

*The Confession of Holy Christian Faith
of All Three Estates*

(Bohemian Confession of 1575)

Translated from the Lissa Folios
of the Unitas Fratrum
(Moravian Church)

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Historical Introduction

The Bohemian Confession of 1575 is the only confession of faith adopted by a country's legislature, permitting denominations that accept it the freedom of worship. And for a few brief years, the Bohemian Confession achieved its aim.

The martyrdom of John Hus in 1415 signaled open struggle in Bohemia over religious principles and practices. In the Hussite wars that followed, several groups, radical or conservative, sprang up to emphasize or champion particular aspects of Christian faith and reform.

By the 1500s, through warfare and persecution, the number of religious groups in Bohemia had been reduced to three churches. The Roman Catholic Church, from which the other two arose, held a significant minority in the country and even more importantly had the favor of the king of Bohemia, who often was also the emperor of the larger Holy Roman Empire. The Utraquist Church, to which a large majority of the Czechs belonged, for the most part retained Catholic rituals and beliefs, but demanded the reform advocated by Hus, holy communion in both kinds, the cup as well as the bread, thus the name "Utraquist," Latin for "in both kinds." The third church, a tenacious minority, was the *Unitas Fratrum*, the Unity of Brethren, which had withdrawn from the Catholic Church in the previous century and by 1500 was practicing a well-ordered ecclesiastical constitution. All three churches, Catholic, Utraquist, and Unity, found support among the nobles, clergy, and commoners — the "three estates" — of Bohemia's national assembly in rough proportion to their members in the country at large. In addition, handfuls of Lutherans made their presence known though they did not yet have a church organization in Bohemia.

A number of motivations drove Bohemia's national assembly. Foremost was a fierce nationalism that, for example, found it galling that numerous positions in the university at Prague were held by Germans. The nobles and knights of the assembly had for centuries been accustomed to electing or deposing kings as they saw fit, but now they faced an equally determined royal

family in the Hapsburgs. A distrust of foreigners pervaded, especially of Spaniards, who increasingly appeared as Jesuits enforcing the “orthodoxy” as espoused by Rome. Over the centuries, up to one-third of the land in Bohemia had come into possession of the Roman Catholic Church, making the Catholics an easy target for those wishing to follow the example of King Henry VIII of England. For decades there was a desire to have religious quandaries addressed at home and not in far-off Rome. Ever expectant, ever hopeful, the Utraquist Church had sought consecration of a bishop of its own from the Roman Catholic Church, to no avail. Communion in both kinds remained a touchstone of reform among many Czechs, a heritage passed on from their martyred hero of the faith, John Hus. Equally determined to withhold the chalice was the Roman Catholic Church.

Faced with increasing Counter-Reformation pressures and rising Hapsburg determination in the 1570s, the Protestants of Bohemia’s national assembly saw a pressing need for a united front in a confession of faith that all — or at least the vast majority— of Czechs could agree upon. They had as an example before them the Consensus of Sandomierz, which in 1570 had extended mutual recognition of the orthodoxy of the three Protestant churches, Lutheran, Reformed, and Unitas Fratrum, in Poland. Thus the Czech nobles, knights, and commoners cobbled together, with assistance from their priests and theologians, the Bohemian Confession of 1575.

It was a grand attempt to satisfy everybody. Since Martin Luther’s Augsburg Confession had been presented in 1530 to Emperor Charles V, a Hapsburg, the Bohemian Confession was patterned after it, and justification “by faith alone” is prominently expressed. For the Unitas Fratrum, which emphasized good works as the fruit of salvation, the longest section of the Bohemian Confession addresses that subject. In addition, the confession refrains from condemning other Christian Churches, a hallmark of the Unity, which never saw itself as the “only way” to salvation. Again inclining toward Lutherans, only baptism and holy communion are recognized as sacraments, but the confession immediately follows them with the other traditional sacraments — without calling them such — for the benefit of the Catholic-leaning Utraquist Church and any Catholics who might want to subscribe.

As a general summation of Christian doctrine, the Bohemian Confession was a success. It received the approval of the Utraquist Church and the Unity as well as the few Lutherans in Bohemia’s national assembly and perhaps a Catholic or two. Meanwhile, each church retained its order, confessions, and liturgies. As with the Consensus of Sandomierz, the Bohemian Confession of 1575 provided an umbrella of agreement under which each church could worship in peace.

In actual practice, the confession was only briefly successful. It was presented to King Maximilian, who was also Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II, on May 18, 1575, but he did not formally act upon it before he died the next

year. Implementation did not occur until July 9, 1609, when Maximilian's son Rudolf II signed the "Letter of Majesty" giving freedom of religious practice to all — Utraquist, Catholic, Unitas Fratrum, Lutheran — who accepted the Bohemian Confession of 1575. In an era of extreme religious strife, Bohemia had created a framework for religious peace. Nine short years later, though, the Thirty Years War began, ironically in Bohemia with the Defenestration of Prague on May 23, 1618. The war proved the death knell for the Bohemian Confession of 1575.

A Note on the Translation

This may be the first English translation of the Bohemian Confession of 1575. It was made from the "Lissa Folios," 14 large manuscript volumes of church history and proceedings compiled by the Unitas Fratrum. The original folios are the property of the Unity Archives (www.archiv.ebu.de) in Herrnhut, Germany, but are deposited in the State Archives in Prague. There is a German translation of the folios, by Joseph Th. Müller, at the Unity Archives. Microfilm copies of the original folios are housed at the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (www.moravianchurcharchives.org). Working with the microfilms in Bethlehem, Andrew Slaby, a Czech native, translated the confession from the original Czech language. Because Slaby made a literal translation, it has been extensively reworked to facilitate the English language reader. I want to thank Archivist Paul M. Peucker and the Bethlehem Moravian Archives for the kind permission to publish the reworked Slaby translation on the Internet. We consider this very much a joint publication of the two Moravian Archives.

We are indebted to Jindřich Halama and his colleagues in Prague for providing us with a copy of the Bohemian Confession as published in *Čtyři Vyznání: Vyznání Augsburské, Bratrské, Helvetské, a České* (Prague: Vydavatel Komenského evangelická bohoslovecká fakulta, 1951), 277-306. This edition of the confession is accompanied by two prefaces, written by the Unitas Fratrum in 1608 and the Utraquist Church in 1575. I have translated them for their historical interest, and they follow the confession below.

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Winston-Salem, North Carolina
January 2008

The Confession of Holy Christian Faith of All Three Estates

1. Of the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments

With the heart we believe and with the mouth we confess that the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are without any exception unchangeably true, holy, sure, and catholic, that is universal, given and commanded by God for the belief and observance of the whole Church. These two covenants, that is, the Old and New Testaments, make known the only Deity and the *three different persons in that one Deity* and also the will of God. Moreover, what is necessary for our salvation is revealed clearly and sufficiently, which confirms the speech of the very Son of God, where he speaks thus (John 5:39-40): “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have eternal¹ life.” And again when he joined two disciples on the road going to Emmaus from Jerusalem, says the Evangelist, Luke 24:27, that he spoke to them what is about him in the Law of Moses and in the prophets and Scriptures. And again, of the dignity and reverence of the word of God, says St. Luke 11:28 that “blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.” In St. John 8:47: “He that is of God heareth God’s words.” And the holy Trinity desires to have an abode with the man who keeps the words of the Son of God, as is stated in St. John 14:23 the Lord Christ himself says: “If a man love me, he will keep my words . . . and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” And St. Paul in Romans 1:16 says that the Gospel is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.” And therefore unmistakably all other writings should step aside and give place to that word of God, and they are not, cannot, nor should they be held in the same dignity and validity as the word of God, which is like a sword sharp on both edges and piercing. And God the heavenly Father proclaimed from heaven concerning his Son (Matt. 17:5): “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” And in the books of Moses (Deut. 4:2): “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it.”

