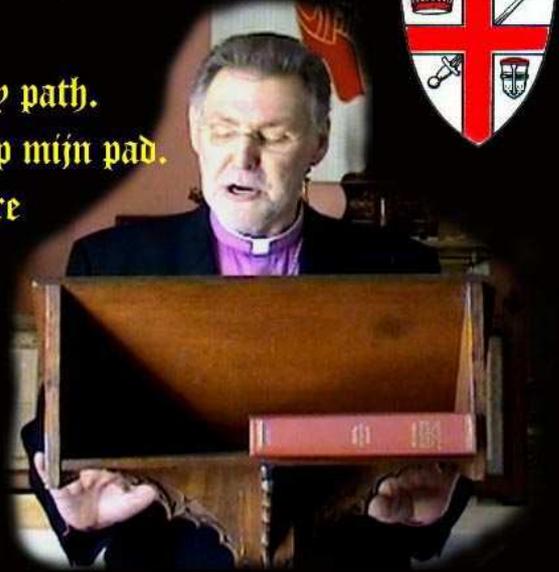


The Berea School of Theology on Internet (Ecumenical)

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Thou Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.
Uw Woord is een lamp voor mijn voet, een licht op mijn pad.
Ta Parole est une lampe à mes pieds, et une lumière
sur mon sentier. (Psalm, Psaume 119: 105)



Right Reverend Philippe L. De Coster, B.Th., D.D.

Berea School of Theology on Internet

(Formerly, Berea Bible Class on Internet)

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The Doctrinal Basis of the Christian Faith

“Looking unto Jesus (Heb. 12: 2)”

The Berea School of Theology on Internet (Ecumenical) accepts and proclaims the historic Truths of Christian Faith and Conduct, including the following:

a) God and Mankind

We believe that the Lord our God is eternally One: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and fulfilling the sovereign purposes of His providence in creation, revelation, redemption, judgement, and the coming of His kingdom.

We acknowledge that though God made man and woman in His own likeness and image, conferring on us dignity and worth, and enabling us to respond to Himself, we are now members of a fallen race, who have sinned and come short of His glory.

We believe that the Father's everlasting love is shown first of all in that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, for us when, through our sinfulness and guilt, we were subject to His wrath and condemnation; and that His grace is shown completely by His putting sinners right with Himself when they place their personal faith and confidence in His Son.

We confess Jesus Christ as Lord and God, the everlasting Son of the Father; as truly human, born of the virgin Mary; as the Servant of the servants, sinless, full of grace and truth; as the only Mediator and Saviour of the whole world, dying in our place on the cross, representing us to God, redeeming us from the grip, guilt and punishment of sin; as the Second Adam, the head of a new humanity, living a life of perfect obedience, overcoming death and decay, rising from the dead with a glorious body, being taken up to the Father in heaven, one day returning personally in majesty and judgment to bring eternal life to the redeemed and eternal death to the lost, to establish a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness, where there will be no more evil, suffering or death; and Victorious over Satan and all his forces, rescuing us from the dominion of darkness, and bringing us into His own kingdom; as the Word who makes God known.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and the Son is worthy of our worship, who convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment, who makes the death of Christ on the cross effective to sinners, enabling them to turn to God in repentance and directing their trust towards the Lord Jesus Christ; who through the new birth unites us with Christ, who is present within all believers; and makes us partake in Christ's risen life, focussing us to Jesus, freeing us from slavery to sin, producing in us His fruit, granting to us His gifts, and empowering us for service in the world.

b) The Holy Scriptures

We believe that the Old and New Testament Scriptures are God-inspired since their writers spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; therefore, they are fully trustworthy in all their affirmations; and as the written Word of God they are our only authority for faith and conduct.

We acknowledge the absolute need for the Holy Scriptures to be correctly interpreted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and using the gifts of understanding and scholarship that God has given to His people.

c) The Church and its Mission

We recognise the Church as the body of Christ, of which He is the head, held together and growing up in Him through the Holy Spirit; both as a total fellowship throughout the world, and as local congregations in which believers gather to worship God, growing in grace through the Word, prayer and sacrament.

We acknowledge the command of Jesus Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all people, making them disciples, baptising them, and teaching them to obey Him.

We acknowledge the command of Christ to love our neighbours, resulting in unattached service to the Church and to society, in seeking until He comes again reconciliation for all with God and their fellows, in proclaiming liberty from every kind of domination; and in spreading Christ's justice in an unjust world.

Exposition of the Doctrinal Basis of the Christian Faith

God and Mankind

We believe that the Lord our God is eternally One: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and fulfilling the sovereign purposes of His providence in creation, revelation, redemption, judgement, and the coming of His kingdom.

