

What the Reformed Episcopal Church Believes¹

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What does the Reformed Episcopal Church stand for? What are its beliefs? One cannot summarize everything about our Church in a small booklet, but we shall give an overview of our beliefs. Thus, we shall not try to defend our beliefs (except a little) in this booklet but only to set them forth.

1. We believe in the Nicene Creed.

The Creed is as follows:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; Who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the LORD and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the Prophets. And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church; I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the Resurrection of the dead, and the Life of the world to come. Amen.

This Creed is very ancient and embraced by all branches of Christendom, Anglican/Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodoxy.² Anyone who denies this Creed places himself outside Christianity. We are required by God to have **a *decided intolerance regarding the basics of the Christian faith***. Such intolerance does not mean that we are angry with others who do not hold these precious truths, nor that we are holier than they are, but that we cannot compromise them and still claim to be Christians. Our modern society does not like intolerance, unless of course, it is their beliefs that are compromised (such as certain sexual sins).

¹ Though I think this accurately represents what the Reformed Episcopal Church holds, this arrangement and my comments have not been formally approved by the REC.

² The Eastern Orthodox Church does not accept the statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, but they embrace the essence of the Creed which is strongly Trinitarian.

The Creed also gives to us the most basic Christian belief of the ancient Church and of all Christianity: **the Trinity**. A very short explanation of the Trinity is that we only believe in one God, that this one God exists in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that these three persons are equal in divine essence. Anyone who denies that there is only one God is an idolater, and anyone who denies that there are three Persons does not believe in the one true God. Both God's unity as One and His diversity as Three are equally important and must be stressed with equal emphasis.

This further means that just as the Father is God so Jesus is God and the Holy Spirit is God. Just as the Father is a Person, so are the Son and the Holy Spirit. This Creed condemns those modern cults who have revived ancient heresies, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses who deny the deity of Christ, rejecting that He is God Almighty, equal with the Father in divine essence. This Creed condemns the Mormons who believe that the Persons of the Trinity are three gods. This Creed condemns the Moslems who believe that Jesus was only a prophet and who deny the three persons in the Trinity. By using the strong word "condemn," we do not mean to be their personal judges, but we must be honest with Scripture. If a sick person went to a doctor and was diagnosed with a curable cancer, it would be very hateful if the doctor did not tell the person that he had such and let him die. Or, what would you think if the doctor said, "I have my opinion and you have yours. Sincerity is all that counts. So if you really believe that you don't have a cancer, you are ok"? You would rightly think that the good doctor had taken leave of his senses. Likewise, we are required by God to love people enough to tell them truth of the Gospel, even when they don't want to hear it.

We should be quick to recognize that this Creed condemns all people, including ourselves (especially the one who writes this), for all of us are sinners who deserve God's judgment, and no one can think that the reason he believes in the one true God is because he is superior to others. No, we must always say, "Except by the grace of God, there go I." The **only** reason we may be Christians is because God chose to save us, to reveal His Son to us (Matt. 11:25-27). Thus, rather than feeling superior to others or thinking that we have a special "in" with God based on our superior knowledge, the Creed should show us that we are saved only by His grace and that have a debt to all men to give them the Gospel (Rom. 1:14).

The Creed says that **Jesus** died for us, which means that He is the **only** way to God. The one who believes in Jesus as his savior who died for his sins, has the Father also. The one who does not come to God through Jesus does not have the Father, and is not a Christian (1 John 2:23). There can be no compromise here. Everything we know about God is mediated through Jesus, who is God the Son, perfect humanity without sin, one Person, and no mixture of the natures of deity and humanity. Forgiveness of sins comes **only** through Him, and this way to God is as broad as anyone who wishes may come to Him, and as narrow as He is the only cure for our sins.

Furthermore, since Jesus died for our sins and we had nothing to do with what He did, we understand that such grace means that we receive forgiveness as a free gift. In other words, **the only thing we contribute to our salvation is our sins**, and God through Christ gives us righteousness as a gift. The one who seeks

to earn God's favor only reveals that he thinks that Christ is not sufficient, that what He did on the Cross was not enough for our salvation, which is a supreme insult to God. If we could earn our salvation, then why did Christ die? Why did He come? The one who seeks to gain God's favor by his own effort has nullified the Cross (Gal. 2:21).

When the Creed says that Jesus arose from the grave, it means in the same body in which He lived among men (John 1:14; 2:21, 22; 20:26-29). There have been some modern heretics who have denied that Jesus arose in the same body in which He lived and maintained that He was raised a spirit creature. Such a denial of the faith invalidates any claim to genuine faith.

2. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God.

