

Introduction to the Compendium

"The 'Compendium of the Christian Religion' is a very old document, having been used in the Reformed churches for over 400 years. It was first prepared by Hermanus Faulkelius, who was installed as minister of the Reformed Church in Middelburg in 1599. At the request of his elders, he prepared this document as an abbreviated form of the Heidelberg Catechism. The purpose was to have available a document which the youth of the church could more easily memorize than the rather lengthy questions and answers of the Heidelberg Catechism.

"The 'Compendium' had no official standing in the Dutch Reformed Churches until the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-1619, saw its value as a teaching tool and recommended it for use in the churches. "The 'Compendium' has since that time been used in the churches of the Netherlands and in the Dutch churches in South Africa. It was used in this country by the Reformed Church in America in the early part of its history. It was translated into its present English form by Rev. Archibald Laidlie, a minister in the RCA from Scotland, in 1767."

Q. 67. Wherein doth the conversion of man consist?

A. In a hearty repentance, and avoiding of sin, and in an earnest desire after, and doing all good works.

Q. 68. What are good works?

A. Only those, which proceed from a true faith; are done according to the law of God, and to his glory; and not those which are founded on human institutions, or on our own imaginations.

Q. 69. Can they, who are converted to God, perfectly keep the law?

A. Not at all; but even the most holy men, as long as they are in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience; yet so, that they with a sincere resolution begin to live not only according to some, but according to all the commandments of God, as they also constantly pray to God that they may daily increase therein.

Q. 70. To whom must we pray for this?

A. Not to any creature, but to God alone, who can help us, and will hear us for Jesus Christ's sake.

Q. 71. In whose name must we pray to God?

A. Only in the name of Christ, John 16:23, and not in the name of any saints.

Q. 72. What must we pray to God for?

A. For all things necessary for soul and body, which Christ our Lord has comprised in the prayer, he himself has taught us. Page 14

and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord your God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that takes His name in vain.

IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your man-servant, nor your maid-servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

V. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land, which the Lord your God gives to you.

VI. Thou shalt not kill.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

X. Thou shalt not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is your neighbor's. Page 3

Q. 58. What is thereby signified and sealed?

A. That Christ, with his crucified body and shed blood, feeds and nourishes our souls to everlasting life.

Q. 59. Where hath Christ promised such things to us?

A. In the institution of the Lord's Supper, which is thus expressed, by St. Paul, I Cor. 11:23, 24, 25, 26: "For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, brake it, and said, take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

Q. 60. Is the bread changed into the body of Christ, and the wine into his blood?

A. No; no more than the water in baptism is changed into the blood of Christ.

Q. 61. After what manner must you examine yourself before you come to the Lord's supper?

- A. I must examine whether I abhor myself for my sins, and humble myself before God on account of them.
- Whether I believe and trust that all my sins are forgiven me for Christ's sake.
 - Whether I also have a sincere resolution henceforward, to walk in all good works.

Q. 62. May those be admitted to the Lord's Supper, who teach false doctrines, or lead offensive lives?

A. No; lest the covenant of God be profaned, and his Wrath be kindled against the whole church. Page 12

Q. 11. Does the disobedience of Adam concern us.

A. Certainly: for he is the father of us all; and we have all sinned in him.

Q. 12. Are we then incapable of doing any good of ourselves, and prone to all manner of wickedness?

A. Indeed we are: unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.

Q. 13. Will God suffer such disobedience and corruption to go unpunished.

A. By no means: but in his just judgment will punish them, both in time and eternity, as it is written: "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them.

"OF MAN'S DELIVERANCE

Q. 14. How can you escape this punishment, and be again received into favor?

A. By such a Mediator, who is in one person very God, and a real righteous man.

Q. 15. Who is that Mediator?

A. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who in one person is true God, and a real righteous man.

Q. 16. Could not the angels be our mediators?

A. No; for they are neither God nor man.

A. That the Son of God gathers by his word and Spirit out of the whole human race, those, who are chosen to eternal life, to be a church to himself; of which I believe I am, and always shall remain a living member.

Q. 41. Where doth he gather his church

A. Where God's word is purely preached, and the holy sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ.

Q. 42.. What benefits doth Christ bestow on his church?

A. He grants her remission of sins, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life.

Q. 43. What doth it profit you now that you believe all this?

A. That I am righteous in Christ before God. Rom. 5:10.

Q. 44. How art thou righteous before God?

A. Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ.

Q. 45. How is it to be understood that you are justified by faith only?

A. Thus: that the perfect satisfaction and righteousness of Christ alone are imputed to me of God, by which my sins are forgiven me, and I become an heir of everlasting life; and that I cannot receive that righteousness by any other means than by faith.

Q. 46. Why cannot our good works be our righteousness before God, or some part thereof?

A. Because even our best works, in this life, are imperfect, and polluted with sins.

Q. 47. Do our good works then merit nothing, which yet God will reward in this, and in a future life?

A. This reward is not given out of merit, but of grace.

Q. 48. Who works that faith in you?

A. The Holy Ghost. Page 10

5. The third day he rose again from the dead;
6. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty;

7.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

8. I believe in the Holy Ghost.

9. I believe an holy catholic church; the communion of saints;

10. The forgiveness of sins;

11. The resurrection of the body;

12. And the life everlasting.

Q. 21. When you profess to believe in God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, do you mean three Gods thereby?

A. In no wise; there is but one only true God.

Q. 22. Why do you then name three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?

A. Because God has so revealed himself in his Word, that these three distinct persons, are the only one and true God, and we also are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Q. 23. What do you believe when you say: "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of nothing made heaven and earth, and still upholds them by his providence, is my God and Father, for Christ his Son's sake. Page 7