¹ The Czech original has the word “eternal.”

2. Of God

(Diet¹ of 1421, Article of Faith 2.)

With the heart we believe and with the mouth we confess, as the creed of the holy catholic Apostolic Christian Council of Nicaea and the confession of St. Athanasius contain, that there is only one divine substance that is called and truly is God eternal, in power invincible, in justice all-wise, and in his goodness immeasurable and incomprehensible, who is the Creator of all things visible and also almighty, protector, director, and counselor most wonderful. However, of the same only divine substance there are three different persons, equal and of one being, of one power and eternity, namely God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. But the word “person” is understood to mean that each one has his own different being, what the Greeks call “hyphistamenon” [entire essence within itself].

3. Of the Holy Trinity, or the Differences of Person in Divinity

(Diet of 1421, Article 2. The old Czech hymn, “Confessing the Trinity.”)

We believe and confess, that the eternal God the Father is the first person of the Deity, omnipotent and eternal, of unfathomable and inconceivable power, wisdom, justice, holiness, and goodness, who from eternity begat a Son, the substantial and perfect image of his being, and from whom as well as from the Son comes the Holy Spirit, and who together with the Son and the Holy Spirit was pleased to create all things visible and invisible from nothing in the acceptable time of his divine majesty, and according to his divine purpose provides, preserves, directs, and governs. And so concerning the divine being and substance as well as concerning the divine external acts, such as the creation, preservation, and direction of all things, we make no difference between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

2. We believe and with the mouth confess that the second person in the Deity, that is the eternal Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, was pleased to take on himself human nature in the body of the blessed Virgin Mary by the action of the Holy Spirit, so that dual nature divine and human in unity of person to eternal indivisibility *is united*, one Christ, true God and true man, born of the Virgin Mary, who for all human kind, truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried in order that he might reconcile us with God the Father. And he was the redeeming sacrifice not only for original sin, but also for all other sins that people commit. And this same Lord of ours, the divine Christ, descended into hell, and truly on the third day he rose from the dead for our justification. Afterward he ascended into heaven, sits on the right hand of God the Father, reigning eternally and ruling over all creation. He justifies all who believe in him, he sanctifies them, sending into their heart the Holy Spirit, who would rule, comfort, and revive them against the devil and the power of sin. And so he is the perfect mediator, advocate, and intercessor with God the Father, reconciler,

¹ [The national assembly of Bohemia. — 2008 ed.]

redeemer, and Savior of his Church, which he gathers by the Holy Spirit, preserves, protects, and rules until completion of the number of the elect of God. Afterward that same Lord Christ will truly come again to judge the living and the dead in such manner as Christian faith and the Apostolic teaching declare more widely.

3. We believe and confess that the Holy Spirit is the third person in the Deity, from eternity coming from the Father and the Son, substantial and eternal, revealed as the Father's love to the Son, and as the Son's to the Father, as power and goodness inconceivable. He is seen not only in the creation and the preservation of all things, but also especially in those works which he pleased to do from the beginning of the Church in the sons of God, working in them through the ministry of the word of God, through the sacraments and the living faith to eternal salvation which is deposited in God's elect in Lord Christ from the foundation of the world.

4. Of the Fall of the First Parents and Original Sin

(Genesis 2 and 8; Romans 5 and 7. The tract of Master John Hus on the Ten Commandments. Item: "Of Mortal Sin," pt. 1, fol. 32. Item: "Of Seven Mortal Sins," fol. 36. Psalm 51. Ecclesiastes 2.)

Also we believe and confess, that the first man Adam, created and placed in perfect holiness and innocence, because of the devil willingly and without any compulsion turned away from God by transgression of God's command. And thus he brought upon himself and all his family, the human race, temporal and eternal death and all that comes from that twofold death. For all people after Adam's fall, being born naturally, are conceived and born with mortality and with sin. Thus they are dead not only from frailty and bodily weakness, but especially from the inner defilement and pollution of the whole man and all his powers. So man, having lost his primitive holiness, innocence, and righteousness, is now turned away from all good, is without fear of God, is without confidence in God, and is in subjugation to sin and natural evil desires.

This natural sin, as it truly is and in itself remains a sin to those who are not born through baptism and the Holy Spirit, brings God's wrath, and thus the second death and eternal damnation.

5. Of Free Will, or Self-freedom of Man

(The tract of Master John Hus on knowing and loving the Lord God, pt. 1, fol. 35.)

Of the free will of man, we confess, that he has a certain liberty to perform worldly orders and righteousness which are subject to reason, so that man in such acts as above mentioned, using his reason, judgment, and will in all his undertakings, will not be able to have an excuse before God. However, he has no power without the Holy Spirit to do the righteousness of God or spiritual righteousness. For the carnal man comprehends not the things that are of the

Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14). But such spiritual righteousness is received in the heart through the word of God the Holy Spirit.

6. Of the Origin, Cause, and Greatness of Sin

(Diet of 1417, Article 4. John 8.)

Of the cause of sin we confess that although the Lord God is the creator and preserver of nature, yet God is not the cause of sin, but it is the will of the wicked, that is of the devil and of godless people, which when the will has no help from Lord God, turns away from the Lord God, as the Lord Christ speaks about it (in John 8). When the devil speaks a lie, he speaks of his own; for he is a liar and the father of lies. And because it is against and violates the law of God, sin of all sorts is variously and greatly repulsive to God and his perfect holiness and righteousness. And for this reason the Lord God, who does not tolerate any sin nor any creature polluted by sin at all, eternally rejects and condemns anyone who would not be a partaker of the Lord Christ and of the perfect salvation in him. Thus to us he shows sure will, unchangeability, and righteousness in the law of his commandments.

7. Of the Law of Divine Commandments

For the omnipotent God was pleased to give man his eternal and unchangeable law, not only for the preservation of nobleness and a good honorable outer intercourse among all peoples in this temporal life; but first and especially to show us that we might recognize the enormity of our sin and transgressions, internal and external, and also the righteous wrath of God and eternal condemnation for our sins, whence comes despair for the wicked. So that in the sons of God by the grace of Holy Spirit comes the true contrition of heart causing a cordial fear of God, also a constant and genuine hatred of all sin as well as inner and outer deficiency. And besides that, there comes a hearty desire to attain salvation secured by the Lord Christ the Redeemer, that is the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from the condemnation of the law and the wrath of God, from eternal death and the power of the devil, reconciliation with God, justification and sanctification, which is the communion of the Holy Spirit and inheritance of eternal life.

8. Of the Justification of Man before God

(Diet of 1421, Article 10. Item: Tract of Master John Hus "On Six Errors," chapter 3.)

And so we believe and confess that the justification of man before God is the declaring by God of the repentant sinner as innocent, holy, and righteous, and that the people do not come to such justification before God by their own powers, merits, and deeds. But they become justified freely (Rom. 3:24) out of pure grace of God for the Lord Christ alone through faith in his blood. Thus through the grace of the Holy Spirit man heartily and undoubtedly believes that

God according to his faithful promises forgives all his sins and receives him to his grace for the sake of the Redeemer and Savior Christ, who with his whole and perfect obedience and by his abominable and innocent death made atonement for the sins of the whole world. Such faith in Lord Christ alone and his merits, God counts before himself as perfect righteousness. As St. Paul the Apostle writes in Romans 3 and 4, a believing man, being truly a partaker of Christ by faith, is in him also a partaker of all holiness and righteousness, which the Lord Christ was pleased to have and fulfill for him and in his stead. And Christ appropriates this to him as a member of his body.

