 5:16; Galatians 3:28). We see every person as one who has been washed in Jesus’ blood and justified.
- This gives us confidence when we proclaim the gospel to the whole world.

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That fear or a reward for obedience motivates us to do what Jesus says.
- That forgiveness applies only to some people, but not to everyone.
- That the gospel is just information but not an effective means of grace.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE ENABLER OF OUR OUTREACH MESSAGE

1. We believe, teach, and confess that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity, true God with the Father and the Son.
 - The Holy Scripture clearly states that the Holy Spirit is true God, with the Father and the Son. It is recorded in Acts 5:3, 4: “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit. ... You have not lied to men but to God.” Here it states that the Holy Spirit is God.
 - Besides this passage, the Holy Spirit is also called “God’s Spirit” (1 Corinthians 3:16), the “Spirit of God” (Genesis 1:2; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3), the “Spirit of truth” (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13), “Spirit of life” (Romans 8:2), the “Spirit of glory” (1 Peter 4:14), and the “Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead” (Romans 8:11).
 - The Holy Spirit is God because the Holy Scripture ascribes to him divine works, divine attributes, and divine honor (Titus 3:5; Romans 8:16; Psalm 33:6, 139:7; 1 Peter 4:14). According to the Athanasian Creed, each person of the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is distinct, but the deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one.
 - When we consider the internal workings of the Holy Trinity we say that the Father is unbegotten (John 1:14), the Son is begotten (Psalm 2:7; John 1:14), and that the Holy Spirit proceeds (John 15:26). The Father and the Son send out the Holy Spirit so that he proceeds from the Father and the Son (John 15:26; Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; 1 Peter 1:11).
 - The work of creation and preservation is seen as the special activity of the Father (Malachi 2:10); redemption as the special activity of the Son (Matthew 20:28); sanctification as the special activity of the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2).
 - The Lutheran Confessions reflect this teaching of Scripture:

There is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.... They condemn also the Samosatenes, old and new, who, contending that there is but one Person, sophistically and impiously argue that the Word and the Holy Ghost are not distinct Persons, but that “Word” signifies a spoken word, and “Spirit” signifies motion created in things (AC I:2, 3, 6).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That the Holy Spirit is merely a power or force emanating from God and not a person.
 - That the Holy Spirit is not a person but a mode of operation of a unipersonal God.
 - That the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Father and the Son.
2. We believe, teach, and confess that we were all born in original sin and can do nothing to save ourselves.
- Jesus did not merely die for some, but rather for all people because all by nature were dead in original sin (Psalm 14:2, 3; Ephesians 2:1-3).
 - Original sin “is the total corruption of our whole human nature, inherited from our first parents, which makes us inclined only to evil and unable and unwilling to do that which is good” (ELS Catechism, question 97). “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5).
 - Original sin is the cause of all manner of sin that we commit in thought, word, and deed (actual sin). “Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander” (Matthew 15:19).
 - The Lutheran Confessions maintain this teaching of Scripture:
 Also they teach that since the fall of Adam all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Ghost. They condemn the Pelagians and others who deny that original depravity is sin, and who, to obscure the glory of Christ’s merit and benefits, argue that man can be justified before God by his own strength and reason (AC II:1-3).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That Adam’s fall into sin merely set a bad example but did not corrupt the entire human race (Pelagianism).
- That God’s grace and man’s will work jointly to accomplish the work of conversion (Semi-pelagianism).

- That the will of man was greatly injured in the fall into sin, but still retains a small amount of power by which a person can apply himself to grace (Synergism).
 - That sinners have free will to accept or reject Christ (Arminianism, decision theology).
3. We believe, teach, and confess that God the Holy Spirit is the one who has brought us to faith in the Savior, enables us to live a holy life, and preserves us in that faith unto our end.
- The work of the Holy Spirit is sanctification.
 - We are justified or declared righteous by nothing we do or accomplish, but alone on the basis of Christ's redemptive work which is counted as ours through faith in the Savior. This faith or trust is not something that we accomplish, rather it is worked by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace.
 - The justification of sinners is immediately followed by sanctification (narrow sense) or renovation (Romans 5:1-5). That is to say, the justified sinner turns from sin and serves God with good works (Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7, 5:23; 1 Peter 1:15; Romans 13:13, 14).
 - The Holy Spirit sanctifies us, that is, he makes us holy, by bringing us to faith in Christ, by giving us all the blessings of redemption, and by preserving us in the true faith unto everlasting life. It includes the bestowal of faith, justification, sanctification as the inner transformation of man, perseverance in faith, and the complete renewal on Judgment Day (1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2). This is sanctification in the wide sense.
 - The Holy Spirit makes us holy (sanctification) by working faith in Jesus as the Savior in our hearts (conversion). "No one can say, Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).
 - The Holy Spirit must create faith in the Savior in our hearts because we are by nature dead in trespasses and sins (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 14:2, 3). "You were dead in your transgressions and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).
 - By working faith in us the Holy Spirit has renewed our hearts, so that we can now overcome sin and lead a Christ-like life. It includes the inward spiritual transformation of the believer, which follows upon, and is inseparably joined with justification (Romans 12:1, 2; 6:18-22). This is sanctification in the narrow sense.
 - Our salvation is entirely the work of the Holy Trinity. The Father in love sent his only begotten Son into the world to save lost sinners (John 3:16). The Son, Jesus Christ, became man to live a holy life in our place and to suffer the punishment for our sins upon the cross (Galatians 4:4, 3:13). The Holy Spirit creates and sustains spiritual life in us through faith in the Son (1 Corinthians 12:3).
 - The Lutheran Confessions enunciate this teaching of Scripture:
I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith... (SC II:6).