When we say the Bible, we mean the 66 books of the Bible (see Article 6 below under the Thirty-Nine Articles). The Bible is our **ultimate** rule of the faith and our **only infallible** rule of faith, and is **sufficient** for our salvation. We do not mean that the Bible is our only authority, which is a modern misunderstanding of the Reformation. Indeed, the Protestant Reformers constantly quoted the early fathers and the creeds to demonstrate continuity—and so do we. But this means that we do not accept anything as an article of faith that cannot be proved by the Bible. For example, I've received e-mails from two people wanting to debate me over the internet whether there is a Second Coming of Christ or not. My response was that I am objectively closed minded to such a debate, for the ancient creeds and every Reformation confession written all espouse the Second Coming. Especially the ancient creeds of the undivided Church but also the confessions demonstrate the unity of the Church for 2,000 years on this topic with no dissenting voice and are authoritative. Every doctrine is not open for debate, for where the Church has spoken with such unanimity in all three branches (Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholic, and Protestant) for so long, we conclude that this is the teaching of Holy Scripture without having to reinvent the wheel.

We do not accept any other so-called holy books, such as the Koran, the Book of Mormon, or any false books promoted by early heretics who claimed to give us other teachings about God or Jesus. Many such books were rejected by the early fathers with one voice. This doctrine of Holy Scripture also means that the Bible judges the Church, not the Church the Bible, that the Bible validates the Church, not the Church the Bible. There are no coordinating authorities to the Bible; it stands alone, unique, above all human authorities, whether they are secular or sacred.

This further means that the Bible is over the culture so that we do not "reinterpret" the Bible to make it palatable to the culture. Thus we reject women's ordination because it is contrary to Holy Scripture, though we accept and honor ladies very much. Our ministry to those who engage in sinful sexual practices, such as sex outside marriage, homosexuality, lesbianism, adultery, and so forth is one of loving exhortation to repentance. We exhort them to flee from the wrath to come by turning away from such sins and trusting in Christ for forgiveness. We would be required by God to lovingly excommunicate those who may be members of the Church and refused to repent of such, though are hearts would grieve and we would seek to do everything possible to reclaim them for Christ.

3. We believe in the Declaration of Principles.

These principles are stated in negative form, the positive not being given, and are 4 in number:

I. The Reformed Episcopal Church, holding “the faith once delivered unto the saints, declares its belief in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, and the sole rule of faith and practice, in the Creed “commonly called the Apostles’ Creed;” in the Divine institution of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; and in the doctrines of grace substantially as they are set forth in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (see below).

II. The Church recognizes and adheres to Episcopacy, not as of Divine right, but as a very ancient and desirable form of Church polity.

III. This Church, retaining a Liturgy which shall not be imperative or repressive of freedom in prayer, accepts The Book of Common Prayer, as it was revised, proposed, and recommended for use by the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, A.D. 1785, reserving full liberty to alter, abridge, enlarge, and amend the same, as may seem most conducive to the edification of the people, “provided that the substance of the faith be kept entire.”

IV. This Church condemns and rejects the following erroneous and strange doctrines as contrary to God’s Word:

First, That the Church of Christ exists only in one order or form of ecclesiastical polity:

Second, That Christian Ministers are “priests” in another sense than that in which all believers are “a royal priesthood.”

Third, That the Lord’s Table is an altar on which the oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ is offered anew to the Father:

Fourth, That the Presence of Christ in the Lord’s Supper is a presence in the elements of bread and wine:

Fifth, That regeneration is inseparably connected with baptism.

4. We believe in historical continuity.

The Reformed Episcopal Church is connected with the Church of all ages in several ways. First, we can trace our history back to the Apostles so that we have **Apostolic succession**. We do not view such succession as necessary to salvation but as an advantage in maintaining continuity with the “faith once for all delivered to the saints.”

Secondly, we believe the Creeds that all branches of the Church has always believed, such as the Apostles’ Creed (shorter form of the Nicene Creed), the Nicene Creed (given above), and the Athanasian Creed (given at the end of this document).

Thirdly, we believe what the early fathers proclaimed at the first four councils concerning the Trinity, and concerning Jesus as fully God, fully man but without sin, one Person, with no mixture of the natures. He was not an angel (especially

not the angel Michael, as one heresy puts it)³ but created the angels (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-18).

In every discipline of life, the next generation builds on the shoulders of the predecessors, not “reinventing the wheel” with each new generation. A heart doctor, for example, must learn from other doctors and would not be certified to practice if he rejected all the learning of his field. Too often in our day, neophytes claim only the Bible as their guide, reject all the learning of the fathers, and are doing spiritual heart surgery on others without training. The result is often spiritual heart failure, for those who do not know where the potholes of heresy are, invariably fall into them.