Also for that reason faith is ascribed and imputed to every believer as perfect righteousness, and for such perfect righteousness in Christ, eternal life is given him, and the pledge thereof is the Holy Spirit, as the Lord Christ assures in St. John 6:47: "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." Therefore to obtain such saving faith in Christ Jesus there is the ordinance of teaching and preaching the sacred Gospel and the administration of the holy sacraments. For the word of God and the sacraments are the means ordained by God by which the Holy Spirit is given, who causes a saving faith wherever and whenever it pleases God in those people who hear the holy Gospel, which teaches that the Lord God, not for any of our deserts, but for the Lord Christ alone, is pleased to accept into his grace all those who believe in Christ, to justify them and to sanctify them to eternal life.

And thus sanctification, renewal, or regeneration is done by faith and the Holy Spirit, when through faith in Christ the Lord we are made partakers of Jesus Christ and all his merits, and so we are perfectly righteous before God. Here too, through this same fellowship of Christ the Lord, is poured on us, as on the living members of his holy body, the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies and renews us, in order that from the beginning we may be holy and dying to all evil desires of the flesh, now being alive for God so that we again ever and ever acquire that first lost holiness of Adam, which we shall attain perfectly only in eternal life. And because this our holiness, which is begun in us in this life by the Holy Spirit, is not perfect, therefore until death there remain in us many deficiencies and imperfections, and thus also many transgressions for which we pray constantly, saying: Forgive us our trespasses. Even for that reason we are not and cannot be perfectly holy before God by that holiness of ours which was begun by the Holy Spirit, according the words of Christ the Lord in St. Luke 17:10: "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants." And in 1 John 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." And St. David prays, saying (Ps. 143:2): "And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." And therefore as above said: Our justification before God is attained only in Christ the Lord and is attained by faith alone. And the ancient teachers and doctors of the ancient holy Church teach this. St. Ambrose certainly writes about it thus: It is ordered by God that

whoever believes in Christ, be saved without acts, by faith alone, freely obtaining the forgiveness of sins.

9. Of the Faith

(Diet of 1421, Article 10. Item: Tract of Master John Hus “On the Question, What Is It to Believe?” part 1, folio 169.)

And so about faith this is our confession, according to the word of God. A saving faith is when a man believes not only that God is, that all which he was pleased to make known to us and to promise us in his holy word is true (which even the devils believe and tremble), but also through the Holy Spirit hopes with his heart that the gracious promises of God concerning the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation will be done to everyone believing in Christ the Lord and also particularly to him. And according to such promises, the eternal God, not only to other sinners but also to him alone, is pleased to forgive his sins for the sake of Christ the Lord, to receive him into mercy, and to sanctify him by the Holy Spirit to eternal life. And so depending upon the faithful promises of God established in Christ, he firmly assures himself concerning his election to eternal life and sure salvation in Christ, as much as he can. And through such heartfelt faith in God, he overcomes various temptations, attains reviving comfort and peace with God, and takes refuge in him in confidence, calling: Father, Father. As the Apostle says in Romans 5:1-2: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice¹ in hope of the glory² of God.”

Also a saving faith, when it is in man through the Holy Spirit, whether feeble or strong, always receives Christ the Lord and all his benefits (for he gives himself to us only under the condition that we believe and trust in him with the heart). And faith brings to a believing man, through the communion of Christ the Lord, the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, justification, renewal in the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. For these reasons faith is not and cannot be dead in man, but it constantly calls forth a new and eternal life; it mortifies all kinds of evil desires of man; it kindles a hearty love of God and neighbor. And so out of love it causes one to bring forth all kinds of good holy deeds, by which it is also known like a tree by its fruit. For as the fire without heat and the sun without shine, so a true faith and sharing of Christ without renewal, without love, and so without many good, holy deeds can nohow and never be.

10. Of Good Works

(Diet of 1417, Article 14. Exposition of Master John Hus on Psalm 118, part 2, folio 173. Also his tract on the Church, chapter 9. Item: Diet of 1421, Article 8.)

¹ The Czech original has the word “boast.”

² The Czech original has the word “sons.”

Of good works we confess that those are truly good and holy works which God was pleased to command in his word, and which come from true faith and are the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). For whatever is done by those who do not conduct themselves by the word of God, and who are empty of a living faith in Christ and the Holy Spirit, no matter how beautiful and good it would seem before human eyes, before God is abominable and ugly and remains a sin according to the words of the Apostle, Rom. 14:23: "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And in Heb. 11:6: "Without faith it is impossible to please him." Therefore good works are properly done by the sons of God alone, who through faith in Christ the Lord obtain all his benefits and full salvation, justification, and renewal. And being led by the Spirit of God, they do and keep all that God was pleased to command and institute in his word. According to the prophet Ezekiel, 20:19: "Walk in my statutes and do them"; and in St. Matthew 15:9: "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

And such good works are pleasing to God not for their own worth and perfection, which is by no means found in them, in accordance with the words of the prophet Isaiah, speaking of his works and of all the Church of God, 64:6: "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."¹ But they are pleasing to God for Christ Jesus alone. For when man by faith in the Lord Christ through him is justified and made pleasing to God, he believes firstly that the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation to God, justification, and sanctification are not earned, but are freely given only by the grace of God through faith in Christ Jesus himself. Secondly, that although he is born again by the Holy Spirit, still he cannot perfectly fulfill the Law of God in this world. But there is and remains with him a great imperfection and weakness in faith and in various good works, thus also many transgressions and inner evil inclinations and desires, which he earnestly resists in the Holy Spirit and constantly prays for forgiveness of such insufficiencies and sins.

First, when he believes that he should and can begin a new life by the grace of God according to divine commandments, his imperfect obedience and good works are pleasing to God only for the sake of Christ the Lord. As St. Peter says in his first epistle, 2:5: "Offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And therefore he does the will of God willingly, without compulsion, doing good works for the love of God and his holy will, to prove obedience to his Lord God and love to his neighbor; this for a testimonial before men of a good conscience and of true faith which is known only by good works.

And so we believe and confess that we are duty bound to do good works, commanded by God primarily for the reason of our redemption, justification, and sanctification in Christ. For whoever is justified in Christ and is born again of the Holy Spirit and sanctified, he can do no other but good works, because he is a new creation in Christ Jesus to do good works (Eph. 2:10). In the same way the sun cannot but shine, because it is created by God for the purpose of

¹ The Czech original has it as the "rags of an unclean woman."

shining. And therefore where there is found an unrepentant Christian and evil deeds, here certainly the work of God is broken and such a one cannot in any way be a saved son of God.

Second, by reason of God's commandments and of our obligatory obedience according to divine instruction which St. Paul shows in Romans 8:12: "We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." And the Son of God in the Gospel of St. John, 15:17, says: "These things I command you, that ye love one another." Therefore every believer, because he is of God, loves God's commandments, keeps them obediently, and to act against them, or sin of his own will he can never do, as St. John teaches in his first epistle, 3:9.

Third, for the preservation of faith a good, peaceful conscience before God. Because by man's forsaking good works and committing sins against the conscience, the Holy Ghost is grieved and expelled, and in this way faith and the true worship of God is lost. For it is by no means possible for those to worship God with joyful and peaceful mind confidently and trustfully, who by yielding to evil desires commit sins and have a wounded conscience.¹

Fourth (Exod. 20; Ezek. 16), in order that we may escape God's temporal and eternal punishments of body and soul, which the Lord God deigns to lay upon transgressors of his commandments according to his eternal justice. And from the beginning of the world and also now there are various and innumerable examples. But among all divine punishments in this life, that one is the greatest when God deigns to punish sin with sin, permitted upon the sinners for their obstinacy and especially for the contempt of his word and his will revealed therein. Second, the seduction and darkening of their hearts, so that by not seeking urgently and sincerely the word of God and the salvation of their souls they increase in their sin and perdition. As St. Paul says in 2 Thess. 2:11-12: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Fifth, for the dignity of our calling in Christ. For we, having believed in Christ, are made members of his holy body and temples of the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 6:15,19, and so are beloved sons of God, John 1:12. And so for that reason we are to be holy, as our God is holy, and the Lord Christ commands that we, being the sons of God, follow the nature and character of our Father, saying in St. Matthew 5:44-45: "Love your enemies . . . that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

Sixth, to attain the abundant and great reward of God, which the Lord God deigned to promise for good works, not for their own worth and perfection, but from grace for the sake of Christ the Lord, whose members we are. And for his promise of such a reward in this life and in eternity, we shall finally be partakers according to our chivalrous warfare. As the Lord says in 1 Kings 2

¹ A Czech printed copy of 1903 [and of 1951] and a German translation of 1621 quote here 1 John 3:21-22.