God has chosen to reveal himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one God the same in substance, equal in power and glory. A Trinity in unity, the Trinitarian God.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD. (Deuteronomy 6: 4)” (KJV)

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. (Isaiah 43: 10-11)” (KJV)

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have

commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28: 19-20)” (KJV)

“And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. (Luke 3: 22)” (KJV)

We acknowledge that though God made man and woman in His own likeness and image, conferring on us dignity and worth, and enabling us to respond to Himself, we are now members of a fallen race, who have sinned and come short of His glory.

When Adam and Eve fell from their original righteousness and communion with God they became dead in sin. From this original sin our natures became sinful. Because of the sinfulness of man, sinful man is inclined to serve his own will instead of God.

“The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. (Psalm 36: 1)” (KJV)

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. (Jeremiah 17: 9-10)” (KJV)

Conversion through true repentance and personal and yielding faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mark 1: 15)” (KJV)

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him. (Mark 1: 14-20)” (KJV)

We believe that the Father’s everlasting love is shown first of all in that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, for us when, through our sinfulness and guilt, we were subject to His wrath and condemnation; and that His grace is shown completely by His putting sinners right with Himself when they place their personal faith and confidence in His Son.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man. Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1: 1-3)” (KJV)

“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. (Colossians 1: 13-18)” (KJV)

“And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. (Hebrews 1: 10)” (KJV)

The Bible, the Word of God, teaches that God has provided salvation for man in the person and work (life, ministry, vicarious death, and resurrection) of his son Jesus Christ. The conditions or requirements for salvation: repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3: 16)” (KJV)

We confess Jesus Christ as Lord and God, the everlasting Son of the Father; as truly human, born of the virgin Mary; as the Servant of the servants, sinless, full of grace and truth; as the only Mediator and Saviour of the whole world, dying in our place on the cross, representing us to God, redeeming us from the grip, guilt and punishment of sin; as the Second Adam, the head of a new humanity, living a life of perfect obedience, overcoming death and decay, rising from the dead with a glorious body, being taken up to the Father in heaven, one day returning personally in majesty and judgment to bring eternal life to the redeemed and eternal death to the lost, to establish a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness, where there will be no more evil, suffering or death; and Victorious over Satan and all his forces, rescuing us from the dominion of darkness, and bringing us into His own kingdom; as the Word who makes God known.

Jesus Christ, Messiah was born of a virgin.

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (Matthew 1: 23)” (KJV)

“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. (Luke 1: 31)” (KJV)

“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1: 35)” (KJV)

He led a sinless life.

“By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore. (Hebrews 7: 22-28)” (KJV)

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. (1 Peter 2: 21-25)” (KJV)

He performed miracles.

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. (Acts 2: 22)” (KJV)

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. (Acts 10: 38)” (KJV)

He died on the cross for our sins.

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15: 3-4)” (KJV)

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5: 19-21)” (KJV)

He rose bodily from the dead.

“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. (Matthew 28: 6)” (KJV)

“And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them. (Luke 24: 28-33)” (KJV)

“Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. (Luke 24: 39)” (KJV)

He sits at the right hand of the Father.

“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. (Acts 2: 33)” (KJV)

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in

earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2: 5-11)” (KJV)

“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1: 3)” (KJV)

He will visibly return again.

“And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1: 10-11)” (KJV)

To affirm that Jesus Christ is God is not simply to suggest He is “God-like.” Christ is absolutely equal with the Father in His Person and His work. Christ is undiminished deity. In commenting on the phrase, “Who, being in the form of God” (Philippians 2: 6), means that in the most express manner possible, to be all that God is, to possess the whole fullness of attributes which make God: God. An attack on the deity of Jesus Christ is an attack on the bedrock of Christianity. At the heart of our belief is the recognition that Christ died a substitutionary death to provide salvation for lost humanity. If Jesus of Nazareth were, only a man He could not have died to save the world. However, because of His deity, His death had infinite value whereby He could die for the entire world.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who with the Father and the Son is worthy of our worship, who convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment, who makes the death of Christ on the cross effective to sinners, enabling them to turn to God in repentance and directing their trust towards the Lord Jesus Christ; who through the new birth unites us with Christ, who is present within all believers; and makes us partake in Christ’s risen life, focussing us to Jesus, freeing us from slavery to sin, producing in us His fruit, granting to us His gifts, and empowering us for service in the world.

The deity of the Holy Spirit is inextricably bound up with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. A denial of one is a denial of the other. Conversely, belief in the Trinity necessitates a belief in the deity of the Holy Spirit.

The title “Spirit of God” evidences His relationship to the Father and the Son and also affirms His deity; and, it clearly shows that as man and his spirit make one and the same being, so God and His Spirit are only one.

