

## **BELGIC CONFESSION - ARTICLE 29**

### **The Marks of the True Church, and Wherein She Differs From the False Church**

We believe that we ought to diligently and carefully discern from the Word of God which is the true Church, since all sects which are in the world assume to themselves the name of “the Church”. But we speak here not of hypocrites, who are mixed in the Church with the good, yet are not of the Church, though externally in it; but we say that the body and communion of the true Church must be distinguished from all sects who call themselves “the Church”.

The marks by which the true Church is known are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin; in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary to it are rejected, and Jesus Christ is acknowledged as the only Head of the Church.<sup>1</sup> Hereby the true Church may certainly be known, from which no man has a right to separate himself.

With respect to those who are members of the Church, they may be known by the marks of Christians, namely, by faith; and when they have received Jesus Christ the only Savior, they avoid sin, follow after righteousness,<sup>2</sup> love the true God and their neighbor, neither turn aside to the right or left, and crucify the flesh with the works thereof.<sup>3</sup> But this is not to be understood as if there did not remain in them great weaknesses; but they fight against them through the Spirit all the days of their life,<sup>4</sup> continually taking their refuge in the blood, death, passion, and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, *in whom they have remission of sins through faith in Him.*<sup>5</sup>

As for the false Church, it ascribes more power and authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God, and will not submit itself to the yoke of Christ. Neither does it administer the sacraments as appointed by Christ in His Word, but adds to and takes from them as it thinks proper; it relies more upon men than upon Christ; and persecutes those who live holy lives according to the Word of God and rebuke this false church for its errors, covetousness, and idolatry. These two Churches are easily known and distinguished from each other.