(1 Sam. 2:30), Whoever honors me, I will glorify him. And St. Paul, 1 Tim. 4:8: Godliness has the promise of life present and future.

But all the good quality and righteousness of law which is found in good people without the Spirit of God, loving honor, order, and justice is very different from good works. For it is nothing but a part of God's law of inner righteousness of man, and of honorable, noble intercourse among men, which St. Paul in Hebrews 9:10 calls righteousness of the flesh, because even a carnal man without the Holy Spirit and inner renewal may perform inner works according to divine law. But such external virtue and nobility is not the spiritual righteousness of the law of the proper sons of God, and therefore no one should rely upon them in the manner of hypocrites and Pharisees, according to the word of the Lord in St. Matthew 5:20: Except your righteousness will be more abundant than that of the masters and scribes, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. But righteousness should be kept by all means diligently and urgently by all people generally, but especially in the Church of God for many reasons, but especially because of the strict command of God in natural and written law relating to all people without exception, and for the escape of punishments eternal as well as temporal and corporal, by which all government according to divine order is duty bound to strictly punish transgressors of the Lord's law and of good order. Moreover, the preservation of common peace and praiseworthy association of people cannot be without order and justice. And finally righteousness should be kept for the inner good virtue and discipline in the Church of God, for it makes the people more civil in all devotion, especially in receiving the word of God and the Holy Spirit. For the Lord God does not do his work by godless people, as long as they lead a brutish and unrepentant life, so that they neither wish to keep an inner virtue nor do they want to receive any good order and discipline.

11. Of the Church of God

(Article of Apostolic faith. Master John Hus: Of the Church, chapter 1, part 1, folio 196. Item: Of the Church's Unity, chapter 7, part 1, folio 446.)

We believe and confess that there is and always will remain one holy universal Church. And she is in this world a visible congregation of faithful and holy people who in every place hold to the true and pure doctrine of Christ in the manner as it is proclaimed by the holy Evangelists and the Apostles, because in the most holy Gospel of Christ it is faithfully and sincerely proclaimed. And they also control and rule themselves in everything by the law and decrees of their one King, Bishop, and Head, Christ, in the bond of love. And they enjoy his mystery, which we generally call sacraments, according to the ordinance of Christ the Lord in the same way as they were enjoyed and left for us in the holy Scriptures by the Evangelists and the Apostles of Christ the Lord. And the holy Church is truly a congregation of saints who through the ministry of the pure word of God and the sublime sacraments, having believed in Christ, are made

one body in him, in the fellowship of one faith, one love, one spirit, leading one spiritual life.

But to such holy ones there are always joined many hypocrites who, confessing the same truth and adhering to it, cannot be distinguished from the faithful nor separated from the Church. For that reason the visible Church in this world is commonly called a sundry society of Christians, good and bad, declaring themselves to Christ and to his law. And that Church is likened to wheat with tares and to a net in which there are good and bad fish (Matt. 13).

Then such a society of good and bad is called the common Christian holy Church. In the matter concerning the good fish and wheat, that is, only the elect sons of God and the true faithful Christians, all of them together in common and without exception are counted to Christ, and also they are holy by a holiness begun in them by the Holy Spirit. And they are those the Lord is pleased to call his own sheep, whose society is the true wife and bride of Christ, the House of God, the pillar and foundation of the truth, the Mother of all believers, and the only ark aside from which there is no salvation. But concerning those admixed and especially the willing hypocrites and other bad godless Christians who remain in that Church, of whom usually there exists a much larger number, those and such are not called the holy Church, but are dead church members. And although they are found in the Church of Christ, yet they are not at all of the Church nor of his Body. Therefore the foremost sure and infallible signs of the holy Church are these:

First, the pure preaching and teaching of the word of God and the holy Gospel, especially those concerning the foundations and leading articles of the universal Christian faith. Second, the pure observance, serving, and partaking of the Lord's holy sacrament according to his ordinance. Third, the proper and obligatory obedience in the observance of all those things which the holy Gospel and the law of Christ command. And therefore also there are the signs of the Church of God, that is, brotherly love of one another as members of Christ, the cross, and great persecution for the truth and the kingdom of God. Finally, breaking away from visible sins and from all kinds of iniquity against God. As there is a kind, brotherly admonition and chastisement, so too there is an orderly excommunication from the Church as instituted by God for those who would not let themselves be corrected by the foregoing admonition. And this is what the holy fathers called church discipline.

These signs of the holy Church, by which she is known without any mistake, are not always found in the same manner. For sometimes she shines very brightly, and sometimes she shows herself in such a way that a true church can hardly be recognized. Especially when God pleases to refine and chastise his Church he decreases the light of his word in her, sending into her strong doers of errors because of ingratitude and the affront of the word and his benefits. By deserting the word of the Living God they build and show the Church on themselves and their ordinances.

But the devout, even in such a hard misleading and great darkening of the Church, cannot be misled if they only look to the Head and wish to hold on to Christ the Lord, faithfully receiving his word wherever it would be preached in purity and sincerity according to the holy Scriptures, and by not stepping away from his truth anywhere, neither in doctrine nor in relations with others. Here surely is a part of his Church, and in such a meeting the Lord Christ is truly present. And through the ministry of the word and his sacrament he works salvation in the hearts of the believers according to his instructions, even though sometimes the ministers of the Church who serve with word and sacraments be hypocrites and dead members of the Church. For the word of God and the use of the sublime sacraments is the power of God unto salvation to every believer. They are not for the dignity of the one who administers them, but for the sole ordinance of Christ the Lord, which is powerful through the real presence of Christ and the working of the Holy Spirit. And therefore as the dignity of the minister adds nothing to the word and sacraments of Christ, likewise also the unworthiness and hypocrisy of the minister subtracts nothing, according to the words of the Lord, Matt. 23:2: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." But it behooves the Church of God to sever from the Church ministry those who are openly unexemplary and unrepentant and cannot be corrected by proper means, and as much as possible to see to it that the doctrine and behavior be holy and undefiled.

12. Of the Church's Keys or Her Official Power

(Tract of Master John Hus "On Six Errors," chapter 3.)

All of the power of the Church, which the Lord God in the holy Scriptures was pleased to give and ascribe to his Church and its prophets, Apostles, and their vicars, refers not properly to their persons, but to the word of God, whose servants they are and also the office entrusted to them so that they perform it according to the word of God and the will of God which is made known therein. Just as the Lord when he sent his disciples gave them certain instructions and orders, to go and teach the Church to observe all those things which he commanded them, that they should not be nor be called masters, because he alone is their Master. And he does not want them to rule themselves and the Church by any other doctrine, but only by that which they heard from his mouth as their Master (Ezek. 34; John 10; Matt. 28:18-20; 23:8; John 13:13), and also by those instructions which the Holy Spirit is to bring to their mind, teaching them all things and reminding them of all things which Christ the Lord spoke to them, and not things contrary to them. Therefore the office of pastor and minister of the Church and the true apostolic vicar is this, namely: To plant and to cultivate the Church of God with the doctrine of Christ and the Apostles, and to demolish and to destroy Satan's church. To feed the Lord's sheep and to chase away from them the ravenous wolves. To teach the penitent, to admonish, comfort, and

loosen them from sin. And to chastise, rebuke, and aggravate the sins of the unrepentant and headstrong. Thus, according to the words of St. Paul, 2 Cor. 10:5, using only the word of God and none but that Spiritual power which is given by God to the Church ministers, they are to vex and uproot all the strength and height that sets itself against the doctrine of God, seizing and subjecting every reason to the service and obedience of Christ, and to do all that, not to destruction, but to our edification.