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2: 11)” (KJV)

Most probably in most instances when the “Spirit of God” is used in the Holy Scriptures, it is a reference to the Holy Spirit rather than the ‘Father’, similarly, when the term “Spirit of Christ” is used it is usually a reference to the Holy Spirit. The reason for this is that if the Father were intended, it would be most normal to use God, Lord, and so forth; if Christ were intended, it would be most normal to use the name Jesus Christ.

All members of the Trinity are mentioned in Romans 8: 9-11.

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (Romans 8: 9-11)” (KJV)

It seems fairly clear that “Spirit of God” is a reference to the Holy Spirit rather than to Christ or the Father. It is further seen that “Spirit” and “Spirit of God” are synonyms and a reference to the third Person of the Holy Trinity.

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (Romans 8: 9-14)” (KJV)

Similar examples can be further seen in the Acts and Ephesians.

“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. (Acts 16: 6-7)” (KJV)

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4: 3-6)” (KJV)

b) The Holy Scriptures

We believe that the Old and New Testament Scriptures are God-inspired since their writers spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; therefore, they are fully trustworthy in

all their affirmations; and as the written Word of God they are our only authority for faith and conduct.

The Bible, the Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testament are Our All-Sufficient Rule of Faith and Conduct, in the Inspired Word of God. The Scriptures, both the Old and the New Testaments, contains the verbally inspired, and authoritative Word of God.

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3: 15-17)” (KJV)

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. (1 Thessalonians 2: 13)” (KJV)

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1: 21)” (KJV)

We acknowledge the absolute need for the Holy Scriptures to be correctly interpreted under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and using the gifts of understanding and scholarship that God has given to His people.

Because the Bible, is God-breathed and therefore in an entirely different dimension from the literature, it is essential that man receives God-given help in understanding the Word of God.

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2: 11)” (KJV)

Additionally, the unregenerate man’s sin-darkened mind cannot apprehend spiritual truths.

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2: 14)” (KJV)

The work of illumination is necessary to enable man to comprehend the precious Word of God.

“And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the

prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. (Luke 24: 44-45)” (KJV)

Biblically there is precedence for interpreting the New Testament literally. Old Testament prophecies, like the following quotations have all been fulfilled literally.

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? (Psalm 22: 1 and further in your Bible)” (KJV)

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7: 14)” (KJV)

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53: 1-12)” (KJV)

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. (Micah 5: 2)” (KJV)

Because we acknowledge the words and full inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, it is incumbent on us to have all our attention to the words of the Bible. Grammatical relationships are important to study because words stand in relationship to each other. Therefore, it is necessary

to study verb tenses, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and rules of structure. The historical context is also important from which to interpret the Holy Scriptures. Every book of the Bible was written in a historical context that should be understood in order to help interpret the book correctly.

c) The Church and its Mission

We recognise the Church as the body of Christ, of which He is the head, held together and growing up in Him through the Holy Spirit; both as a total fellowship throughout the world, and as local congregations in which believers gather to worship God, growing in grace through the Word, prayer and sacrament.

The Church are those regenerate and baptised persons who are gathered together in Jesus Christ the head of the church; through which the gospel is preached and believers are nurtured.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28: 19-20)” (KJV)

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16: 15)” (KJV)

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1: 8)” (KJV)

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4: 11-16)” (KJV)

“Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. (1 Corinthians 14: 12)” (KJV)

We acknowledge the command of Jesus Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all people, making them disciples, baptising them, and teaching them to obey Him.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28: 19-20) (KJV)

To accomplish the work of the ministry we believe in the royal priesthood of the baptised believers in Jesus Christ.

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4: 12-13)” (KJV)

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: (1 Peter 2: 9)” (KJV)

Also, the ministry of Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. (Ephesians 4: 11)” (KJV)

We acknowledge the command of Christ to love our neighbours, resulting in unattached service to the Church and to society, in seeking until He comes again reconciliation for all with God and their fellows, in proclaiming liberty from every kind of domination; and in spreading Christ’s justice in an unjust world.

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22: 36-40)” (KJV)

The Sacraments or Ordinances of the Protestant and Evangelical Churches

d) The Ordinances of the Church

There are two ordinances (Christ's authoritative order, decree) that we observe and practice.

A) Water baptism by immersion: all who repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are eligible for water baptism (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:47; Romans 6:4).

B) Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper. "Do it in remembrance" declares the Lord's death and as such a memorial (1 Corinthians 11:24). "You do show the Lord's death" is an act of faith in the atoning work of Christ and as a proclamation (1 Corinthians 11:26). "Till He comes" is a statement of anticipation of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ and as such our hope.