It is correctly said that in conversion God, through the drawing of the Holy Ghost, makes out of stubborn and unwilling men willing ones, and that after such conversion in the daily exercise of repentance the regenerate will of man is not idle, but also cooperates in all the works of the Holy Ghost, which He performs through us (FC Ep II:17).

It follows that as soon as the Holy Ghost, as has been said, through the Word and holy Sacraments, has begun in us this His work of regeneration and renewal, it is certain that through the power of the Holy Ghost we can and should cooperate, although still in great weakness (FC SD II:65).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That sanctification is not necessary in the Christian life as the fruit of faith.
 - That a Christian can reach perfection in this life.
4. We believe, teach, and confess that the Holy Spirit works faith and preserves faith through the means of grace, the Word and the sacraments.
- The Holy Spirit has chosen to use means, or channels, to convey to us all the blessings of salvation. These means of grace are the gospel in Word and sacrament (Luke 16:29; John 3:5; Matthew 26:28). The gospel is the good news of the full forgiveness of sins on account of Christ's innocent life, redemptive sacrifice on the cross, and triumphant resurrection.
 - The means of grace convey to the individual all the blessings Christ obtained for all on the cross, and work and strengthen faith in the Savior to receive those blessings.
 - The Holy Spirit operates through the Word, for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17; Isaiah 55:10, 11).
 - Baptism is a washing of water and the Word where one is born again through faith in the Savior, united with Christ's death and resurrection, and incorporated into his body, the church, receiving all the blessings of redemption (John 3:5; Acts 2:38, 39; Colossians 2:11-14; Titus 3:5).
 - In the Lord's Supper, through Christ's body and blood, the Holy Spirit gives the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation (Matthew 26:28).
 - The Holy Spirit clearly works through means, as Luther taught:
 For He wants to give no one the Spirit or faith outside of the outward Word and sign instituted by Him, as He says in Luke 16:29, "Let them hear Moses and the prophets." Accordingly Paul can call baptism a "washing of regeneration" wherein God "richly pours out the Holy Spirit" [Titus 3:5]. And the oral Gospel "is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith" [Rom. 1:16].
 (LW 40:146)
 - The Holy Spirit has given to Christians the message of the gospel to proclaim to all people and strengthens Christians through the means of grace to carry out that proclamation (Matthew 28:19, 20).

- The Lutheran Confessions teach this doctrine of Scripture:
That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake (AC V:1-3).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That the Holy Spirit works faith and produces sanctification apart from, or alongside of the means of grace (Enthusiasm, Calvinism).
 - That the sacraments are mere acts of men or sacrifices which we perform in obedience to God rather than being means of grace by which God gives life and salvation.
 - That the certainty of our salvation is to be found in something in us rather than in the means of grace.
5. We believe, teach, and confess that the church of God is the work of the Holy Spirit.
- All those who are brought to faith in the Savior by the Holy Spirit—and only believers—belong to this one church built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-22). This is the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.
 - The church always remains hidden because we cannot look into another person's heart to see if faith is present. Yet, because God has promised that his Word will not return void (Isaiah 55:10, 11), we know that where the Word and the sacraments are used, the church is there, and there Christians are to be found. Therefore the Word and the sacraments are called the marks of the church.
 - The invisible church or the church in the narrow sense consists of all believers gathered around the means of grace. The visible church or the church in the wide sense includes not only believers but also hypocrites.
 - A true teaching church is a gathering around the means of grace where the Word is taught in its truth and purity and the sacraments are rightly administered.
 - A false teaching church is a gathering around the means of grace where doctrines contrary to the Scripture are permitted alongside the teachings of Scripture. Where the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of Christ and his atoning sacrifice are rejected, the gospel is no longer present and therefore there is no salvation.
 - We use the doctrine of the church correctly according to God's Word,
 - a. When we become members of the Holy Christian Church by sincere faith in Christ as our Savior (2 Corinthians 13:5);
 - b. When we belong to that congregation, synod or denomination which teaches the Word of God in all its purity (John 8:31, 32; Acts 2:42);

- c. When we do all in our power to maintain, promote and extend God's kingdom by prayer, personal service and financial support (2 Corinthians 12:15; 1 Corinthians 16:2);
 - d. When we avoid all false teaching churches and all other organizations that profess a religion which is false (Matthew 7:15; 1 John 4:1; Romans 16:17; 2 Corinthians 6:14). (ELS Catechism, question 208).
- The Lutheran Confessions maintain this teaching of Scripture:
Also they teach that one holy Church is to continue forever. The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. As Paul says: One faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, etc. Eph. 4, 5, 6 (AC VII).
 - Each Christian has the directive to announce the message of salvation to those around him or her (1 Peter 2:9; Matthew 16:19, 18:15-20, 28:18-20; John 20:20-23; Revelation 1:6).
 - At the same time, the Lord has instituted the public ministry of the Word to carry out this important work in the name and in the stead of Christ and on behalf of the church (Ephesians 4:11, 12; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5-9).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That there is salvation outside the Holy Christian Church.
 - That one must belong to the Evangelical Lutheran church to be saved.
 - That we may have church fellowship with those who teach contrary to Holy Scripture.
6. We believe, teach, and confess that the Holy Spirit comforts and strengthens the church in carrying out its important work of proclaiming the gospel of forgiveness.
- When Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to his disciples, he used the term "comforter" (*parakletos*; John 14-16).
 - The Holy Spirit comforts with the assurance of forgiveness through the Word and sacraments.
 - Through the means of grace, the Holy Spirit strengthens the church to carry out its great responsibility to proclaim the gospel to all nations (Matthew 10:19, 28:18-20).
 - The Holy Spirit comforts troubled sinners. He works through the law to show us our sin, and then he provides the comfort of forgiveness through the gospel (2 Timothy 2:15).
 - The Holy Spirit comforts us amid the toils of everyday life. Burdens, struggles, and problems will come upon the believer, but the Holy Spirit comforts us in our suffering. Through the means of grace, he gives us the power to do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13). Since the Father did not spare his own Son, but offered

him up for us all, we have the certainty that he will be with us in all the other needs and struggles of life, working all for our good (Genesis 50:20; Romans 8:28-39).