Of such office, then, and Church authority, there is found in the holy Scripture a twofold difference or part. For the principal and foremost office and authority of the Church is in reference to the word of God, that is, to preach the holy Gospel (Mark 16:15), and in accordance with which, they are to serve the sublime sacraments (which duty belongs only to those who are the Church's shepherds or priests) (1 Cor. 11:23). And they are to do other duties such as church prayers, confirming, blessing matrimonial nuptials, which we call weddings, and several other duties which the Lord first deigned to designate as the keys, namely the unbinding and binding, forgiving and withholding of sins (Matt. 16:19, 18:18; John 20:21-23). For there is no admittance to heaven as a closed mansion to sinners and no other way besides Christ the Lord, and likewise there is no other approach to Christ the Lord but by faith alone in him. This faith is caused in us generally by the Holy Spirit only through the word of God and the use of sacraments. Also for this reason when the authority of serving the word of God and the sublime sacraments is given, entrusted, and ordered to the pastors and ministers, thereby are given the true keys to the kingdom of heaven. Because by their service, heaven is opened to the penitent, and the way is shown to eternal life; and our sins seriously and heavily bind us and hold us depressed in the prison of the devil and eternal death. Thus the preaching of the holy Gospel brings tidings to the penitent and believers in Christ of deliverance from sins, from the devil, and from eternal death. But to the unrepentant is announced a greater judgment and condemnation for their scorn of the salvation offered them in Christ. Therefore the ministers of the Church, when they perform their office faithfully according to the command of the Son of God, preaching the holy Gospel and the commandments of divine law, then they strongly unbind and bind the people, they forgive or withhold their sins.

Another excellent part of the office and authority of the Church concerns the courts and the rights of the Church by which are judged and ruled, not the worldly things, but spiritual things, pertaining first to the end that sound doctrine be preserved in the Church, from which comes the true honor of the Lord God and mutual love of all the Church. Also that the various good order be preserved in the life of the holy Church and in various external matters of the Church. And that office belongs especially only to some persons in the Church who are enlightened and adorned with wisdom and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, who were particularly elected by the whole Church to direct and regulate others.

However, this and other official power of the Church of God has no worldly power, nor does any secular government, power, sovereignty, dominion of this world belong to her. For the Son of God separated the Church and worldly rule one from the other. The Church also has no power and cannot have the power either in the Church Councils to establish anything against the word of God, or also to submit anything for belief in doctrines as if it were the substance of salvation except the clear word of God. Also neither does the Church nor anyone in the Church of Christ have the power to explain the holy Scripture in such a way that one would contradict the other, and especially with the articles of universal Christian faith.

13. Of the Sublime Sacraments Instituted by the Lord Christ and Their Uses, Also the Proper Use

We believe and confess that the sublime sacraments are the visible stamps and surety of divine promises, and a plain distinction of God's grace. The sacraments are the visible elements of the word and ordinances of God, which are in truth and in fact invisible heavenly things and by human reason incomprehensible. They assure us of the gracious will of God proclaimed to us in the word of the holy Gospel and in the covenant with us made in Christ about the participation of Christ the Lord and of all his benefits. And therefore about the uses of the sublime sacraments we believe this, that because the sacraments are instituted and ordained by Christ the Lord, not only to distinguish externally the faithful Christians from the pagans and other various followers of religion different from the true Church, but really to be the certainty and abundant eye-witness of the special and gracious will of our Lord God toward us.

Also for that reason their foremost and chief use is this, that when we partake of them they will arouse and confirm in us our faith in the promises of God. That is, in the sublime sacraments, the Lord Christ is given to us with all his merits and benefits, that we by such using of the sublime sacraments and faith in him, finally are more and more partakers of him, and have in him all the benefits promised us, namely the forgiveness of sins, liberation from eternal death and the power of the devil, reconciliation with God, justification, partaking of the Holy Spirit, and inheritance of eternal life.

Another capital use is this, that the sublime sacraments strengthen and encourage us to a diligent and zealous care of that covenant, according to which we receive such great benefits from God, and according to which also we again are bound that by holding to his holy word with whole heart faithfully and sincerely we want to wage a brave fight against sin, the devil, the world, our own flesh; and to honor him with all honor and obedience commanded by him, but especially by loving our neighbor as our own members of Christ the Lord and co-partaker of all heavenly things. And therefore those worthily partake of the sublime sacraments who receive them in true repentance and in true faith in the Lord Christ with intention to be truly partakers of those and such signs of those

benefits for which the Son of God deigned to order his sacraments. For who partakes of the sublime sacraments differently from such benefits and handles them contrary to Christ's ordinances, but disdains them, changes and empties them. Hence, for that reason the sublime sacraments do not bring such people the forgiveness of sins and salvation, but a dreadful judgment and damnation.

14. Of Holy Baptism, the Sublime Sacrament of Christ

(Diet of 1417, Article 2. Some of the Diet of 1426, Article 5. Item: Diet of 1524, Article 10.)

Of holy baptism we confess and believe that that sacrament instituted by Christ the Lord is the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5-7). And that baptism, or washing of a man by water in the name of the worshiped holy Trinity of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit brings to a man grafted in the Church of Christ the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, as the Son of God says in St. Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." We confess also that infants or children (because to them the kingdom of God is given, which is according to divine promises, Matt. 19:14) ought to be baptized, and that being offered to God by prayer and baptism, they are received into grace according to many reasons of the holy Scripture.

15. Of the Lord's Supper, the Second Sublime Sacrament of Christ

(Diet of 1417, Article 2. Item: Diet 1421, Article 2. Item: Diet of 1524, Article 10.)

Of the sublime sacrament, the testament of the Last Supper instituted by the Lord Christ himself before his betrayal and suffering, we believe and confess that the bread in that supper is the true Body of the Lord Christ given for us. And the wine in the cup is the true Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, shed for us for the forgiveness of sins. Thus it is given to the communicants that eating the Body and drinking the Blood of Christ the Lord, they do it in remembrance and to make known his innocent death until he come. As the Lord Christ himself, at that Last Supper and in his own testament, with his words so deigned to institute and attest. And the holy Evangelists and the Apostle St. Paul openly teach, write, and confess about it. (Matt. 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; 1 Cor. 11.)

And such a sublime sacrament is instituted first for the purpose of the taking root and confirmation of our faith in participating in Christ the Lord and all his benefits, that we, by partaking spiritually and *piously* by faith and also by mouth *in holiness the Body and the Blood* of our Lord Jesus Christ, never doubt but firmly believe that we are faithful. And by such partaking of the Lord's Supper we are always made more and more the living members of Christ the Lord, who thus joins us to his holy Body, that we, like branches of the vine, are

thus members of his holy Body and from him alone frequently obtain our true food. And by obtaining the true satisfaction of our souls, we live in light, joy, comfort, and all the benefits, which the Lord Christ earned for us by his death and his whole obedience. And in his holy Gospel he deigned to present and promise this to everyone repenting, namely the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, justification, the communion of the Holy Spirit, and the inheritance of eternal life. Accordingly the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is instituted so that we mutually in a church congregation heartily thank God for all divine benefits done to us in Christ the Lord. And by partaking in the sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord we earnestly arouse and strengthen ourselves to remain in the body of Christ the Lord, to whom we are joined to the end, that we by dying to all our sins and evil desires, and rising to righteousness, live for God in all devotion and holiness according to all God's commandments, and keep the unity of Christ's Body, which is the Church, by heartily loving one another. Knowing this, that all who eat from one Bread in the sublime sacrament are made into one body, as St. Paul in 1 Cor. 10:17 teaches, we as joint members of one Lord Christ love one another with hearty, fervent love, being sure thereby that we can never abuse our fellow neighbors nor offend, lest we instantly abuse and offend Christ the Lord, also neither can we love Lord Christ unless we love him in our neighbors. As the Lord says: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40).