The Reformers have historically recognised two sacraments or ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, whereas Roman Catholics have held to seven sacraments: Baptism, the Eucharist (Lord's Supper), Confirmation, Penance, Extreme unction, Holy Orders and Marriage. There is a difference of opinion regarding terminology. Catholics and some Protestants as Calvinists prefer the term *sacrament*, which comes from the Latin *sacramentum*, meaning "a thing set apart as sacred." The term *sacramentum* in the Latin Vulgate was also used to translate the Greek word *mysterion* (Ephesians 5: 32) and "came to be used for anything that had a secret or mysterious significance. The church-father Augustine called it 'the visible form of an invisible grace'." 'Sacrament' was later defined as an "outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." By the sacraments or ordinances, we mean those outward rites which the Lord Jesus Christ has appointed to be administered in His church as visible signs of the saving truth of the Gospel. They are signs, in that they vividly express this truth and confirm it to the believer.

Baptism

Complete study in the Constitutional Church of Christ, by the author

Meaning. New Testament baptism had its origin in the command of Jesus Christ to make disciples and baptise them (Matthew 28: 19). In the origination of the ordinance or sacrament there is a particular order established; the first act was to make disciples, then those disciples were to be baptised. This is the pattern that is carried out in the book of Acts. The apostle Peter commanded that his hearers should first repent, and then be baptised (Acts 2: 38). Only those who heard the gospel understood and responded to it through faith and repentance, could be

baptised. The result was that the people received the Word, and then were baptised (Act 2: 41). Those who responded to Philip's message first believed, then were baptised (Acts 8: 12), similarly with the Ethiopian (Acts 8: 38), with Paul (Acts 9: 18), the Caesarean Gentiles (Acts 10: 48), Lydia (Acts 16: 14-15), the Philippian jailers (Acts 16: 32-33), and Crispus (Acts 18: 8). All of these references indicate that baptism follows belief; repentance and faith precede the ordinance of baptism.

Baptism means identification. In the New Testament, baptism involves identification with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection. Being baptised in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2: 38) stresses association with Him in the rite. Romans 6: 04-05 illustrates the meaning of water baptism. It is a public declaration that the believer has been united to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith in His death and resurrection.

According to the view of *Reformed and Presbyterian churches*, baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are "signs and seals of an inward and invisible thing by means whereof God works in us by the power of the Holy Spirit ... Like circumcision in the Old Testament, baptism makes us sure of God's promises... The act of baptism is both the means of initiation into the covenant and a sign of salvation." Baptism by immersion is the only Biblical view.

Other views of baptism

- (1) Means of saving grace (baptismal regeneration). In this view baptism "is a means by which God imparts saving grace; it results in the remission of sins. By either awakening or strengthening faith, baptism affects the washing of regeneration." The Roman Catholic view is that faith is not necessary; the rite itself, properly performed, is sufficient. The Lutheran view is that faith is a prerequisite. Infants should be baptised and may possess unconscious faith or faith of the parents.
- (2) Symbol of our salvation. The view of Baptists and others is that baptism is only an outward sign of an inward change. It serves as a public testimony of faith in Jesus Christ. "It does not produce any spiritual change in the one baptised ... Baptism conveys no direct spiritual benefit or blessing." Moreover, it is to be conducted only with believers. Therefore, this second view is the only view that holds only believers should be baptised. The other views state that, along with adult converts, children (infants) should or may be baptised.

Mode

There are differences of long standing concerning the mode of baptism. Part of the problem is that the word *baptism* is actually an untranslated word, having been incorporated into English or any other language through transliteration of the Greek word *baptisma* (verb, *baptizo*). There are three modes of baptism being practiced today: sprinkling, pouring or effusion, and immersion.

Infant baptism

Infant baptism, which is practiced in the Reformed Church and Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans and by Roman Catholics, is defended on several grounds. It is related to covenant theology. As infants in the nation Israel infant baptism is the counterpart of circumcision, which brings the infants into the Christian community. It is related to household salvation (compare Acts 16: 15, 31, 33-34; 18: 08). Some understand the statement, “when she and her household had been baptised” (Acts 16: 15) to mean infants were baptised.

The Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion or Eucharist)

The Lord Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper on the eve of His crucifixion, commanding that His followers continue to observe it until His return (Matthew 26: 26-29; Mark 14; 22-25; Luke 22: 14-23). This was a new covenant or testament in contrast with the old Mosaic covenant. To enact the covenant, death was necessary because death provided forgiveness of sins. The apostle Paul also rehearsed the ordinance for the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 11: 23-32). Of course, the issue at hand is, what is the meaning of the Lord’s Supper? There have been four distinct views in Christianity concerning its meaning.