It is always true in theology that if one cannot find his beliefs approved by the Church he will find them condemned by the Church. Thus Church history (or tradition as some term it) is a good guide for one’s beliefs, though only the Bible is our infallible guide.

5. We believe in worship.

The worship of God has fallen on bad times in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. Many follow the “contemporary” worship movement, thinking that it does not matter what we offer to God as long as we are sincere, that He must accept what we do, no matter the form or the substance. We in the Reformed Episcopal Church hold to a more God-centered worship, maintaining that worship is objectively revealed in the Bible. Thus we are so concerned to worship God *His* way that we follow the Church for 2,000 years in using a written liturgy. Of course everyone uses a liturgy but many leave it unwritten, but they do something every time they get together, even though it may be different each time. What one does in worship is his liturgy.

We do make changes to our worship book, the Book of Common Prayer, as we progress in our understanding of Scripture, but our changes are very gradual and well-thought out. Our Book of Common Prayer that we currently use is based on the 1662 edition and the 1928. One will find the Book of Common Prayer very Trinitarian and biblically oriented. For example, all through the Book we find the expression “in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Also, in our services, we read passages from the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Epistles. We are concerned not just to claim to be Bible centered, but also to actually practice such each service.

Those who criticize us for using a Book in worship may not realize that 70% of the Book of Common Prayer is directly the words of Scripture, 20% is putting passages together, and 10% is based on biblical principles. We believe in worshipping God *His* way, not however we may invent as we go along, and certainly not what is

³The Jehovah’s Witnesses say that Jesus was Michael the archangel before he came to the earth in the sense that he was a literal, created angel, and not God. Orthodox people may say that Christ was Michael (Calvin, John Gill, Hengstenberg) in the sense that He appeared as such in a theophany. In other words, He was Michael in the same sense that He was the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament, that He manifested Himself in this way. The tendency was for older, orthodox commentators to hold such while the more recent ones (last hundred years) would reject that Christ was ever Michael. In this latter view, Michael would be a literal, created angel and not Christ.

acceptable to the culture to make people feel good. We are in worship for **God**, not for man, and **He** is to be the center of our worship. We are to please **Him**, not man. It is even secondary what we get out of worship, and primary that **He** is pleased. Worship is to be God-centered, not man-centered.

One will find the table for the Lord's Supper in the center of and in the front of our churches to emphasize that Jesus is the center of our worship. This table is placed between our "pulpits." We have two "pulpits," one to read the Bible from (called the lectern) and another to preach from, indicating a distinction between the Bible read and interpreted. Thus the Bible is read, sung, interpreted, and then "eaten" in the Lord's Supper, which is the climax of the Sunday worship service. By "eaten," we do not mean literally as the bread and wine remain bread and wine but are concentrated to a holy use in the service.

Our worship services are modeled after the Book of Romans where Paul by the Holy Spirit demonstrates our need of Christ by first rehearsing all the common sins we are inclined to commit (Rom. 1:18-3:20). Then Paul gives us the grace of God in Christ (Rom. 3:21 to the end of the chapter). Finally, he teaches us how to receive such grace by faith alone in Christ alone (Rom. 4). Thus we have law, grace, and faith in every such service so that the Gospel is learned over and over all one's life. The Book of Common Prayer, therefore, also emphasizes that the Gospel is not something we believe once and leave but that we are believing all the time. Salvation is not just a past experience (saved from the *penalty* of sin) but also a present experience (as we are being saved from the *power* of sin) and a future reality (as we shall one day be delivered from the *presence* of sin, both inwardly and outwardly). (See point 8 below on the sacraments.)

6. We believe in the Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments have been a part of the Church's worship since the very early church. These have several functions. First, they reveal to us the standard for conduct, which commandments are in turn a revelation of God's own holy character, which cannot change (1 Peter 1:13-16). The Ten Commandments reveal that we come to God on His terms, not on ours, that we define sin the way He does, not according to the culture.

Secondly, they are not Ten Suggestions for each generation to warp to its own culture. Some come to church and espouse the Ten Commandments and then do not take them seriously. They think that if they do not murder someone that they have not violated the Sixth Commandment, but the command also requires us to promote life. It is not enough not to murder, we must also seek to extend our neighbor's life. The Reformed Episcopal Church, therefore, is very much pro-righteousness, which means it is righteous for innocent babies not to be aborted, and it is righteous for murderers to be put to death by the state. Furthermore, the Seventh Commandment says not to commit adultery, but also under this heading are all other sexual sins, such as homosexuality, lesbianism, living with someone outside marriage, and other sins. The command also condemns lusting after someone in one's heart (Matt. 5:28). We could show the same implications with the other commands in the Ten. This naturally leads us to the next point.