16. Of Repentance

(Diet of 1421, Article 10. Song of ancient Czechs about sacraments, 4. Tract of Master John Hus on repentance.)

About repentance we think and confess that those who, after receiving the holy baptism fall and sin, can again obtain the forgiveness of sins at any time when they return to Lord God by his grace in true repentance, and that the Church should absolve such penitent Christians and receive them into the fellowship of saints. But true repentance consists of three parts. The first is contrition of the heart, fear, and sorrow in the conscience through the knowledge of sin, which contrition (as stated above) causes in man a real hatred of all kinds of sins, inner and outer ones, and a cordial desire of deliverance from the wrath of God and eternal damnation. The second part is faith in Christ Jesus, which comes from the holy Gospel, which declares absolution in Christ alone, that is, deliverance from all sins, reconciliation with God, and justification in the merits of Christ. And such faith causes in man through the Holy Spirit a sincere consolation and a cordial advice, from which comes the loving of the Lord God and of his commandments. Therefore the third part of true repentance is a new life and new purpose, by which the Holy Spirit deigns to be changing and renewing, that by loathing bad life and various sin forbidden by God, knowingly and willingly will commit no more, but now living again is made a son of God, and lives for God in all devotion and holiness according to all the command-

ments of God. And so according to the words of St. Paul, 1 Tim. 1:18-19: “War a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience.”

17. Of Confession

(Diet of 1421, Article 25.)

Of confession and absolution we think that in the Church there ought to be confessing of sins and their absolving, although it is not possible nor necessary to name all the sins at confession. For according to the word of God stated in Psalm 19:12: “Who can understand his errors?” Also at confession the Church ministers ought to impart saving and consolatory words of comfort from the holy Scriptures, so that human conscience burdened by sin and scarred by God’s law may find consolation from the word of God.

18. Of Church Ministries

(Diet of 1421, Article 10. Diet of 1524, Article 14. Tract of Master John Hus “Of the Apparent Duty of Priests,” part 1.)

Of the Church ministers, we think that no one should openly teach in church except he that was properly called thereto.

19. Of Church Orders

(Diet of 1421, Article 3.1. Item: Diet of 1524, chapters 9, 10, and 12.)

Of orders and ceremonies of the Church which ought to be done in the Church of God and the various ecclesiastical services, as in the holy Mass (i.e., public worship), the preaching of the word of God, and the worthy partaking of and serving the Lord’s Supper, also other church gatherings and divine services, they will be found elsewhere. But with our ancestors we think and confess that only such orders and such ceremonies of the Church of God should exist which would be neither contrary to the word of God nor superfluous, but pleasant, comfortable, serving to the honor and praise of the Lord God, to unity and edification of the Church, and for the preservation of good order, as belonging to the Church in every congregation and place. No orders and ceremonies of the Church established by men, no matter how ornamental they be, should be held as if on them God’s own honor and human salvation depends, nor should the Church be bound to them as to God’s commandments. But when the Church of God, holding fast to the word of God, institutes with sound reason worthy, important, and to the people of God remarkably useful and necessary rituals with good manner and order, no one belonging to the Church authority ought to treat lightly and meddlingly, especially with offense, disturbing and transgressing to others. For such disparagement and contempt of the Church and her institutions, made according to the word of God, are plainly forbidden by God in St. Matthew 18:17: Whosoever will not hear the Church, let him be to you like a pagan and patent sinner.

20. Of the Secular Government

(Diet of 1421, Article 8.)

Of the secular government we confess that it is ordered of God, and that everybody (that is, every soul without exception), not only because of its authority and to escape temporal penalties, but also especially because of God's commandment and the preservation before God of good conscience, is obliged to be obedient, according to the will of God, so that under its rule in Christian order we may lead a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty (1 Tim. 2:2).

21. Of Matrimony

(Hymn of ancient Czechs about sacraments. Tract of Master John Hus about matrimony, chapters 1-6.)

We confess also that matrimony is an honorable and God-ordered union of two single persons, a man and woman, free to all people who wish to use it according to their needs and the ordinances of God, that is, freed by God and his ordinance, honorable and undefiled (Heb. 13:4). For the Lord God himself deigned to tell Adam about the universal human nature that it is not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2). And St. Paul also says (1 Cor. 7:2), "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman have her own husband."

Although we would be pleased if the priests without wives be continent and be able to do their ministerial duty more diligently, we are mindful of the advice and order of the Holy Spirit and of the Apostle Paul, especially knowing that they too are people and also subject to sin and frailty according to common human nature. Therefore according to the definition of the holy Scriptures, this should remain, that whoever does not have the gift of continence, let him marry devoutly and according to the ordinance of the Church. For the same St. Paul says that it is better to marry than to burn (1 Cor. 7:9), and for the reason that marriage is good, clean, holy, and ordained by God even in the state of innocence. It is better to be in God's order than to stand in wicked, unclean disorder, strictly forbidden by God, and especially for those who are serving the word of God and the sacraments. And to others they are to be an example for good, according to the admonition of God: "Be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 20:8; 1 Pet. 1:16).

22. Of Remembrance of Saints

(From the proofs of holy Scriptures, as added.)

We confess also that the memory of saints, concerning their faith and following their good deeds, may and should be preserved in the Church for great edification. But we ought not worship the saints, neither flee to them, because worship is an act belonging to the Lord God alone. As the Scripture says (Deut. 6:13, 10:20; Matt. 4:10; Luke 4:8): "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." And another Scripture (Ps. 50:15): "Call upon me in

the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” Furthermore, the saints ought not be regarded nor held as mediators. For the holy Scriptures show us our Lord Jesus Christ as the only mediator (Luke 22:32; Rom. 3:25; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 John 2:1-2).

23. Of Fasting

(Diet of 1421, Article 5, and proofs from holy Scripture.)

About holy fasting we confess that it is good and very useful to tame and restrain the body lest it become very unruly against the spirit. Second, that we be in every way more capable and more methodical to holy prayers and to a diligent study and meditation on the things of God. Third, that we show and certify this way the humiliation of our heart before God and in all humility confess our sins and transgressions before his majesty. And so fasting is twofold: One special (particularly for the first cause or use mentioned above), used devoutly, either alone or with one’s household voluntarily, whenever a worthy cause or need for fasting appears. The second is used by the whole community or Church of God for a common need or for some coming trouble or chastising by God. Being admonished thereto by her leaders, the Church flees together to Lord God through Lord Christ in true repentance and also in external signs of true repentance, as thus the prophet (Joel 2:12): “Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning,” humbling one’s self before God, and confessing transgressions with various heartfelt and also external humility, as the ample example in holy Scripture of both Testaments and also the primitive Church show us.

But fasting is also temperance and moderate scantiness in the use of God’s gifts at all times, for a pious Christian life should always be like a continuous fast, according to the faithful admonition of the Lord, when he says (Luke 21:34): “Take heed, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, etc.” But there is really this, when aside from customary temperance and restraint, we strictly set for ourselves even greater moderation in all things comfortable to our flesh, but especially and particularly in eating and drinking for one day or for any certain time. Firstly, those things for which the fast is set we may do with hunger the more methodically and diligently. Then also, while eating and drinking simple and modest food and drink, we have no pleasure in eating and drinking. And finally, even while eating and drinking such simple food and drink, we keep a greater moderation than at other times. However, it is important to observe diligently the good purpose sacred fasts should have in the Church of God, that is, fasts when one keeps a variety of foods, so that the people of God will know and understand how and why one should fast, and not let them be in error by presuming that God’s honor depends solely on the fast without inner devotion.