The Reformed view is also called the Calvinist view because its members are from the Reformed churches (and others) who follow Calvin’s teaching on the subject. Adherents to this view reject the notion of the literal presence of Christ in any sense and in this are similar to adherents of the memorial view. This view, however, does emphasise the “present spiritual work of Christ.” John Calvin^{1[1]} taught that Christ is “present and enjoyed in His entire person,

^{1[1]} John Calvin (1509-1564), the respected and influential theologian of the Reformation, was born in Noyon, Picardy, sixty miles northeast of Paris, France in 1509. He began his studies for the priesthood at the University of Paris where he came under the influence of the humanists. (Because of a conflict with the bishop he eventually left to study law.) Later, Calvin studied law at Orleans, with further studies at Bourges. In 1534 he identified himself through conversion with Protestantism and was forced to leave France. John Calvin rejected the “superstitions of the Papacy.” He was persecuted for his faith, imprisoned, but subsequently freed. Calvin came to Basel, Switzerland, where at the young age of twenty-six he completed his *magnum opus*, “*The Institutes of the Christian Religion*” (*Institutio Religionis Christianae*), an apologetic that defended Protestantism to the king of France. The work eventually underwent several revisions until it consisted of eighty chapters in four volumes. After a brief interlude in Strasbourg, John Calvin returned to Geneva, Switzerland, in 1541, to remain there the rest of his life. There, as pastor, Calvin spent his time preaching and lecturing daily. He also wrote commentaries on twenty-seven books of the Old Testament and on all the New Testament books except Revelation. Calvin’s authority in Geneva was both ecclesiastical and political. John Calvin was called the first scientific interpreter of the Bible. He built a theology on the sovereignty of God that directed the Reformed Church in Europe and Scotland. He affirmed the Bible, not the church, as the final authority in religious matters. It was seen as the binding authority upon all people at all times. His adherence to inspiration was affirmed when he stated that it was the duty of people to accept “without any exception all that is delivered in the sacred Scriptures.” John Calvin has been referred to as the “king of commentators,” “the greatest exegete of the sixteenth century,” and the “creator of genuine exegesis.” Others have referred to John Calvin as the first of the scientific interpreters. He produced sound exegetical commentaries on nearly all the books of Scripture, as well as an exposition of his theology in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, as briefly described above. He enunciated the following important principles for biblical interpretation. (1) The illumination of the Holy Spirit is necessary to prepare the interpretator of Scripture. (2) Allegorical interpretation is satanic, leading people away from the truth of Scripture, and therefore is to be rejected. (3) Scripture interprets Scripture. This involved a number of things for John Calvin. It meant literal interpretation; it meant listening to Scripture and letting the author say what he will; it meant a study of the grammar of Scripture – meaning of words, the context, and comparing Scripture with Scripture on common subjects. Calvin’s influence was felt throughout Europe as his doctrinal teachings spread quickly. The Heidelberg Catechism, written in 1563 by friends of Calvin, influenced the Reformed

both body and blood.” He emphasises the mystical communion of believers with the entire person of the Redeemer ... the body and blood of Christ, though absent and locally present only in heaven, communicate a life-giving influence to the believer. Because of the mystical presence of Jesus Christ in the elements, grace is communicated to the participant in the elements; moreover, it is a grace that is similar to that received through the Word of God and in fact, it adds to the effectiveness of the Sacred Word.

Divine Healing in the Life of the Local Church

Jesus Christ is our Divine Physician who according to His will, sovereignty, graciousness, and mercy can heal the sick. There is no physical condition, sickness or disease that Christ cannot heal! His power to heal is not bound by natural limitations. He can and will heal. It is not enough to have faith that Christ can heal today. One’s faith must be rooted and grounded in the written and living Word of God. One’s eyes must be fixed on Christ; and then one must act in faith on Jesus’ Living Word before one can receive the healing he or her needs. Faith is a fact and an act.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53: 4-5)” (KJV)

“When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. (Matthew 8: 16-17)” (KJV)

“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5: 14-16)” (KJV)

The Second Coming of Christ

His coming will be personal, visible, and glorious.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (John 14: 3)” (KJV)

churches in Belgium, Holland, Germany and America. The Belgian Confession, written in 1561 by Guy de Bray, became the standard of belief in the Dutch Reformed church. The Synod of Dort met in 1618-1619, condemned Arminianism and the Remonstrants, and reaffirmed Calvinistic doctrine as expressed in the Heidelberg and Belgian Confessions.

“And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1: 10-11)” (KJV)

“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9: 28)” (KJV)

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. (Philippians 3: 20-21)” (KJV)

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (Zechariah 12: 10)” (KJV)

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. (2 Thessalonians 12: 7)” (KJV)

“When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3: 4)” (KJV)

“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. (Revelation 1: 7)” (KJV)

The dead in Christ will rise, then the redeemed that are alive shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (1 Corinthians 15: 51-52)” (KJV)

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4: 17)” (KJV)

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, (2 Thessalonians 2: 1)” (KJV)

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (Titus 2: 13)” (KJV)

With the Second Coming of Christ will begin the thousand-year reign of Christ over an earthly kingdom.