- The Holy Spirit assures us that the church, the little flock, will be preserved unto the end of the world. Regardless of how dark and hopeless things may appear the gates of hell will not prevail against the church (Matthew 16:18).
- The Holy Spirit comforts us with the assurance of the glory waiting for us. The sufferings of this present life cannot even be compared to the glories that will be revealed to us in heaven (Romans 8:18). All the sorrows of this life will be over and there will be joy forevermore in the presence of Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:19; Revelation 21:4).
- The Holy Spirit comforts us through the doctrine of election. This is the truth that God, on account of His grace in Christ, chose people to everlasting life. Through the means of grace these people are brought to faith in Christ and preserved in that faith unto their end. Our salvation from beginning to end is the work of the Holy Trinity. Therefore we have the comfort that no one can pluck us out of the Father's hand (Romans 8:26-39; Ephesians 1:5, 6; John 10:29).
- The Lutheran Confessions reflect this teaching of Scripture:

God in His purpose has ordained before the time of the world by what crosses and sufferings He would conform every one of His elect to the image of His Son, and that to every one his cross shall and must work together for good, because they are called according to the purpose, whence Paul has concluded that it is certain and indubitable that neither tribulation nor distress, nor death, nor life, etc., shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord (FC SD XI:49).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That the Holy Spirit comforts us spiritually apart from his Word and sacraments.
- That such comfort is to be found in how we feel about God rather than in God's means of grace.
- That human reason and experience can bring us such comfort.

IV. CHRISTOLOGY: THE FOCUS OF OUR OUTREACH MESSAGE

1. We believe, teach, and confess that God throughout the Bible makes us focus on the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.
 - In the first gospel promise to our fallen parents, God makes us focus on the Savior, "her offspring" (Genesis 3:15).
 - Then, God chose Abraham and his descendants, the Israelites, as the nation from whom the Savior would be born. And in the promises to them he constantly makes us focus on the Savior, Abraham's one seed (Genesis 12:3, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14; Galatians 3:16).
 - From among Jacob's 12 sons – Abraham's 12 great grandsons – God chose the fourth son Judah and his children as the tribe from whom the Savior would be born. And in the

promise to them he makes us focus on the Savior, the one in whose hand the royal scepter eternally belongs (Genesis 49:9, 10).

- Out of the tribe of Judah God chose the line of King David as the line from whom the Savior would be born. And in his promises to that line he makes us focus on the Savior, a shoot which would come from the stump of Jesse (David's father), a righteous Branch, and a King who would establish the throne of his kingdom forever (Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5, 6; 2 Samuel 7:12, 13).
- Out of many women in the line of David God chose the Virgin Mary as the mother of the Savior and caused her to give birth to a son. And by the announcement of an angel to the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem he makes us focus on the Savior, a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger (Luke 2:11, 16, 17, 20).
- By the guidance of a special star, God brought Magi from the east to Bethlehem and gave them the privilege of worshipping the Christ-child (Matthew 2:1, 2, 11). Through the worship of these Gentiles he makes us focus on the Savior.
- On the day following Jesus' baptism, John the Baptist saw Jesus and said to his disciples: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me surpassed me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel. I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God" (John 1:29-34). With this testimony of John, God makes us focus on Jesus as the Savior of the world.
- On the Mount of Transfiguration God the Father said to Jesus' three apostles – Peter, James, and John: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5). With this declaration he makes us focus on the Savior, who is also the Son of God.
- At the Jewish court the high priest Caiaphas said to Jesus, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus replied, "Yes, it is as you say" (Matthew 26:63, 64). With this reply Jesus made even his enemies focus on him.
- In his second letter to the Christians in the city of Corinth, Paul said to them: "For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). With this message Paul makes us focus not on him or his co-workers but on Jesus Christ.
- When his martyrdom was drawing near, Peter wrote: "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts"

(2 Peter 1:16-19). Together with the word of the prophets, Peter makes us focus on the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

- While the Apostle John was exiled on the island of Patmos as a punishment for preaching the gospel, the exalted Jesus promised his Second Coming to the apostle, saying: “Yes, I am coming soon.” Then, John replied, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20). Together with John we are invited to focus on the reappearance of Jesus, who is the Alpha and the Omega.

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That the gospel accounts of Jesus are merely the development of oral tradition reported by the early church.
 - That it is impossible to arrive at “the Jesus of history.”
2. We believe, teach, and confess that the firm and only foundation on which the Christian Church stands is Jesus Christ.
- One day Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do you say I am?” He really wanted to hear their answers. On behalf of the disciples Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:15-18a). The Greek word for “rock” in this passage is feminine, *petra*. It does not refer to the masculine Greek word for “Peter,” *petros*, but to the confession Peter made: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The Christian Church is built only on Jesus in whom believers rely as the Christ, their Savior.
 - Some days before his ascension Jesus gave the Great Commission to his disciples: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:18-20a). Because this commission is effective until the end of the world, this command applies to all believers of all times.
 - On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit worked through Peter’s message and led 3000 people to faith in Jesus: “Those who accepted his message were baptized and they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:41, 42). On that day Peter and the other disciples started to carry out the Great Commission. The phrase “the apostles’ teaching” is not the apostles’ own ideas but what Jesus taught and commanded them. The apostles built the Christian Church on the “living rock,” Jesus Christ.
 - In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul told them how he had built the Christian Church, and he encouraged them not to build it on Paul himself, or on Apollos or on any other human being. He said, “By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds.

