

Belgic Confession

Articles 12-15

Article 12

The Creation

We believe that the Father, by the Word, that is, by His Son,¹ created of nothing the heaven, the earth, and all creatures as it seemed good unto Him, giving unto every creature its being, shape, form, and several offices to serve its Creator; that He doth also still uphold and govern them by His eternal providence and infinite power² for the service of mankind,³ to the end that man may serve his God.⁴

He also created the angels good,⁵ to be His messengers⁶ and to serve His elect;⁷ some of whom are fallen from that excellency in which God created them into everlasting perdition⁸ and the others have, by the grace of God,⁹ remained steadfast and continued in their primitive state. The devils and evil spirits are so depraved that they are enemies of God and every good thing, to the utmost of their power,¹⁰ as murderers watching to ruin the Church and every member thereof, and by their wicked stratagems to destroy all;¹¹ and are therefore, by their own wickedness, adjudged to eternal damnation, daily expecting their horrible torments.¹² Therefore we reject and abhor the error of the Sadducees who deny the existence of spirits and angels,¹³ and also that of the Manichees who assert that the devils have their origin of themselves, and that they are wicked of their own nature, without having been corrupted.

1 Gen. 1:1; Isa. 40:26; Heb. 3:4; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 8:6; John 1:3; Col. 1:16

2 Heb. 1:3; Ps. 104:10; Acts 17:25

3 1 Tim. 4:3–4; Gen. 1:29–30; 9:2–3; Ps. 104:14–15

4 1 Cor. 3:22; 6:20; Matt. 4:10

5 Col. 1:16

6 Ps. 103:20; 34:8; 148:2

7 Heb. 1:14; Ps. 34:8

8 John 8:44; 2 Peter 2:4; Luke 8:31; Jude 6

9 Matt. 25:31

10 1 Peter 5:8; Job 1:7

11 Gen. 3:1; Matt. 13:25; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:3, 14

12 Matt. 25:41; Luke 8:30, 31

13 Acts 23:8

Article 13

Divine Providence

We believe that the same God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them, nor give them up to fortune or chance, but that He rules and governs them according to His holy will,¹ so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment;² nevertheless, God neither is the author of, nor can be charged with, the sins which are committed. For His power and goodness are so great and incomprehensible, that He orders and executes His work in the most excellent and just manner, even then when devils and wicked men act unjustly.³ And as to what He doth surpassing human understanding, we will not curiously inquire into it further than our capacity will admit of; but with the greatest humility and reverence adore the righteous judgments of God which are hid from us,⁴ contenting ourselves that we are disciples of Christ to learn only those things which He has revealed to us in His Word without transgressing these limits.

This doctrine affords us unspeakable consolation, since we are taught thereby that nothing can befall us by chance, but by the direction of our most gracious and heavenly Father, who watches over us with a paternal care, keeping all creatures so under His power⁵ that not a hair of our head (for they are all numbered), nor a sparrow, can fall to the ground without the will of our Father,⁶ in whom we do entirely trust; being persuaded that He so restrains the devil and all our enemies that, without His will and permission, they cannot hurt us. And therefore we reject that damnable error of the Epicureans, who say that God regards nothing, but leaves all things to chance.

¹ John 5:17; Heb. 1:3; Prov. 16:4; Ps. 104:9, etc.; Ps. 139:2, etc.

² James 4:15; Job 1:21; 1 Kings 22:20; Acts 4:28; 1 Sam. 2:25; Ps. 115:3; 45:7; Amos 3:6; Deut. 19:5; Prov. 21:1; Ps.

105:25; Isa. 10:5–7; 2 Thess. 2:11; Ezek. 14:9; Rom. 1:28; Gen. 45:8; 1:20; 2 Sam. 16:10; Gen. 27:20; Ps. 75:7–8;

Isa. 45:7; Prov. 16:4; Lam. 3:37–38; 1 Kings 22:34, 38; Ex. 21:13

³ Matt. 8:31, 32; John 3:8

⁴ Rom. 11:33–34

⁵ Matt. 8:31; Job 1:12; 2:6

⁶ Matt. 10:29–30

Article 14

The Creation and Fall of Man, and His Incapacity to Perform What is Truly Good

We believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth, and made and formed him after His own image and likeness,¹ good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God.² But being in honor he understood it not, neither knew his excellency,³ but willfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death and the

curse, giving ear to the words of the devil.⁴ For the commandment of life which he had received,⁵ he transgressed; and by sin separated himself from God⁶ who was his true life, having corrupted his whole nature,⁷ whereby he made himself liable to corporal and spiritual death.⁸ And being thus become wicked, perverse, and corrupt in all his ways, he hath lost all his excellent gifts which he had received from God⁹ and only retained a few remains thereof,¹⁰ which, however, are sufficient to leave man without excuse;¹¹ for all the light which is in us is changed into darkness,¹² as the Scriptures teach us, saying: The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth¹³ it not; where St. John calleth men darkness.

Therefore we reject all that is taught repugnant to this concerning the free will of man, since man is but a slave to and has nothing of himself unless it is given him from heaven.¹⁵ For who may presume to boast that he of himself can do any good, since Christ saith, No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him?¹⁶ Who will glory in his own will, who understands that to be carnally minded is enmity against God?¹⁷ Who can speak of his knowledge, since the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God?¹⁸ In short, who dare suggest any thought, since he knows that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God?¹⁹ And therefore what the apostle saith ought justly to be held sure and firm, that God worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.²⁰ For there is no will nor understanding conformable to the divine will and understanding but what Christ hath wrought in man, which He teaches us when He saith, Without Me ye can do nothing.²¹

1 Gen. 1:26; Eccl. 7:29; Eph. 4:24

2 Gen. 1:31; Eph. 4:24

3 Ps. 49:21; Isa. 59:2

4 Gen. 3:6, 17

5 Gen. 1:3, 7

6 Isa. 59:2

7 Eph. 4:18

8 Rom. 5:12; Gen. 2:17; 3:19

9 Rom. 3:10

10 Acts 14:16–17; 17:27

11 Rom. 1:20, 21; Acts 17:27

12 Eph. 5:8; Matt. 6:23

13 John 1:5

14 Isa. 26:12; Ps. 94:11; John 8:34; Rom. 6:17; 7:5, 17

15 John 3:27; Isa. 26:12

16 John 3:27; 6:44, 65

17 Rom. 8:7

18 1 Cor. 2:14; Ps. 94:11

19 2 Cor. 3:5

20 Phil. 2:13

21 John 15:5

Article 15

Original Sin

We believe that through the disobedience of Adam original sin is extended to all mankind,¹ which is a corruption of the whole nature and an hereditary disease, wherewith infants themselves are infected even in their mother's womb,² and which produceth in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof;³ and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind.⁴ Nor is it by any means abolished or done away by baptism; since sin always issues forth from this woeful source as water from a fountain; notwithstanding it is not imputed to the children of God unto condemnation, but by His grace and mercy is forgiven them. Not that they should rest securely in sin, but that a sense of this corruption should make believers often to sigh, desiring to be delivered from this body of death.⁵ Wherefore we reject the error of the Pelagians, who assert that sin proceeds only from imitation.

1 Rom. 5:12, 13; Ps. 51:7; Rom. 3:10; Gen. 6:3; John 3:6; Job 14:4

2 Isa. 48:8; Rom. 5:14

3 Gal. 5:19; Rom. 7:8, 10, 13, 17–18, 20, 23

4 Eph. 2:3, 5

5 Rom. 7:18, 24