24. Of the Resurrection of the Dead, and of the Last Judgment

(Article of universal Christian faith.)

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ at the end of this world will come in glory to judge all and to resurrect all the dead. Here he will give eternal life and joy everlasting to all the godly and elect of God. But the ungodly people he will condemn with the devils so that they will suffer forever.

25. Of Eternal Life

([Diet of 1421?], Article 25. Also articles of universal Christian faith.)

With mouth we confess and with heart we believe with pleasure that after this temporal life there is and will last forever a life pleasant and joyful for all the believers in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, prepared from eternity, into which the only begotten Son of God alone by his death and perfect obedience prepared the way and opened the gate. And of course we so believe and with the heart confess that into this eternal life no one can come by any other means, nor enter into it in any other way except alone through the Lord Christ. As our Lord and Savior himself has said (John 11:25, 14:6, 6:47, 6:44): I am the resurrection, the way and the truth and the life. He that believeth on me hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. Item (John 17:24, 12:26, 17:12): Father, I will, that where I am, there also be my servant, and those thou hast given me, no one shall pluck them out of my hands. Which future eternal happy life, only those first fruits reach. From the word of God they acquire the true and sure knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and communion with the Holy Spirit, and abide in Christ and in true faith in him and also live in unerring hope here. Afterward they come in certainty to perfect bliss in the heavenly kingdom, when according to the words of the Apostle, they shall see God face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). For also the Son of God himself says in John 17:3: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." And John 5:24: "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

And that eternal life is full and limitless of unspeakable joy. About it the Apostle said (1 Cor. 2:9): "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Into which joy, help us and all who believe in the One alone, the only begotten Son of God, our Savior, God the Father, *God the Son*, who with the same Son and Holy Spirit is in Three Persons and in a single indivisible Deity, alive and reigning for ever and ever. Amen.

*Preface for the pious reader
who loves holy and Christian agreement
in the faith of the Lord Christ*

As it is very dear to the Lord God and a useful thing for the Christian Church to have unity in the proper Christian universal faith (which has its foundation and sure meaning in holy Scripture and is contained in the twelve articles [of the Apostles' Creed] in summary fashion), just as much as it is to be baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity and to be pure in the service of God and one's neighbor and to act wisely and in union, so we are able to be, and must be, mutually tolerant and thus made more perfect in all of life in faith, love, and hope. We are also to be confirmed in this, which every sincere and fruitful Christian not only understands very well, but is likewise grateful for God's great favor in this. And these things have high approval and testimony from the Spirit of God, who through St. David says (Ps. 133:1): "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" And Christ the Lord before his death prayed to the Father for such unanimity, saying (John 17:21): "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." And St. Paul in Philippians (3:16) says: "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

To have such an agreement in faith and religion, holy love, which is the bond of perfection, has always been and still is greatly and necessarily needed. Therefore Christ says (John 13:35): "By this shall all know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." And again (I Cor. 16:14): "Let all your things be done with love." And the same (Rom. 14:19): "Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." "For he who in these things serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men" (Rom. 14:18). This bond of a unified mind and a joint love and concord was present in the early apostolic church so that all "were of one heart" (Acts 4:32).

And all three noble estates of this glorious Czech land who receive the body and blood of our Lord, Savior, and Redeemer Jesus Christ under both kinds are to foster and remember this and be in love and concord with one another so that in times to come they may serve the Lord God in different ways as best they can, leaving behind discord, opposition, and hindrance. For this

reason they were in attendance at the General Assembly held in the year 1575 at the castle in Prague to make conciliation and concord among them. And they introduced this confession of holy universal Christian faith and produced this document and were pleased to present it [in 1575] to Emperor Maximilian, of glorious and holy memory, along with their supplication to him, which likewise was printed for the public.

By the grace of the Lord God Almighty all three of the above mentioned estates of the Czech kingdom were present at the assembly which was held in this year of 1608 on the Monday after Exaudi Sunday (19 May) at the Prague castle, and again in deepest humility asked his imperial majesty, our king and lord most gracious [Rudolf II], for confirmation of the aforementioned confession in the official national records. And they received from his imperial majesty a truly gracious and loving answer. Because of this, having heard of this, we render praise to the eternal Lord God for this great and immense mercy and goodness, and with hearts humbled before this divine grace we have not ceased to implore that God by his Spirit will direct the heart of his imperial highness, our king most gracious (whose heart is in the divine hand, Prov. 21:1) graciously to rule, administer, and act well for all three noble estates so that this useful and saving design may achieve its desired aim and confirmation for the glory of God's most holy name and the preservation of concord and love in this glorious Czech kingdom, under the happy rule of his imperial majesty (whom the Lord God may be pleased to bless in time and eternity).

And because there are hardly any copies of the aforementioned [1575] confession or declaration of faith left, and many have asked that there be a new printing of it, we have humbly asked that pre-eminent, Christian and gallant knight, Lord Michael Špánovský of Lisova to have it printed again (and that on its pages be noted where the Scripture quotations in it come from so that they be more easily found). And this is for the following reasons:

First, it is true that our own [Unity] predecessors of glorious and holy memory presented a confession of our faith to Emperor Ferdinand (1535) and to Emperor Maximilian (1564), which faith was the same as that which they were granted by grace to confess before other Czech kings who had gone before. In these for the sake of justice in varying circumstances they always spoke wishing to show that by the grace of God this faith is no heretical, new, foreign, or insolent teaching against God and his holy church. Rather, it is the same pure, evangelical, and ancient faith established by the prophets and apostles and by Christ himself, the same which was preached by Master Jan Hus, of holy memory, the martyr of God, which has been adhered to here in Bohemia and other places and maintained and passed down as true evangelical teaching among all god-fearing people.

However, when in the year 1575 the Utraquist party, its lords and knights and also its third estate of city dwellers, wished to give a more ample demonstration of the fact that they are faithful followers of the teachings of

Christ and the apostles they thought to submit their confession of faith unanimously to his imperial majesty Maximilian, of glorious and holy memory, they selected for this men who were enlightened, pious, and seeking the glory of God. Among these were some from among us who were firmly secure in the Lord. These all with one heart and spirit signed this confession (as it was with the approval and avowal of all three estates subsequently submitted along with a preface to his imperial majesty the emperor Maximilian). And they thus by this made known to all the world that they were innocent and that they were wrongly opposed as if they believed something wrong which did not agree with the holy Scripture and the prophets and apostles, but that their knights were obedient to this teaching. And although our predecessors held dear our own confession bequeathed to them from the lords of the estates (as the supplication from the estates submitted to his imperial grace sufficiently attests), this confession of all three estates is in all essential articles in full agreement with our confession, and so our predecessors liked it and claimed it also. And this they did as a proof and demonstration of the love which all three estates of the Czech kingdom who receive the body and blood of Christ in two kinds have for each other, and as proof and demonstration that they are not divided, but in the holy faith tolerate one another and are in concord.

Second, [we desired this confession to be reprinted] because some might presume and suspect that the current priests and servants of the Unity are not walking in the footsteps of their predecessors and are not holding to this confession and are disobeying its teaching. In recent times we have not been able through copies of it to prove to all Christianity that we are following our dear predecessors, and that this confession agrees in all essential articles with ours, and that we follow the religion which is contained in this confession which was submitted to his imperial majesty Maximilian and which our predecessors and we ourselves hold as useful for salvation: This confession of the three estates (as the one true God is professed in it as in ours) we confess and intend to maintain and persist in to our death.

To this may the true and gracious Lord God, forever blessed, be pleased to assist us. Amen.