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that is already laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:10, 11).

- In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul said to them: “You are...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20). The prophets caused people in Old Testament times to focus on the Savior who was to come. The apostles caused people in New Testament times to focus on the Savior who had already come. The Savior is the center of the message of both the prophets and apostles. The gospel of Jesus alone can save people from eternal death. That’s why Paul is right when he says: “You are...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.”
- It is our God-given role to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ name to all nations (Luke 24:47).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That people’s works can serve as the foundation for the Holy Christian Church.
 - That the pope is the vicar of Christ on earth.
 - That Mary is co-redemptrix and mediatrix (The Roman Catholic Church).
 - That Jesus is only one among many foundations for people’s relationship with God.
3. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus is true God.
- The angel Gabriel said to Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).
 - At Jesus’ baptism and his transfiguration, God the Father declared Jesus’ divinity, saying: “This is my Son whom I love” (Matthew 3:17, 17:5).
 - Jesus healed a paralytic man, and in order to show to some teachers of the law his divine authority to forgive sins he said: “Son your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:1-12).
 - Jesus did many miracles to reveal his glory as the Son of God: he changed water to wine (John 2:1-11); he calmed the storm with one command (Mark 4:39); he fed five thousand (John 6:1-14); Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:43, 44). He himself rose from the dead (Matthew 28:5, 6).
 - Jesus said to the Jews, “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58). This “I am” phrase is not merely a personal pronoun and a linking verb. Here Jesus applied the “I AM” phrase of Exodus 3:14 to himself. At Mt. Horeb God introduced himself to Moses, saying: “I AM WHO I AM.” With the “I am” phrase Jesus solemnly claimed his divinity and his oneness with God the Father (John 10:30).
 - John, the last remaining apostle, correctly understood Jesus’ divinity and correctly handed down the truth, saying: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” (John 1:1, 2). The phrase “in the beginning” means before the universe and everything in it were created. Before anything existed, the Word, Jesus Christ existed with God.

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That Jesus emptied himself of his divinity during his state of humiliation (Kenoticism).
 - That the statements by Jesus regarding his human nature indicate that he is only a man and not equal to God the Father (Jehovah's Witnesses).
 - That the deity of Jesus was constructed by the early church to give the impression that he was a super-man.
 - That the deity of Jesus taught in the Bible is merely an adaptation of Greek legends concerning the Greek gods.
 - That Jesus is not of one eternal divine essence with the Father, but that he is only adorned with divine majesty, inferior to God, and separate from him (Arianism).
 - That we may deny or limit the true deity of Jesus (Monarchianism, Unitarianism).
4. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus is true man.
- In the first gospel promise, the Savior is called “her (Eve’s) offspring” (Genesis 3:15). These two words implied that the Savior would take on a human body and would be born of a woman.
 - As Matthew records in the first chapter of his gospel, Jesus was born as a descendant of Abraham and King David according to prophecies in the Old Testament.
 - Jesus took on a human body in the womb of Mary, who belonged to the line of David. He was wrapped in cloths and placed in a manger (Luke 2:7).
 - Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth (Luke 2:21).
 - As a boy Jesus was obedient to his parents and grew in wisdom and stature (Luke 2:51, 52).
 - Jesus ate and drank (Luke 24:41-43); he slept (Mark 4:38); he had a human will (Luke 22:42); he had emotions (John 11:33); he wept (John 11:35); Jesus died on the cross (John 19:30); his body was wrapped with spices in strips of linen and was buried (John 19:38-42).
 - As the above passages show, Jesus had the same kind of body that we have – consisting of flesh and blood and bones (Luke 24:39). Jesus was like us in all respects except he had no sin, since he had been conceived by the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That it makes no difference if Jesus was born of a virgin or not.
- That we may deny or limit the true humanity of Jesus (Docetism, Gnosticism).
- That Jesus' body was a phantom (Docetism).
- That Jesus did not have a human spirit (Apollinarianism), or a human will (Monothelitism).
- That Jesus did not receive his human nature from Mary but brought it with him from heaven (certain Gnostics).