“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. (Revelation 20: 1-6)” (KJV)

The Final Judgment, known as the "Great White Throne Judgment", describes the judgment of all the wicked dead.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20: 11-15)” (KJV)

It will be a New Heaven and a New Earth. Heaven and earth will have a new beginning. Heaven and Earth have awaited their redemption and will be restored in harmony and order, wherein dwells righteousness.

“Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. (Psalms 102: 25-26)” (KJV)

“And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. (Isaiah 34: 4)” (KJV)

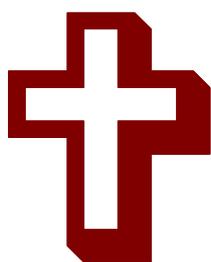
“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. (Isaiah 51: 6)” (KJV)

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. (Romans 8: 22)” (KJV)

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (2 Peter 3: 10-13)” (KJV)

The Objectives of the Berea School of Theology on Internet (Ecumenical)

- To prepare all Christians for the life and ministry to which they have been divinely called, instructing them in the Word of God and in the disciplines needed for an effective ministry.
- To maintain a high level of Christian education easing a good conduct, both in the areas of spiritual growth, intellectual development, pastoral and social activities.
- To encourage evangelistic and missionary fervour in accordance with Christ’s great commission. Today, every part of the world is the missionary field.
- To perpetuate the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in a multicultural society of ours by educating and training Christians to the ministry for the various needs of church-life.
- To help all, Christian or seekers of the Christian Truth, putting them on the way of spiritual discovery where individual gifts will be revealed, fostering as such a commitment to the ministry of the Church of Jesus Christ.
- To promote lay-preaching and educating teachers in the various domains of local church-life, as the ‘Sunday School’ teaching, etc.



The Theologies of the Main Church Denominations

THE THEOLOGY OF THE REFORMERS

Doctrine	Luther	Calvin	Zwingli / Anabaptists
Scripture	Only infallible authority for faith and salvation. Scriptures point to Christ.	Bible, not church is final authority. First scientific interpreter.	Z: Infallible authority – must determine all practice. Scripture will be fulfilled. Common people can understand.
Predestination	All events ordained by God. Taught double predestination.	Predestination necessary because of man's depravity.	Predestination based on providence of God.
Christ	In Lord's Supper, human nature takes on His divine characteristics such as omnipresence.	Orthodox view; one Person with two natures, with no intermingling.	Orthodox view; one Person with two natures, with no intermingling.
Man and sin	Man is depraved and unable to free himself. Grace necessary because of sin.	Man is depraved and unable to free himself. Grace necessary because of sin.	Man is depraved and unable to free himself. Grace necessary because of sin.

Atonement	Christ died a substitutionary death for all.	Christ died a substitutionary death for all.	Christ died a substitutionary death for all.
Salvation	Justification by faith alone, not works.	Justification by faith as legal act of God, imputing righteousness to the believer. Unconditional election is basis.	Christ died a substitutionary death; paid for original and actual sins. Dependent on eternal election.
Church	Priesthood of all believers composed of all believers on earth.	Salvation is possible outside of church. Church is visible and invisible.	A: Church composed only of believers; infants not involved. Church and state separate. Believers are pacifists.
Baptism	Communicates grace. Produces forgiveness of sin; necessary for salvation. Infants baptised.	Only for believers, but children baptised to show they are in covenant.	Z: infants baptised. A: Believers only; infant baptism rejected.
Lord's Supper	Christ present in real sense. Unbelievers may profit.	Communicates grace. Believer partakes of Christ through faith.	Z: Memorial only. Bread is symbol of Christ, not His literal body.

REFORMER'S VIEWS ON THE CHURCH AND ORDINANCES

View	Church	Baptism	Lord's Supper
Lutheran	All believers on earth constitute the one invisible church. Visible	Necessary for salvation. Effects salvation. Infant	"Consubstantiation" – Christ is bodily present "in, with, under" the

	church observed through ministry of Word and sacraments.	baptism necessary; God works faith in them.	elements.
Reformed	Universal church completed at Christ's return. Salvation possible outside the church.	Sign of believer's faith. Infant baptism necessary and sign of covenant.	Christ is spiritually present and mediates grace to participant.
Anabaptist	Church composed only of believers (infants not part of the church). Emphasised church purity through discipline.	Baptism only for believers. Infant baptism rejected.	Memoriam only. Bread and cup symbolises Christ and His death. No grace is mediated.

FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM

The following will affirm the major tenets of Calvinism as it is generally taught today. John Calvin did not author the so-called "five points of Calvinism." They originated at the Synod of Dort (1619), and are also a result of affirming the distinctives of Calvinism over the centuries since. God as sovereign was central in the theology of Calvin and that is reflected in the five points. The five points emphasise God in His sovereignty and grace but also man in his depravity and sin. The five concepts are arranged logically and are contingent upon one another. If man is totally depraved, then he is unable to make an initial response to God; God must call man to salvation through unconditional election; God also makes provision for those whom He calls to salvation by the death of Christ; He secures their salvation by the effectual call of the Holy Spirit and keeps them secure in order that they might receive the eternal life He has promised them. The accompanying table gives a more detailed explanation.

Doctrine	Explanation
Total depravity	As a result of Adam's fall, the entire human race is affected; all humanity is dead in trespasses and sin. Man is unable to save himself.
Unconditional Election	Because man is dead in sin, he is unable to initiate response to God; therefore, in eternity past God elected certain people to salvation. Election and predestination are unconditional; they are not based on man's

	response.
Limited Atonement	Because God determined that certain ones should be saved as a result of God's unconditional election, He determined that Christ should die for the elect. All whom God has elected and Christ died for will be saved.
Irresistible Grace	Those whom God elected and Christ died for, God draws to Himself through irresistible grace. God makes man willing to come to Him. When God calls, man responds.
Perseverance of the Saints	The precise ones God has elected and drawn to Himself through the Holy Spirit will persevere in faith. None whom God has elected will be lost; they are eternally secure.

The Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church

The Seven Roman Catholic Sacraments

Sacrament	Procedure	Significance	Vatican II Emphasis
Baptism	Priest perform the rite by pouring pure, baptismal water on infants.	Produces rebirth, "infant Christian." Necessary for salvation. Frees one from original sin and guilt. Unites one to Christ and the Church.	Baptism to receive greater emphasis. Convert to receive instruction beforehand. Illustrates commitment to Christ. Emphasis unity of all members in Christ.
Confirmation	Bishop lays hands on person whereby they receive the Holy Spirit.	Necessary sequence after baptism. With baptism, part of the sacrament of initiation." Person receives the Holy Spirit, bringing one to maturity and dedication.	Endeavour to unite baptism and confirmation as one act of initiation. Separating the two sacraments suggests there are "degrees of membership in church."
Eucharist	Priest celebrates Mass. Upon pronouncing, "This is my body, and my blood", bread and wine turn to body and blood of Christ.	Mass is ongoing sacrifice of Christ. Same as Calvary except Mass is unbloody. In Mass, Christ offers atonement for sin. Participant receives forgiveness from venial sins. Eating the bread and drinking the wine, is eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ.	Frequent participation encouraged to increase "union with Christ". Ceremony now involves lay people. Shorter, simpler ceremony; more use of Scripture.

Confession (Penance)	Three steps: 1. Sorrow of sin. 2. Oral confession to priest. 3. Absolution of sins by priest.	Having confessed all known sins to priest, and stated intention not to sin in the future, the adherent receives absolution from sins by priest.	New view of sin: distorted personal relationship and motives. Allows for general confession and absolution. General confession performed in service of singing, Scripture, prayer, sermon, self-examination, confession, absolution.
Holy Orders	Ordination to office: Bishop, priest, deacon. As successor to the apostles, bishops ordains bishops, priests and deacons.	Confers on recipient power to sanctify others. Priest receives power to offer body and blood of Christ and remit sins. Priest mediates between God and men as Christ mediated between God and men.	Greater involvement of lay people in ministry. Lay people to develop/use gifts in Church. Reduced distinction between priest and people. Priest considered “brother and brothers.”
Marriage	Vows between the man and the woman exchanged in presence of a priest.	Sign of union of Christ and Church. Indissoluble because marriage of Christ and the Church is indissoluble.	Marriage is not just for procreation only, but also for love between the man and the woman until death separates. Mass permitted at weddings with baptized non-Catholics.
Anointing the Sick	Bishop consecrates oil. Person near death anointed by priest.	Removes infirmity and obstacles left by sin, which prevent soul from glory. Prepares people for death by making them like the risen Christ. Prepares soul for eternity.	Broadened usage: changed from “extreme unction” to “anointing the sick.” Used to strengthen/heal body and soul. Sick person shares in readings and prayers.

Evaluation on Roman Catholic Theology summarised

While Roman Catholic theology has a number of doctrines in common with conservative Protestant theology (trinity, Deity of Christ, etc.), there are many deviations from orthodox theology. A fundamental difference is the authority of tradition in addition to the sole authority of the Bible. In its outworking, tradition in a way supersedes the authority of the Bible, because they claim, tradition and church councils make decrees that countermand and/or add

to the explicit teachings of the Scripture. The recognition of the Apocrypha is a further deviation. The place of Mary in Roman Catholic theology removes Christ from His rightful place as sole mediator between God and men (I Timothy 2: 5-6):

“For God is one, and *there is one Mediator of God and of man, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*”

In addition, the entire system of sacraments is in a way a genuine rejection of the true grace of God and salvation of grace. Salvation in Roman Catholic theology is not by grace through faith as in Old Catholicism and Protestantism in general, but a complex adherence to the sacraments and rituals as legislated by the church hierarchy.

