

A COMPENDIUM

OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION

## Introduction to the

# COMPENDIUM

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

The *Compendium* had no official standing in the Dutch Reformed Churches until the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-1619, saw its value as a teaching tool and recommended it for use in the churches.

The *Compendium* has since that time been used in the churches of the Netherlands and in the Dutch churches in South Africa. It was used in this country by the Reformed Church in America in the early part of its history. It was translated into its present English form by Rev. Archibald Laidlie, a minister in the RCA from Scotland, in 1767.



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Question 1. How many things are necessary for thee to know, that thou enjoying real comfort mayest live and die happily?

Answer: Three: first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.

## THE FIRST PART

### OF THE MISERY OF MAN

Q. 2. Whence knowest thou thy misery?

A. Out of the law of God.

Q. 3. What hath God commanded thee in His law?

A. That is contained in the ten commandments, which He hath revealed in Scripture, as follows:

Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5: 6, 7, etc. *I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

1. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*
2. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*
3. *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*
4. *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD*

*thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

5. *Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*
6. *Thou shalt not kill.*
7. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*
8. *Thou shalt not steal.*
9. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*
10. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.*

**Q. 4. How are the ten commandments divided?**

**A.** Into two tables.

**Q. 5. Which is the sum of what God requires of thee in the four commandments of the first table?**

**A.** That I love the Lord my God with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength; this is the first and great commandment.

**Q. 6. Which is the sum of what God commands thee in the six commandments of the second table?**

**A.** That I love my neighbor as myself; on these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets.

**Q. 7. Canst thou keep all these things perfectly?**

**A.** In no wise; for I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor; and to transgress the commandments of God in thought, word, and deed.

**Q. 8. Hath God created thee naturally so wicked and perverse?**

**A.** By no means; but He created me good and after His own image, in the true knowledge of God, in righteousness, and in holiness.

**Q. 9. Whence then proceeds that depravity which is in thee?**

**A.** From the fall and disobedience of Adam and Eve in Paradise; hence our nature is become so corrupt that we are all conceived and born in sin.

**Q. 10. What was that disobedience?**

A. That they did eat of the fruit of the tree, which God had forbidden them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## THE SECOND PART

### OF MAN’S DELIVERANCE

**Q. 14. By what means canst thou escape this punishment and be again received into favor?**

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

**Q. 15. Who is that Mediator?**

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

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

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

**Q. 17. Cannot the saints be our mediators?**

A. No, for they themselves have sinned, and have obtained salvation by no other means than through this Mediator.

**Q. 18. Shall all men then be saved by the Mediator, Jesus, as they are all condemned in Adam?**

A. No, but those only who receive Him by a true faith; as it is written, John 3:16: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

**Q. 19. What is true faith?**

A. It is a certain knowledge of God and of His promises revealed to us in the gospel, and a hearty confidence that all my sins are forgiven me, for Christ’s sake.

**Q. 20. What is the sum of that which God has promised in the gospel, and commanded us to believe?**

**A.** That is comprehended in the twelve articles of the catholic Christian faith, which are as follows:

1. I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth;
2. And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord;
3. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary;
4. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, he descended into hell;
5. The third day He rose again from the dead;
6. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty;
7. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Ghost.
9. I believe an holy catholic church; the communion of saints;
10. The forgiveness of sins;
11. The resurrection of the body;
12. And the life everlasting.

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

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

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

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

**Q. 23. What believest thou when thou sayest: "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"?**

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

**Q. 24. What believest thou when thou sayest: “And in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son, our Lord”?**

A. That Jesus Christ is the eternal and only son of the Father, co-essential with God the Father and the Holy Ghost.

**Q. 25. Do you not believe that He also became man?**

A. Yes, for He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.

**Q. 26. Is His Godhead then changed into humanity?**

A. No, for the Godhead is immutable.

**Q. 27. How is He then become man?**

A. By assuming the human nature into a personal union with His divine.

**Q. 28. Did He then bring His human nature from heaven?**

A. No, but He took it on Him of the Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and is thus become like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted (Heb. 2:17 and 4:15).

**Q. 29. Why is He called Jesus, that is, Savior?**

A. Because He saves His people from their sins.

**Q. 30. Is there no other Savior?**

A. No, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, than the name of Jesus (Acts. 4:12).

**Q. 31. Why is He called Christ, that is, anointed?**

A. Because He was anointed with the Holy Ghost, and ordained by God the Father, to be our chief Prophet, our only High Priest, and our eternal King.

**Q. 32. What then hath Jesus Christ done to save us?**

A. He has suffered for us, was crucified and died, was buried and descended into hell, that is, He suffered the torments of hell, and thus became obedient to His Father, that He might deliver us from the temporal and eternal punishment due to sin.