The priests and servants of the Lord,
preachers of the holy Gospel
in the Unity of the Brethren.

Preface of the Czech Utraquist Estates

Most serene and invincible and all-powerful Roman Emperor, Hungarian and Czech etc., King and Lord, our most gracious lord! We do not doubt that as it is known to the almighty Lord God and leader of all, so also it has come to the attention of your imperial grace, the lord of all Christendom and our most gracious lord king, as is also known to many others, how we by religion are of the holy Utraquist faith, which is truly the old-time Christian faith, as it has its origin from the Son of God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and was proclaimed through the holy apostles, and came even into the Czech kingdom through certain godly messengers some hundreds of years ago. And then through Master Jan Hus, of holy memory, and other holy men, it was renewed by the preaching and teaching of the word of God, and was accepted in neighboring lands as well.

For this religion and true faith our predecessors had to bear great adversity, wishing to maintain this according to the true and pure word of God as it has been revealed, and to preserve for us, their descendants, this treasure which is precious and revealed through the word of God.

We acknowledge also from the word of God that that we are created from the Lord our God to the end that on earth we should worship him as well as our Savior, to glorify and praise him with reverence as he in his word wishes to be worshipped, to be mindful of and obey his divine will in all things, and to carry out and mind this will. And we are everywhere to take care that peace, love, and concord with our neighbors be preserved, as far as it depends on us. Then when in these years through many persons, and especially through several godless priests, matters went harmfully beyond the bounds of proper neighborliness, Christian faith, and ancient good order, with great scandal to the common people, and became an open door to sin, and as we were desirous that old-time Christianity and good order should again be introduced within our church and party, we several times humbly sought before your imperial majesty the fulfillment of our desires. Indeed, we have also wished to bring this desire to recollection before this present national assembly — first to our own dear lords and friends from all three estates who receive the sacrament in like manner in order to preserve concord and love. And we also brought up this matter to our friends [in the Unity of Brethren] with the desire that they should go with us to your imperial grace and be of help to us in this good purpose. These discussed the matter among themselves and with friendship made answer to us, providing

proofs that they have nothing against us, and that they have no doubts about this. And so we thought that together we would send word of this to your imperial grace so that you might be pleased to show yourself gracious to us in this regard. And thus with us in love and in friendship they are in agreement that all who receive the sacrament in two kinds should go together to your imperial grace and through the highest lord judge of the Czech kingdom [Lord Bohuslav Felix Hasištejnský of Lobkovice, a neo-Utraquist] humbly and unanimously to make our request verbally to your imperial grace. And this request is made on these grounds:

- Whereas we are of the ancient Christian religion and Utraquist faith (as noted above) which in former times spread from here into neighboring lands and then came into the Holy [Roman] Empire, and
- Whereas this faith was then written down in certain articles at the general assembly in Augsburg in the year of our Lord 1530 and was presented to the almighty emperor Charles (the fifth of that name) of renowned and holy memory in the presence of your father, Ferdinand, of renowned and holy memory, and
- Whereas this was permitted and accepted for the estates of the holy empire in many churches as the true Christian ancient and holy faith, agreeing with the Scriptures, the prophets, the apostles, and also with the teaching of the Lord Christ, and
- Whereas through their agreement and through his imperial majesty's gracious permission, concord and love were introduced, and peace was confirmed among the estates of the Holy Roman Empire, and
- Whereas through this confession other erroneous and harmful teachings which do not agree with the word of God are rejected as untrue and are condemned for judgment and uprooting;

Therefore because of these and other good examples of the estates of the holy empire for the nurture and preservation among us in this kingdom of concord, love, peace, and good order, and likewise for the carrying out of our Christian duty, which (as is mentioned above) is first to the Lord our God, then to your imperial grace, and finally to our homeland and descendants, and concerning these things which have to do with the honor and glory of our Lord God almighty and our souls depend for salvation and which we must provide and care for in our mortality, we first submissively and humbly ask your imperial grace as the highest Christian sovereign and our most gracious lord that you would be pleased that we may assemble together and along with our ancient faith and Christian religion that we may discuss our church order and, partly at least, by these means uproot what has harmfully arisen and gotten out of hand, that is the false teaching of all sorts of scandalous sects, which imitate our faith as

though they are hidden with some sort of cloak.

And, as is written above, having received grace and permission from your imperial grace for all of this, we are very much cheered and heartily thank the Lord God almighty, humbly beseeching his divine grace that your imperial grace may continue for a long time to extend happiness and peace over our domains and the whole kingdom and land. We pray too that your imperial grace may have victory over our enemies and now and always be favored with great blessing. May your imperial grace be heartily strengthened by the Holy Spirit for eternal life, and may the Spirit be pleased to look after the empire and all of your imperial grace's lords and ladies.

And because of such gracious permission already received from your imperial grace, we have introduced among us in these days several pious and learned clerical and lay persons into our general assembly, and have brought forth a summary of our old-time Christian and true religion in these articles and document. And now, with all submission and humility, we deliver to your imperial grace this document for your consideration and understanding.

And we all profess before the true God and our confession of faith that we keep true Christian order everywhere (not deviating from the word of God to the right or to the left, being placed under your imperial majesty's gracious protection by God's ordinance). And with the help of God we will continue not to receive any heretical teachings or agree with them in faith. In this endeavor may we continue in every truth of Scripture and every ordinance of God to be preserved from every sect or heresy, or erroneous teaching on the sacraments, old or new.

And since we have a religion whose basis and principles are from holy Scripture, and this is also built on the sure foundation laid down by our ancestors which affirms that our confession of religion and faith cannot be firmly built and endure without good church order, therefore we humbly ask your imperial grace that you may be pleased that we be established and constituted as before with our administrators and consistory composed of pious, worthy, and exemplary men, and that our priesthood be continued. And thus our profession of holy faith and good order may be maintained and administered in relations with the nobility. May you be pleased graciously to establish this so that no discord or laxity may exist in our church, but rather peace, love, and concord may be preserved among us all. For we do not wish to have any other friend and protector over our confession and administrators and consistory beyond the Lord God other than your imperial grace as our king and most gracious lord. And you may be sure that we in all three estates who partake of the sacrament in both kinds will be diligent in caring for and protecting this consistory and order so that in this kingdom under your imperial grace the honor and glory of God will be fostered and his holy word preached and proclaimed in purity, and the people will be brought to true piety and turn from iniquity, heresies, and indifferent service to the word of God. And this you may

see from our document on the order of our consistory which we offer to your imperial grace along with our confession of faith.¹

So, most gracious emperor, this is the situation we have been in of not all being tolerated in faith, especially our dear friends who call themselves the Unity of Brethren, and therefore we with all submissive humility declare to your imperial grace that they in former years presented their own confession to your imperial grace and have requested to retain this. This agrees in all essential articles with the one we have presented here, and so we will not print it. Therefore we unanimously ask your imperial grace that you extend your gracious and protecting hand to us all and that you may be pleased that in our Christian religion we may willingly and freely serve the Lord God.

And thus to your imperial grace, as faithful subjects according to our highest powers, we wish always to render humble service.

And in all of this, your imperial grace, with humble submission we commend ourselves to your safeguarding protection as Christian emperor and king and our most gracious lord.

Dated on the Tuesday after the Ascension of our Lord [17 May] at the national assembly which began on the Monday after Invocavit Sunday [21 February] and continued until the Tuesday before St. Wenceslas' Day [27 September] in the year of our Lord 1575.

Your imperial graces faithful subjects, lords, and knights, citizens of Prague and other cities, all three estates of the Czech nation who receive the sacrament under both kinds.

¹ A first portion of this church order, mostly concerning the rights of the consistory, was compiled in May of 1575 by a committee comprised of representatives of the Utraquists and the Unity of Brethren. It was presented to the emperor along with the confession, but did not achieve legal status.