5. We believe, teach, and confess that in the union and communication of his two natures Jesus completely carried out his work as the Savior and that what he has done assures us of salvation.
- Jesus is completely God and completely man, yet he is only one person. Because the union of his two natures is a deep and great mystery, Paul calls Jesus “the mystery of God” (Colossians 2:2).
 - The two natures were united at the moment the Son of God was conceived in the womb of Mary (FC SD VIII:13). “Not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God” (The Athanasian Creed, 33).
 - From the time Jesus was conceived, he has had two natures, even after his ascension (Acts 1:11).
 - The Bible does not tell us that Jesus divided his work as the Savior: one part as the work of his divine nature, the other part as the work of his human nature (FC SD VIII:46).
 - Because of the union of the two natures and because of the sharing of attributes, the baby Jesus lying in the manger was not only a descendant of David but he was also “the Son of the Most High” (Luke 1:32).
 - When the baby Jesus shed his blood at his circumcision to obey God’s law, “the Son of the Most High” also shed his blood.
 - At the beginning of his public ministry, the God-man, Jesus, was baptized by John the Baptist. Because he had no sin, he did not need to be baptized. That is why John tried to deter him from being baptized. But he told John to baptize him in order “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). It was God the Father’s will that the God-man become the substitute for sinners.
 - When his enemies arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, he did not resist them. This was not because he was powerless, but because he wanted to fulfill God’s will. If he had wanted to destroy them, he could have called down out of heaven more than twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53).
 - On the cross Jesus suffered the agony of hell and died. It is characteristic of man to suffer or to die. Because of the union of the two natures, however, God in the person of Jesus Christ suffered and died (Acts 3:15).
 - Jesus’ two natures and their union were absolutely necessary to live a perfect life and to die as the substitute for all people, to pay for all the sins of all people, and to destroy the power of Satan, sin, and death.
 - Jesus completely carried out his work as the Savior. Nothing was left undone. That is why Jesus solemnly proclaimed before his last breath: “It is finished” (John 19:30). His resurrection and his empty tomb testify to that fact. Because his atoning work was perfect, the writer to the Hebrews could boldly say to the Christians in his time, “This priest (Jesus) had offered for all times one sacrifice for sins. By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. There is no longer any sacrifice for sin” (Hebrews 10:12a, 14, 18b).
 - Jesus who died on the cross to atone for all people is also the One who will come on the clouds to judge all people. He is the Alpha and the Omega. “All the nations will be

gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another” (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 1:7, 8). Whoever believes in him will not be condemned (John 3:18a). “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That there is no communication of attributes in the person of Christ, nor communion between the two natures. For instance, Zwingli taught that whenever the Bible says that Jesus suffered, the divine nature did not participate in that suffering.
 - That the personal union was effected by a mingling of the two natures into the other or by a confusion or a conversion of the one nature into the other (Eutychianism).
 - That Jesus’ two natures have a connection with each other but that they are separate (Nestorianism).
6. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus had and has a threefold office: Prophet, Priest, and King.
- Among God’s people in the Old Testament times, prophets, priests, and kings were important people. They were God’s servants to lead the spiritual and daily lives of the people. They were anointed with oil before serving in their office: Aaron and his sons as priests (Exodus 28:41), David as a king (1 Samuel 16:1, 12, 13), Elijah as a prophet (1 Kings 19:16).
 - Anointing was a visible means that signified that God would separate the person for a particular task and would pour the Holy Spirit on him to carry it out (1 Samuel 16:13).
 - Prophets, priests, and kings prefigured the threefold office of Jesus Christ. He is our Prophet, Priest, and King. He was not anointed with oil before starting his public ministry, but he was anointed with the Holy Spirit in full measure (Isaiah 61:1). The title “Christ (the Anointed One)” showed that the Father set Jesus apart for his threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King and fully equipped him to carry out that work.
 - Unlike all the prophets, priests, and kings in the Old Testament, Jesus carried out his office perfectly.

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That Jesus was a mere martyr, a misguided zealot.
 - That Jesus was a social reformer or just an example for living.
7. We believe, teach, and confess that as our Prophet Jesus stands behind our witness.
- Moses said to the Israelites: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him” (Deuteronomy 18:15).
 - Peter quotes the above passage when he preached in Solomon’s Colonnade (Acts 3:22, 23). The context tells us that the “prophet” in Deuteronomy 18:15 is Jesus. God the Father’s declaration at Jesus’ transfiguration testifies that Peter’s quotation is correct. The

Father declared, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him” (Matthew 17:5).

- We should listen to Jesus because he tells us about the Father (John 1:18); he speaks what the Father has taught him (John 8:28); he tells us God’s truth (John 8:45); his Word sets us free (John 8:32); his Word gives us encouragement, comfort, and peace (Matthew 9:2, 11:28, 29); his Word is a lamp to our feet (Psalm 119:105); he gives us eternal life as a free gift through faith in him (John 11:25, 26); on the Last Day he will judge all people according to his Word (Luke 9:26).
- Jesus’ message or teaching was made up of the law, which tells us what we are to do and not to do, and the gospel, which tells us what God has done, and still does, for our salvation. A good example is Mark 16:16: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” Yet against stubborn sinners, he strongly preached the law alone: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites” (Matthew 23:25). He preached the law even to his dear disciples (Matthew 16:23, 20:26, 27). On the other hand, he never hesitated to preach the gospel to penitent sinners. One of the two criminals crucified with Jesus repented of his sins and asked him for forgiveness. Jesus proclaimed to the criminal the pure gospel – the gracious, encouraging, and peace-giving message: “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise (heaven)” (Luke 23:43).
- Jesus’ prophetic work did not end with his death. While he was publicly proclaiming God’s Word, Jesus called and trained his disciples so that they could continue to proclaim God’s Word (Luke 5:10b). Then, before his ascension he committed his prophetic work to them and all the Christians of all times (Matthew 28:19, 20a). Whenever we give witness on behalf of Jesus, he stands behind our witness. Therefore, Paul writes: “It is he (Christ) who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God” (Ephesians 4:11-13a).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That Jesus was essentially a new Lawgiver (Pelagianism, Arminianism, Semi-pelagianism, Modernism, Roman Catholicism).
 - That we may look for continued revelation from God apart from the Scriptures (Roman Catholicism, Pentecostalism, and the Charismatic Movement).
8. We believe, teach, and confess that as our High Priest Jesus, who sacrificed himself for our sins, intercedes for us and answers our prayers, including those for mission workers.
- The role of a priest was to reconcile people with God by means of sacrifices and intercessions.
 - The tenth day of the seventh month was a special day for the Israelites. It was the Day of Atonement. Only on that day was the high priest allowed to enter the Most Holy Place with the blood of the animal sacrifice to atone for all the sins of the Israelites. Before

doing that, however, he had to offer a bull to atone for his own sin. The details of this priestly service are recorded in Leviticus 16.