Thirdly, the Ten Commandments reveal that we are sinners in need of God's grace since we all have violated them. Thus we are under God's just wrath and

just condemnation, but Jesus has taken the penalty of condemnation on Himself when He died in our place. There is no one who escapes being condemned by these commandments, including the one writing this! Thus one function of these commands is to show us our need of God's grace in Christ and to cause us to run to Him for mercy (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16-21; 3:10-13). Only those who repent of their sins, that is, turn from them and run to Christ, can expect to avoid God's final condemnation at the Last Day. His final condemnation is given by Christ Himself: "These will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46). Hell is not a temporary abode nor is one burned up into oblivion as then it would not be "everlasting punishment." But the mercy of Christ extends to all who will agree with Him that they are sinners in need of His grace. Those who want to define morality according to the culture of the day and will not admit that they are sinners as He defines them will not repent and thus will not come to Him (Matt. 9:12; Mark 2:17).

In each service of Holy Communion, we affirm the Ten Commandments, which shows us our need of the Gospel, we affirm our faith in the Holy Trinity as our one God, and we affirm our faith in Jesus as our only Savior from our sins.

7. We believe in the Lord's Prayer

Our worship book is called *The Book of Common Prayer* because prayer forms a great part of our worship of God and of our Christian lives. The Lord's Prayer is a model for prayer that the Church has used from the earliest times through today, and in every service of the Prayer Book we will find it. The prayer begins with God and His sovereignty ("Our Father who art in heaven") and ends with His glory ("for thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever"). In the middle are the petitions that we are to pray for (daily bread, forgiveness, no temptation, etc). We view this prayer in particular and all prayers in general as most acceptable when we pray His words back to Him, though we also believe in extemporaneous prayers as well.

Furthermore, prayer does nothing apart from the Trinity. Sometimes we hear of people praying to "God" in the sense that he (or it) may be a force or some higher reality, and these people will say that prayer helps people in some way. Sometimes the help claimed may be physical or psychological. Indeed, such prayer may give temporary psychological relief, but it accomplishes nothing else. But Scripture teaches us that the only prayer acceptable to God the Father is that which is based on the blood of God the Son and offered in the power of God the Holy Spirit. Any prayer apart from this theology is not acceptable to God.

8. We believe in the Sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion.

This means that we believe in the Church, outside which there is ordinarily no salvation. We do not baptize ourselves into the Church nor do we give ourselves the Lord's Supper. The reason for this is that the Church represents the sovereignty of Christ, who rules the Church as its Head. He regulates the Church through His pastors (Heb. 13:17). Therefore, one does not join the Church, but it joins him, *if* he is qualified. As an adult, if one can show that he has made a credible profession of faith (based on the Creeds) and that his life is in conformity to God's Word, the Bible, (especially the Ten Commandments), he may be admitted

into membership. The children of believers are admitted on the basis of the covenant extending to them through their parents through baptism.

The way in which one is admitted into the Church is through holy baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Though we prefer pouring, the mode of baptism is not an issue with us to the extent that we would deny one entrance if has been baptized with another mode in another church. Baptism gives one legal entrance into the covenant of the Church (Acts 2:38-41; Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). There is no other way to join the Church except through baptism. Once a lady stated that her friend had joined the Church after many years of making fun of God. When I asked her when he was baptized, she stated that he had not been baptized but had joined the Church by walking the aisle and the people voting him in. This is man's invention, man thinking that he joins the Church on his terms, rather than God's. The one who thinks that he joins the Church on his terms will think very little of Christ's authority later, and these often cause much trouble in the churches. There is only one Lord, one faith, and one baptism (Eph. 4:4-6). Those who reject such are rejecting Him.

Furthermore, when we say they are added to the Church through baptism, we mean the local, *visible* Church. The invisible Church (which term is not used in Scripture but may refer to the elect in the churches) does not exist apart from the visible Church. One cannot be a member of the invisible, universal Church without being a member of the visible Church. The Bible and the Reformed confessions make this very clear (see point 19 below under the Thirty-Nine Articles). If one rejects His organized, visible Church, he is rejecting Him, for He is the One who established it. Where would salvation be except in His body, His bride, the Church, and how else does one become a member except His way, by baptism? The kind of person who stays away from Church often says that all churches are apostate, which means none are good enough for him. If he can find his "perfect" church, he will grace it by his presence; otherwise, forget it. However, Christ made it clear that there will be no perfect Church in this life (Matt. 13:25-40).

Furthermore, one of the main features of the Church is protection through God-ordained authority. Satan can easily kill off a lone sheep, but one who is in covenant with Christ through His authority, the Church, will be safe. In other words, we all need human accountability. The one who thinks he can live autonomously will fall prey to himself and his sins. Our worst enemy is ourselves! We need the Church to keep us in line. Though we are saved as individuals, we are not saved apart from the body, the holy nation, the corporate, visible people of God.