**Q. 33. In which nature hath He suffered this?**

A. Only in His human nature, that is, in soul and body.

**Q. 34. What hath then His Godhead contributed thereto?**

A. His Godhead, by its power, in such wise strengthened the assumed human nature, that it could bear the burden of God's wrath against sin and deliver us from it.

**Q. 35. Did Christ then remain under the power of death?**

A. No, but He rose from the dead the third day for our justification (Rom. 4:25).

**Q. 36. Where is Christ now, as to His human nature?**

A. He is ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father; that is, exalted in the highest glory, far above all creatures (Eph. 1:20, 21).

**Q. 37. To what end is He there so highly exalted?**

A. Particularly that He might from thence govern His church, and there be our Intercessor with the Father.

**Q. 38. Is He not with us then even unto the end of the world, as He hath promised us? Matt. 28:20.**

A. With respect to His Godhead, majesty, grace, and Spirit, He is never absent from us; but with respect to His human nature, He remains in heaven, until He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead.

**Q. 39. What do you believe concerning the Holy Ghost?**

A. That He is the true and co-eternal God with the Father and the Son; and that He, being given to me of the Father, through Christ, regenerates me and leads me into all truth, comforts me, and will abide with me forever.

**Q. 40. What believest thou concerning the holy catholic church?**

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

**Q. 41. Where doth He gather His church?**

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

**Q. 42. What benefits doth Christ bestow on His church?**

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

**Q. 43. What doth it profit thee now that thou believest all this?**

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



**Q. 44. How art thou righteous before God?**

A. Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ.

**Q. 45. How is it to be understood that thou art justified by faith only?**

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

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

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

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

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

**Q. 48. Who worketh that faith in thee?**

A. The Holy Ghost.

**Q. 49. By what means?**

A. By the hearing of the Word preached (Rom. 10:14-17).

**Q. 50. How does He strengthen that faith?**

A. By the same Word preached, and by the use of the holy sacraments.

**Q. 51. What are the sacraments?**

A. They are holy signs and seals instituted by God, thereby to assure us that He of grace grants us remission of sins and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ finished on the cross.

**Q. 52. How many sacraments hath Christ instituted in the New Testament?**

A. Two: holy baptism and the holy supper.

**Q. 53. Which is the outward sign in baptism?**

A. The water, with which we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

**Q. 54. What doth that signify and seal?**

A. The washing away of sins by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ.

**Q. 55. Where hath Christ promised and assured us of this?**

A. In the institution of baptism, which is as follows: *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*

**Q. 56. Are infants also to be baptized?**

A. Yes, for they, as well as the adult, are comprehended in the covenant of God and in His church.

**Q. 57. What is the outward sign in the Lord’s Supper?**

A. The broken bread that we eat, and the poured out wine which we drink, in remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ.

**Q. 58. What is thereby signified and sealed?**

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

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

A. In the institution of the Lord’s supper, which is thus expressed by St. Paul (1 Cor. 11:23-26): *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.”*

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

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

**Q. 61. After what manner must you examine yourself before you come to the Lord’s Supper?**

A. I must examine whether I abhor myself for my sins and humble myself before

God on account of them. 2. Whether I believe and trust that all my sins are forgiven me for Christ's sake. 3. Whether I also have a sincere resolution henceforward to walk in all good works.

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

A. No, lest the covenant of God be profaned and His wrath kindled against the whole church.

**Q. 63.** How must we then deal with such persons?

A. According to the appointment given us by Christ, Matt. 18: 15-17: *"If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."*

## THE THIRD PART

### OF THE GRATITUDE WE OWE TO GOD FOR REDEMPTION

**Q. 64.** Since we are saved merely of grace through Christ, why must we then yet do good works?

A. Not to merit heaven thereby (which Christ has done), but because this is commanded me of God.

**Q. 65.** What purpose then do your good works answer?

A. That I may thereby testify my thankfulness to God for all His benefits, and that He may be glorified by me; and that also I may be assured of the sincerity of my faith by good works as the fruits thereof; and that my neighbors may be edified thereby and gained to Christ.

**Q. 66.** Shall they also be saved who do no good works?

A. No, for the Scripture says that neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor whoremongers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers, nor such like shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9 and 10), unless they turn to the Lord.

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

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

**Q. 68. What are good works?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. For all things necessary for soul and body, which Christ our Lord has comprised in the prayer He Himself has taught us.

**Q. 73. What are the words of that prayer?**

A. *Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

**Q. 74. What do you desire of God in this prayer?**

A. 1. That all things which tend to the glory of God may be promoted, and whatsoever is repugnant thereto, or contrary to His will, may be prevented. 2. That He may provide me with all things necessary for the body, and as to my soul, preserve me from all evil, which might in any wise be detrimental to my salvation. Amen.