- The law required God's people in the Old Testament times to offer countless sacrifices to God through priests: two one-year-old-lambs without defect as a regular burnt offering each day, one lamb in the morning and the other at twilight (Numbers 28:3-8); on the Sabbath day two one-year-old-lambs without defect as burnt offerings (Numbers 28:9); on the first day of every month two young bulls, one ram, and seven one-year-old male lambs as burnt offerings – all without defect (Numbers 28:11); one one-year-old-male lamb without defect on the fourteenth day of the first month as the Lord's Passover (Exodus 12:1-14; Numbers 28:16); two young bulls, one ram, and seven one-year-old-male lambs as burnt offerings for seven days after the Passover – all without defect (Numbers 28:17-19); two young bulls, one ram, seven one-year-old-lambs, and one male goat on the day of firstfruits, fifty days after the Passover – all without defect (Numbers 28:26-31), etc.
- As the above passages show, the sacrifices to God had to be without defect. However, the blood of countless animal sacrifices and the atoning work of the high priest could not take away his own sins and the sins of the people. The Old Testament priests and their work were only shadows of Jesus' atoning death and priestly office, as the author of Hebrews writes (Hebrews 10:1-7, 10).
- However as our Priest, Jesus atoned for all the sins of all people by one sacrifice (Hebrews 10:14). The sacrifice he offered to God was not animals but his own holy and precious life. Jesus was worthy to be the sacrifice to make atonement for all people, because he had no original sin and had committed no actual sins. Unlike high priests in the Old Testament times, he did not need to offer a sacrifice for his own sins before making atonement for the sins of the people. He was both "the perfect sacrifice" and "the perfect high priest." Therefore, he could atone for all the sins of all times, once for all, when he died on the cross. That is why Peter wrote: "You were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers... with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world" (1 Peter 1:18–20).
- Jesus continues his priestly office even after his exaltation, not by repeating his atoning work (Hebrews 10:10, 18), but by interceding for his people (1 John 2:1).
- Jesus tells us to pray for workers to go out into his harvest (Matthew 9:38).
- Because of the priestly work of Jesus, we can draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith (Ephesians 3:12).
- Because of Jesus' intercession, the Father hears and answers our prayers (John 16:23; Romans 8:34).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That Jesus' only function as priest is to inspire men by precept and example to become their own saviors (Modernism).

- That Jesus is not the only mediator, that his intercessory work can or should be supplemented with the intercessions and merits of Mary or other saints (Roman Catholicism).
 - That Jesus' vicarious satisfaction was not sufficient in itself, but was accepted as such by God's sovereign volition (Calvinism, Arminianism).
 - That Jesus made satisfaction only for the sins of the elect (Calvinism).
9. We believe, teach, and confess that as our King Jesus promises us final victory and royal blessings, even as we witness in the face of opposition.
- The role of a king was to rule over his nation and to protect his people from their enemies. God said to Samuel who was to anoint Saul as the first king of Israel: "Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines" (1 Samuel 9:16).
 - The kings of Israel were also called to serve the nation like shepherds. God said to David: "You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler" (2 Samuel 5:2).
 - As a shepherd made his sheep lie down in green pastures and led them beside quiet waters, the kings of Israel were asked to lead the people in God-pleasing paths that offer blessings, safety, and peace.
 - An ideal king is devoted to serving God. He carries out the duty of a ruler to support good and oppose evil. But even King David fell short of the ideal king. He committed gross sins. He coveted someone else's wife, slept with her, and arranged for someone to bring about her husband's death. What he had done displeased the Lord. Through the prophet Nathan, God pointed out David's sins. David repented of those sins and asked for forgiveness (2 Samuel 11:1-12; Psalm 51).
 - David was not an ideal king but he knew that the ideal King would come and rule in the future. In Psalm 23 David confesses that the Lord – the Messiah or the Christ – is his Shepherd-King.
 - We have Jesus' own declaration as the Shepherd-King: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...I lay down my life for the sheep" (John 10:11, 15).
 - The prophet Zechariah also tells us about Jesus' office as our King. According to the prophet, Jesus is much different from secular rulers. He is the righteous and gentle King. In those days the Jews who had returned from captivity in Babylon were experiencing difficult times. There was opposition to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and the temple of the Lord. The Jews were discouraged. Zechariah encouraged them to get to work and to rejoice. He reminded them of God's wonderful promise of the coming Savior-King, saying: "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). Jesus' rule extends from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth, but he is not an earthly king. He comes to do battle with Satan and to sacrifice his holy precious blood as payment for all the sins of all people. To the nations he proclaims peace based on God's promise of forgiveness and salvation.

- Jesus fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy during Holy Week. On Palm Sunday, he entered Jerusalem as the gentle King, riding on a donkey (Matthew 21:1-11). Jesus kept on walking faithfully to the cross, his final battlefield against the power of Satan, sin, and death. There he completely carried out the will of the Father and proclaimed with confidence, "It is finished" (John 19:30). That shout was the shout of triumph. Jesus destroyed Satan, who held the power of death; he freed all those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Hebrews 2:14, 15).
- By his triumphant shout Jesus directed all sinners to himself as their sure and only refuge. What Jesus did is all-sufficient and is valid for all people of all time, even for the people who lived in Old Testament times. Therefore we have confidence to share the good news about Jesus with others, even in the face of opposition. For Jesus has said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).
- To show his victory over Satan, sin, and death, Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. As our eternal King, he continues to protect us from every danger; finally he will take us to heaven. For that reason, together with John we eagerly say: "Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That Jesus will establish a millennial reign on earth, which will either precede or follow his Second Coming (Millennialism).
- That the ascended Lord is not controlling world events for the sake of his church.