This belief has never been challenged until recent times, but today it seems especially harsh to modern ears as individualism and Gnosticism has gained so much favor in the USA. Individualism is the idea that each person is a law unto himself, that he/she is sovereign, that no one has the right to exercise authority over him/her, that he/she is not accountable to anyone. Gnosticism teaches that it is only the spiritual, invisible aspect of salvation that is important, that no physical aspect is necessary to salvation, such as a local Church and baptism. If we combine these heresies of individualism and Gnosticism, we would conclude that the individual dictates to God when he is saved and the terms of his salvation, mean-

ing that one is saved when *he decides* that he has made a credible profession of faith and that this makes him/her a member of Christ's invisible Church.

But as the great Reformer John Calvin said, quoting an early father, "There is no other way to enter into life unless this mother [the church] conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance. . . ."⁴ Other confessions agree. ". . . we so highly esteem it that we say plainly that none can live before God who do not communicate with the true Church of God. . . ."⁵ "We believe, since this holy congregation is an assemblage of those who are saved, and out of it there is no salvation. . . ."⁶ "The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel . . . consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation."⁷ (See also points 19 through 30 below under the Thirty-Nine Articles.)

Likewise, Holy Communion is also part of the sacraments of the Church, and we dare not neglect this. If we do, it is to the peril of our own souls. From the earliest times of the fathers, Holy Communion was seen as a necessary part of the Church, done for forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28; John 6:51-58), and as having a major part in sustaining one in the covenant of life (see point 28 below under the Thirty-Nine Articles).

9. We believe in the Thirty-Nine Articles.

(These are not the official form in which the Reformed Episcopal Church accepts them but were put in modern English by the late Philip E. Hughes to help the modern reader understand them.)

1. The Holy Trinity

There is only one living and true God. His existence is everlasting, without beginning or end. As a spiritual being, not limited by a body and bodily members, and free from bodily desires and impulses, his power; wisdom. and goodness are infinite. He is the Creator and Preserver of all things whether seen or unseen. In the unity of this one true God there are three Persons, the Father; the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are one in being, power and eternity.

2. Of the Word or Son of God

The Son, who is the Word of the Father (John 1:1), is the Son of the Father from everlasting to everlasting. He is truly and eternally God, one with the Father in being. He took our human nature to himself in the womb of the Virgin Mary; so that two full and perfect natures, his divine and our human nature, were united in

⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4:1:4.

⁵ Second Helvetic Confession, 1566.

⁶ Belgic Confession, 1619.

⁷ Westminster Confession of Faith, 25.2

the one person of the incarnate Son, never to be divided. There is therefore one Christ who is truly God and truly man, and who truly suffered, was crucified, died and was buried. By Christ's sacrifice of himself not only for original guilt but also for all actual sins of men, God was reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19).

3. Christ's descent to the grave

As Christ died for us and was buried, so also it is to be believed that the giving up of his life was a reality.

4. Of the Resurrection of Christ

Christ truly rose again from the dead. His was a bodily resurrection, with flesh, bones and all things that belong to the perfection of our human nature. His ascension was a bodily ascension into heaven, where he is now enthroned until the last day, when he will return to judge all men.

5. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son is one in being, majesty and glory with the Father and the Son, and thus is truly and eternally God.

6. The sufficiency of Holy Scripture for our salvation

Holy Scripture sets forth everything that is necessary for our salvation. Consequently; nobody should be required to believe as an article of the Christian faith, or to regard as necessary for salvation, anything that is not found in Scripture or that cannot be proved from Scripture. By the term Holy Scripture we mean the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, namely:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1,2 and 3 John, Jude, Revelation. The books known as the **Apocrypha** are read by the Church, as Jerome said, because of the examples they provide of heroic lives and faithful conduct; but the Church does not use these books to establish any doctrine.

7. The Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New Testament. In the Old as well as in the New Testament, everlasting life is offered to mankind through Christ; for Christ, who is both God and man, is the only Mediator between God and man. Therefore we must not pay attention to any who say that in the Old Testament the patriarchs and others were limited in their expectation to transitory promises. Although the ceremonies and rites of the Law which God gave through Moses are not binding on Christians, and the civil precepts of the Law are not essential

for the Organization of any state or commonwealth, yet no Christian at all is free from obedience to the commandments known as moral.

8. The three creeds

The three creeds, namely the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and what is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, should be received and believed without reservation, because they may be proved from Holy Scripture.