Dogmatic Roman Catholic theology refers to the detailed system that was produced primarily by the popes, theologians, and councils of the medieval and Reformation eras. It is protected by such sanctions as *de fide* labels and papal infallibility, thereby differentiating it from the flux and uncertainty of much of contemporary Catholic theology.

GENERAL VIEWS ON THE LORD’S SUPPER

View	Christ and the Elements	Significance
Transubstantiation (Roman Catholic)	Bread and wine literally change to body and blood of Christ.	Believer partakes of Christ, who is being sacrificed in the Mass to atone for sins.
Consubstantiation (Lutheran)	Bread and wine contain the body and blood of Christ but do not literally change. Christ is actually present “in, with, and under” the elements.	Believer receives forgiveness of sins and confirmation of one’s faith through partaking on the elements, but they must be received through faith.
Reformed (Presbyterian, Reformed)	Christ is not literally present in the elements but there is a spiritual presence of Christ.	Believer receives grace through partaking of the elements.
Memorial (Baptist, Mennonite)	Christ is not present physically or spiritually.	Believer commemorates the death of Christ.

Your self-examination or written work.

1. By universal consent the Bible is the most wonderful book in the world. It is not like any other book. it makes the greatest claims, exerts the greatest influence, is the most widely read, is the best loved, and has been the most hated of all books. It has been banned and burned, for long the Bible was a forbidden book for laity in the Roman Catholic Church, and yet it lives and spreads more than ever.

What is this book, and what is its secret? Give also biblical quotations.

2. The word ‘revelation’ (apocalypses, unveiling) means the drawing away of a veil from that which had been previously hidden in mystery (Romans 16: 25; Revelation 1: 1). In this sense Christ was revealed when first he took on Himself human flesh, and will be so revealed again when He comes in glory. (Luke 2: 32; 1 Peter 1: 13). In the same sense the Spirit is said to reveal to the individual Christian soul some hidden truth (1 Corinthians 14: 26). The Lord taught us that no one can know God, unless God Himself be the teacher; that is, without God, God cannot be known.

How can the Infinite, communicate with the finite, the Creator with the creature?

3. When the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3: 16), it is beyond doubt that he referred to the ‘Holy Scriptures’ (verse 15) of the Old Testament, the sacred literature which was able to make the reader wise into salvation. By calling them inspired (*theopneustos*, God-breathed) he taught that ‘the breath of God was in each “Scripture” as man’s breath is in his words, making them to be the vehicle of his thought. That the Old Testament was the work of the Holy Spirit was the convinced belief of the Christian Church from the beginning, and that the Holy Spirit ‘spoke by the prophets’. While we affirm that the Bible is in itself the inspired Word of God, yet, in another sense, its messages become the present Word of the living God to the individual when received by faith, and applied by the work of the Spirit. (1 Peter 1: 23, 25; 1 Corinthians 2: 12 and 15; 1 Thessalonians 2: 13; also 2 Timothy 3: 16).

Explain the following someone’s own words: “In my agnostic days, when I began to examine the Bible, I suddenly became aware that it was examining me.”

4. Why should I believe that the books of the Bible, and these alone are inspired?
5. The presence of miracles in the story of God’s self-revelation is what we should expect. Explain!
6. The observed uniformities merely represent God’s usual method of working in nature; but it must not be forgotten that God is free in His own world. The apostle Paul’s question on this subject is very apposite, when he asks Agrippa, “Why should it be

thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”(Acts 26: 8) Please, you too answer the question.

7. Miracles are the effects of causes that belong to the ‘impending’ world (Hebrews 6: 5), a world divided from us by such a thin veil that it breaks through on us from time to time at the bidding of Him whose home it is? How do you explain this? Also, miracles have been called ‘parables in action’. How do you see this?
8. The fullness of Christian Doctrine involves the postulate of the absoluteness of the religion of Jesus. To assert that Christ fulfils all the revelation of the Holy Scriptures and is in Himself the fullness of Christian teaching is to declare that there can be nothing beyond.

Why should Jesus Christ consummate all spiritual wisdom?

9. About the two ordinances of the Church! What are your biblical views on baptism? Explain the memorial view of the Lord’s Supper!
10. In the blessed hope, the rapture of the Church at Christ’s coming; the only means of being cleansed from sin is through repentance and faith in the precious blood of Christ; regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential for personal salvation.

In the regenerated believer in Christ, there is a flow of His divine life and power that has been released and is available to all those who will come to Him in faith. How did you experience this? God bless you.

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