V. ESCHATOLOGY: THE URGENCY OF OUR OUTREACH MESSAGE

1. We believe, teach, and confess that the church's mission is to proclaim the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus to all people of the world.
 - We have Jesus' own commission to proclaim the gospel to all people throughout the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15).
 - The message Christ gave the church to proclaim focuses on his substitutionary life and death for our sins and his resurrection for our justification (1 Corinthians 2:2; Romans 4:25).
 - Jesus told the church to proclaim the law to convict people of their sins (Romans 3:20) and to proclaim the gospel to give people, as their very own, the forgiveness and righteousness which he won for all (John 3:16).
 - The church is to offer the good news of salvation through the means of grace, the gospel in the Word (Romans 1:16) and in the sacraments of baptism (Titus 3:5) and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). God has bound us to the means of grace to carry out the work of spreading the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus.
 - Christians are, by virtue of their new man, eager to share the gospel (Acts 1:8, 4:20).
 - Christians are royal priests who have the privilege of proclaiming to others the grace God has shown to them (1 Peter 2:9).

- Christ also has established the public ministry through which ministers of the Word proclaim God's grace to, and on behalf of, those who have called them (Ephesians 4:11, 12).
- Christians also recognize there is a great urgency to reach out to others with the gospel, since Christ could return for Judgment Day at any time (Revelation 22:20).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That the church's main mission is to care for the temporal needs of people (Social Gospel, Liberation Theology).
 - That Christ's Second Coming is not imminent.
2. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus is coming again to judge all people.
- Enoch, the seventh from Adam, foretold Jesus' coming at the end of time to judge the world (Jude 14).
 - Job declared that Jesus would come again at the end of time (Job 19:25).
 - The Psalms speak of the final judgment (Psalm 58:11, 96:13).
 - The Old Testament prophets speak of the end of all things and the day of the Lord (Daniel 12:13; Isaiah 24:21).
 - Jesus clearly taught he was coming again in judgment at the end of time (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; Mark 14:62).
 - The angels foretold Jesus' Second Coming (Acts 1:11).
 - The epistles frequently mention the Second Coming of Christ (Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Timothy 4:8; 2 Peter 3:10-13).
 - Jesus closed the New Testament with the message he is coming soon (Revelation 22:20).
 - Whereas Jesus' first coming took place quietly and in great humility, his Second Coming will be in great glory so that all people will see him (Luke 2; Matthew 24:30-32).
 - Jesus' Second Coming will terrify those who do not believe in him (Revelation 6:16, 17).
 - Christians eagerly look forward to Christ's Second Coming (Philippians 3:20).
 - God has determined the exact time for the end of the world (Acts 17:31). Only he knows when this will occur (Mark 13:32).
 - In his state of humiliation, when Jesus did not make full and constant use of the powers the human nature had received from the divine nature, he chose not to know when Judgment Day would occur (Mark 13:32). In his state of exaltation, when He does make full and constant use of the powers his human nature received from the divine nature, Jesus does know when Judgment Day will be (Revelation 22:12).
 - The last days of the world comprise the whole period between the first and the second coming of Christ (Acts 2:14-17; Hebrews 1:1, 2; 1 John 2:18).
 - Jesus indicated that signs in nature (earthquakes, floods), society (wars, plagues, famines), and the church (many false teachers, a falling away from the faith, the rise of the Antichrist) will occur throughout the entire New Testament era (Matthew 24; 2 Timothy 3:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2). All of these signs are a constant reminder that Jesus is coming.

- There are no signs that still must happen before Christ can come again. Paul declared that the gospel had been proclaimed throughout the world in his day already (Matthew 24:14; Colossians 1:6, 23). Jesus could come at any time.
- Christ's Second Coming will happen suddenly, like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2). He will come when people least expect him (Matthew 24:37-39).
- There will be scoffers in the end times who question Jesus' Second Coming (2 Peter 3:3-10).
- Christians also need to be watchful and ready for Christ's Second Coming (Matthew 24:42; Romans 13:11-14). Through faith in Jesus who has promised to preserve us in the faith, we are ready whenever Jesus comes again (John 10:27, 28; 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24).
- The assurance of Jesus' Second Coming is a great comfort and hope for the church militant (Titus 2:13, 14). In faith we respond, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20)!

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That there will be no Second Coming of Christ, that this world will simply continue until it ends through natural causes.
 - That there will be a reign of Christ on earth for 1000 years.
 - a. Pre-millennialism, with the idea of a Great Tribulation, Rapture, first resurrection of believers, visible 1000 year reign of Christ on earth, and second resurrection of unbelievers.
 - b. Post-millennialism, with the idea that Christ will come after a 1000 year period in which things will gradually get better on earth.
 - That we can know the time when Christ will come again.
3. We believe, teach, and confess the resurrection of the body.
- God created Adam and Eve with bodies fit for eternal life (Genesis 1:31).
 - When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they brought sin and death into this world (Genesis 2:16, 17, 3:19; Romans 5:12). Death is a universal condition (Ecclesiastes 3:2). The exceptions are Enoch (Genesis 5:24), Elijah (2 Kings 2:11), and those still living at the time of Jesus' Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 4:17).
 - Upon death, the body decays (Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastes 3:20).
 - Upon death, soul and body separate. The souls of believers go to heaven and the souls of unbelievers go to hell (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 16:22, 23, 23:43; 1 Peter 3:20).
 - When believers die, they will consciously enjoy the blessings of seeing God and living with him (Revelation 14:13). When unbelievers die, they will suffer the torments of hell (Luke 16:23).