9. Original sin

Original sin does not consist in imitating the sin of Adam (as the Pelagians wrongly teach), but is the fault and corruption of the nature with which all the descendants of Adam are born. It is due to original sin that we have departed very far from the original righteousness in which we were created, and are naturally inclined to evil, with the result that there is a constant war between the flesh and the spirit. Accordingly in every person born into this world, original sin is deserving of God's wrath and condemnation. This infection of our nature remains even in those who in Christ are reborn. Because of it the desire of the flesh is not submissive to the Law of God. True though it is that there is no condemnation awaiting those who believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle asserts that all ungodly desires are in themselves sinful.

10. Free Will

Since the fall of Adam, man's state is such that he is unable, by his own natural strength and good works to turn and dispose himself to believe and call upon God. Consequently, we have no power of our own to do good works that are pleasing and acceptable to God, unless the grace of God is first given through Christ, so that we may have a good will, and that same grace continues at work within us to maintain that good will.

11. Justification

It is not because of any good works or deservings on our part, but only by faith which rests on the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that we are accounted righteous before God. Therefore the doctrine of our justification by faith alone is most edifying and full of strength and comfort. (This doctrine is more fully explained in the Homily on Justification.)

12. Good works

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith and follow after our justification, cannot put away our sins, and are subject to the severity of God's judgment, yet, inasmuch as they are done in Christ and for his sake, they are pleasing and acceptable to God; for they spring necessarily from a true and vital faith, and are indeed the evidence of a vital faith, just as a tree is recognized by its fruit.

13. Works before justification

Works that are done before receiving the grace of Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit are not pleasing to God, because they do not spring from faith in Jesus Christ; nor is it true (as some say) that they render us fit to receive grace or are deserving of grace. On the contrary the fact that such works are not done as God

has willed and commanded them to be done can only mean that they have the nature of sin.

14. Works of Supererogation

Works which are supposedly done voluntarily beyond and in excess of what is required by God's commandments (known as works of supererogation) cannot be taught without self-centered arrogance and irreverence; for it is claimed that persons who perform such works render to God not only as much as it is their duty to render; but actually do for God more than is of bounden duty required; whereas Christ plainly stated, "When you have done all that is commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants" (Luke 17:10).

15. Christ alone without sin

As our true fellow man, Christ was like us in all respects, with the exception only of sin, from which he was completely free, both in his flesh and in his spirit. He came into the world to be the Lamb without spot or blemish, and by his once-for-all sacrifice of himself to take away the sins of the world as the one in whom, as St John says, there was no sin (John 1:29; 1 John 3:5). But all the rest of us, even though we have been baptized and born again in Christ, continue to offend in many things; and "if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

16. Sin after Baptism

Not every serious sin committed after our baptism is an unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit. Therefore persons who fall into sin after baptism should be encouraged to repent. After we have received the Holy Spirit it is possible for us to turn away from the grace we have experienced and to fall into sin, and it is possible for us who have fallen to rise again and amend our lives by the grace of God. Therefore, persons who say that they cannot sin any more as long as they continue in this life (claiming to have attained sinless perfection), or who deny any opportunity of forgiveness to those who truly repent, are to be condemned.

17. Predestination and election

Predestination to life belongs to God's everlasting purpose. By this is meant that before the foundation of the world, it is his unchangeable decree, in accordance with his secret counsel, to deliver from the curse and damnation those whom he has chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by him to everlasting salvation, as vessels of his mercy (Rom. 9:21ff). Therefore, those on whom such an excellent blessing of God is bestowed are called according to God's purpose by the Holy Spirit working in them in God's good time; through grace they obey this calling and are freely justified by God; they become the sons of God by adoption (Rom. 3:24; 8:15); they are conformed to the image of his only Son Jesus Christ; they lead holy lives that are given to good works to the glory of God; and at last, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting bliss (Rom. 8:29f; Eph. 2:8-10).

The reverent consideration of our predestination and election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable strength and comfort to godly persons, who feel the working in themselves of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the

flesh and their earthly passions and drawing their thoughts upward to high and heavenly realities. This teaching is welcome to us both because it strongly establishes and confirms our assurance of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ and also because it kindles in us a fervent love to God. For unregenerate persons, however; who are moved by idle curiosity and who do not have the Spirit of Christ, to be constantly confronted with the doctrine of God's predestination is dangerous and disastrous, since the devil uses it to drive them either to despair or to abandon themselves to immoral and ungodly living, which is no less perilous than despair.

Furthermore, we must accept God's promises in the way in which they are ordinarily presented to us in Holy Scripture, and in all that we do the will of God is to be followed precisely as it is revealed to us in the Word of God.

18. Salvation in Christ alone

They are to be condemned as false teachers who assert that persons will be saved no matter what belief they hold or what sect they belong to, provided they sincerely lead their lives according to those beliefs and to the light of nature; for Holy Scripture insists that it is only by the name of Jesus Christ that we may be saved (Acts 4:12).