- On Judgment Day, God will raise all dead bodies back to life, to be reunited with their souls (Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 26:19; Hosea 13:14; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28, 29, 11:24; Acts 13:30-37, 17:31; 1 Corinthians 15; Philippians 3:21).
- Jesus' physical resurrection from the dead guarantees the resurrection of our bodies (1 Corinthians 15:20, 50–56; John 11:25, 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:14).
- Believers will be raised with a glorified body patterned after the resurrection body of Jesus (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:42-53).
- Unbelievers will be raised with their same bodies which have been corrupted by sin (Isaiah 66:24; Mark 9:48).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That believers are not consciously aware of living in the presence of Jesus after they die (the idea of soul sleep).
- That the resurrection takes place spiritually without involving the body.
- That there is no resurrection.

4. We believe, teach, and confess the final judgment.

- The Bible clearly teaches a final day of reckoning for the world when all people must appear before God for a final and public judgment (Jude 14, 15; Daniel 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:10).
- Jesus will send his holy angels to gather all people before him, placing all believers at his right hand, and all unbelievers at his left hand (Matthew 25:31-33).
- Even the fallen angels will be present for the final judgment. They know the day is coming, and they tremble (2 Peter 2:4; Matthew 8:29). Believers will concur with Jesus' judgment on the devil and his demons (1 Corinthians 6:3).
- Jesus will be the Judge on the Last Day (John 5:27).
- Jesus will use faith in the gospel as his standard for judgment. Those who believe the gospel, by God's grace, have eternal life. Those who rejected the gospel will be sent away to eternal torment in hell (John 3:16, 18, 5:24, 12:48; Mark 16:15, 16).
- Jesus will point to the good works of the believers as evidence of their faith in him (John 13:35; Matthew 25:35, 36).
- Jesus will welcome believers into heaven, for they are clothed in his righteousness and cleansed by the blood of Christ (Matthew 25:34).
- Jesus will send unbelievers away from him into eternal torment in hell. He paid for their sins and earnestly desired their salvation. They, however, denied the Lord who bought them (1 Peter 2:1; Matthew 25:41).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That there is no day of final reckoning with God.
- That good works earn eternal life.
- That God is to blame for the damnation of sinners.

5. We believe, teach, and confess the eternal damnation of unbelievers.
- Eternal damnation of unbelievers is a fact (Matthew 25:46).
 - Those who deny eternal damnation of the unbeliever ignore a number of biblical facts.
 - a. God is holy. He hates all who do wrong (Psalm 5:5).
 - b. God is just. He cannot ignore disobedience to his will, and he will punish those who disobey (Exodus 34:7; Galatians 6:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10).
 - c. God is also love. He earnestly desires the salvation of all sinners (1 Timothy 2:4; Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9). Jesus paid for the sins of all people (1 John 2:2).
 - d. Scripture places the sole blame for the sinner's damnation on the sinner alone. God cannot be blamed for a sinner's damnation (John 3:18).
 - The Bible describes hell as "eternal fire" (Matthew 18); "their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48); "darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12); "shut out from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The damned in hell will be forever shut out from the loving presence of the Lord (Matthew 25:30). Torments of hell will never end.
 - There will be degrees of torment in hell. Jesus said it will be more tolerable for the city of Sodom in hell than for the cities of Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Chorazin, which witnessed the mighty miracles of Christ and rejected him (Matthew 11:20-24).
 - Hell is a place (Luke 16:27, 28). It cannot, however, be located geographically.

We therefore must reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That God could not punish people in hell because he is a loving God.
 - That hell is a condition in this world and not a place of torment.
 - That God will annihilate unbelievers and not punish them forever in hell (Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists).
 - That hell will not be eternal.
6. We believe, teach, and confess that God gives eternal life to all who believe in Jesus.
- Heaven is the continuation and the full enjoyment of that full life which began when God brought us to faith by the Holy Spirit (John 3:16, 5:24, 6:47).
 - The Bible often describes heaven in terms of what will not be there (hunger, thirst, sorrow, sin), because we cannot comprehend what perfect joy is.
 - The chief joy of heaven is that we will share the "beatific vision" of the angels, always seeing the face of God, living forever in his loving presence (Matthew 18:10; 1 John 3:2; Job 19:27; Psalm 17:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:17).
 - In heaven, believers will not be able to sin any more. They will be like the good angels in heaven. They will have no desire to do anything but the will of God (Luke 20:36; Revelation 22:3). The gates of heaven will never be shut, for the devil and his angels will no longer be able to attack believers.

- In heaven, believers will have glorified bodies patterned after the resurrection body of Jesus (Philippians 3:21).
- In heaven, believers will be reunited with their loved ones and with the other believers who have died before them (Matthew 8:11).
- In heaven, believers will rest from their labors (Revelation 14:13). The Bible speaks of degrees of glory in heaven (2 Corinthians 9:6). God will, out of grace, recognize the labors of his faithful people. There will be no degrees of happiness in heaven.
- The Bible speaks of the believer living in a new heaven and a new earth which the Lord will make (Isaiah 66:22; Revelation 21:1).
- All in heaven will praise forever the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the God of grace, the God of our salvation (Revelation 7:12).

We therefore reject as contrary to Scripture:

- That heaven is a state of existence achieved in this life.
- That all people will enter heaven, regardless of what they believe.
- That in heaven we will be angels.
- That those in heaven will not have their bodies with them.