19. The Church

The visible Church of Christ is a gathering of believing people in which the pure Word of God is preached and the sacraments are ministered with due order and discipline as ordained by Christ. Together with other churches, the Church of Rome has erred, not only in matters of conduct and ceremonial but also in matters of doctrine.

20. The authority of the Church

The Church has power to prescribe rites and ceremonies and has authority in theological controversies; but it is not lawful for the Church to prescribe anything that is contrary to God's written Word, or to expound one passage of Scripture in such a way that it disagrees with another. Therefore, although the Church is a witness and a guardian of Holy Scripture, yet it is not open to it to prescribe anything contrary to Scripture, or to enforce anything not found in Scripture to be believed as necessary to salvation.

21. The authority of General Councils

Even general councils may err when they meet, and sometimes have erred, even in issues of theological importance—for such councils are composed of men, not all of whom may be governed by the Spirit and the Word of God. Therefore, nothing declared by such councils as necessary for salvation has binding power or authority unless it is plainly taught in Holy Scripture.

22. Purgatory

The Romish teaching about purgatory, pardons, the worship and adoration of images and relics, and also the practice of praying to saints, is a futile deception, which, far from being grounded in Scripture, is repugnant to the Word of God.

23. Ministering in the congregation

No man is permitted to take upon himself the office of public preaching or ministration of the sacraments before he has been called and appointed to fulfill this office. Those persons should be accepted as lawfully called and appointed who have been selected and called to this work by men entrusted with public authority in the Church to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard.

24. The language of public worship

It is plainly incompatible with the Word of God and with the custom of the primitive Church to conduct public worship or to minister the sacraments in the Church in a language the people do not understand.

25. The Sacraments

The sacraments prescribed by Christ are badges and tokens of our profession as Christians, and, more particularly, they are trustworthy witnesses and effectual signs of God's grace and goodwill to us. By them God works invisibly in us, both arousing and also strengthening and confirming our faith in him. Christ our Lord has ordained two gospel sacraments, namely baptism and the Lord's supper.

The five that are commonly called sacraments, namely, confirmation, penance, ordination, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be received as sacraments of the gospel, since they have in part developed from a false understanding of apostolic practice and in part represent states of life allowed in the Scriptures. Moreover; because they have no visible sign or ceremony commanded by God, they do not belong in the same category as the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper.

The sacraments were not appointed by Christ to be a public spectacle or to be paraded for adoration, but to be used with due discipline. They have a beneficial effect or working only in those who receive them worthily; whereas those who receive them unworthily bring condemnation on themselves, as St Paul teaches (1 Cor. 11:27ff).

26. The unworthiness of ministers

Although in the visible Church there is always a mingling of evil with good, and at times evil persons hold the chief positions in the ministry of the Word and sacraments, yet, because they do so not in their own but in Christ's name and perform their ministry by his commission and authority, we may avail ourselves of their ministry both in hearing the Word of God and in receiving the sacraments. The effect of Christ's ordinance is not taken away by their wickedness, nor is the grace of God's gifts diminished in the case of those who receive the sacraments rightly and by faith; for, although ministered by evil men, these are effectual on account of Christ's institution and promise.

Nevertheless, it belongs to the discipline of the Church that evil ministers should be investigated and that they should be accused by those who have knowledge

of their offenses, and, further, that, on being found guilty, they should by just judgment be deposed.

27. Baptism

Baptism is a sign of the faith we profess and a mark that differentiates Christian persons from those who are unbaptized; and it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth by which, as by an instrument, those who receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church, the promises of forgiveness of sin and of our adoption to be the sons of God are visibly signified and sealed, and faith is confirmed and grace increased by virtue of prayer to God. The baptism of young children is under all circumstances to be retained in the Church as a practice fully agreeable with the institution of Christ.

28. The Lord's supper

The supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves for each other; but is especially a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death. Accordingly, for those who rightly, worthily, and with faith receive it the bread that is broken is a partaking of the body of Christ and the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16).

Transubstantiation (the teaching that the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the actual flesh and blood of Christ) in the supper of the Lord cannot be proved by Holy Scripture, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthrows the nature of a sacrament, and has given rise to many superstitions.

In the Lord's supper the body of Christ is given, taken and eaten only in a heavenly or spiritual manner; and faith is the means by which the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper. The sacrament of the Lord's supper was not commanded by Christ to be reserved, carried about, lifted up or worshipped.

29. The participation of unbelievers

Though wicked persons, and all in whom a vital faith is absent, physically and visibly press the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ with their teeth (as Saint Augustine says), yet in no sense are they partakers of Christ; on the contrary, they eat and drink the sign or sacrament of so great a reality to their own condemnation.

30. Communion in both kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the laity, for both parts of the Lord's sacrament, the wine as well as the bread, ought by Christ's ordinance and commandment to be ministered alike to all Christian persons.

31. The one offering of Christ finished in the cross

Christ's offering of himself on the cross, once for all, is the perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and there is no other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Therefore the sacrifices of masses, in which it is commonly said that the priest offers Christ for

the living and the dead, to obtain the remission of their punishment or guilt, are blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits.

32. The marriage of priests

Bishops, priests and deacons are not commanded by God's law to take vows of celibacy or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christian persons, to marry at their own discretion, where they judge that it serves better to godliness for them to do so.

33. Excommunicated persons

Any person who by open denunciation of the Church is rightly cut off from the unity of the Church and excommunicated ought to be treated by the whole company of the faithful as a heathen and a traitor; until such time as he is reconciled by penitence and received back into the Church by a judge with authority to do so (cf. Matthew 18:17).

34. The traditions of the church

It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies should be uniform and identical in every place; for these have at all times been diversified, and they may be changed to accord with the diversities of countries, times, and human customs, provided that nothing be ordained contrary to God's Word. Anyone who by his private judgment willingly and deliberately breaks the traditions and ceremonies of the Church which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are appointed and approved by common authority, ought to be openly rebuked (so that others may fear to follow his example) as one who offends against the common order of the Church, undermines authority and wounds the consciences of weak fellow Christians.

Every particular or national church has authority to prescribe, change and abolish ceremonies or rites of the Church which have been ordered only by human authority, providing all things are done for edification.

35. The Homilies

The two books of Homilies, which were set forth in the times of Edward VI and Elizabeth I respectively, contain godly and wholesome teaching.

36. The Consecration of bishops and ministers

The form of consecration of Archbishops and bishops and the ordering of priests and deacons, set forth in the time of Edward VI, contain all things necessary for such consecration and ordering and nothing that of itself is superstitious and ungodly. Therefore anyone who is consecrated or ordained according to these rites we declare to be rightly, orderly and lawfully consecrated and ordained.

37. Civil magistrates

We do not give to our princes or rulers the right to minister either God's Word or the sacraments. The only prerogative which we recognize as having been given by God himself in Holy Scripture to all godly rulers is that they should rule all states and classes committed to their charge by God, whether ecclesiastical or secular; and restrain with the civil sword stubborn persons and evildoers. The

Bishop of Rome has no jurisdiction in this realm. Christians may be punished by the laws of the realm with death for heinous and grievous offenses. It is lawful for Christian men to carry weapons and serve in wars at the command of the civil ruler.

38. Private property

The wealth and possessions of Christians are not common to all nor is their right and title to own private property to be questioned. Nevertheless, every person ought to give liberally and according to his ability from the things he possesses to the poor.

39. Oath-taking

While we acknowledge that vain and rash swearing is forbidden to Christians by our Lord Jesus Christ and by St James (Matthew 5:34-37; James 5:12), we judge that our Christian religion does not prohibit us from swearing an oath when it is required by the magistrate in the cause of good faith and charity, providing it is done according to the prophet's teaching in justice, judgment and truth.

10. We believe in the Athanasian Creed:

- 1. W**hosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith:
2. Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.
3. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
4. Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.
5. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.
6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.
7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.
8. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Ghost uncreated.
9. The Father incomprehensible [unlimited, infinite], the Son incomprehensible [unlimited], and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible [unlimited].
10. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal.
11. And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal.
12. As also there are not three uncreated, nor three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.
13. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty.
14. And yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty.
15. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.
16. And they are not three Gods, but one God.
17. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost is Lord.
18. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.

19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;

20. So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion to say, "There be three Gods, or three Lords."

21. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.

22. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created, but begotten.

23. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

25. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other; none is greater, or less than another [there is nothing before, or after; nothing greater or less].

26. But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal.

27. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

28. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.

29. Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

30. For the right faith is, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;

31. God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the substance of his Mother, born in the world;

32. Perfect God, and Perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting;

33. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood.

34. Who although he be God and Man, yet he is not two, but one Christ;

35. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the Manhood into God;

36. One altogether: not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person.

37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ;

38. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.

39. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty; from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

40. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works.

41. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

42. This is the Catholic Faith, which except a man believes faithfully, he cannot be saved.

(This creed is one of the three historic creeds of Christianity. It was written by St. Hilary to set forth the teaching of St. Athanasius, the latter being born around A.D. 295. St. Athanasius defended the historic faith of the deity of Christ at the Council of Nicea, A.D. 325.)