

## **FIFTH HEAD OF DOCTRINE. THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS**

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 1.** Those whom God, according to His purpose, calls to the communion of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, He also delivers from the dominion and slavery of sin, though in this life He does not deliver them altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 2.** Hence spring forth the daily sins of infirmity, and blemishes cleave even to the best works of the saints. These are to them **a perpetual reason to humiliate themselves before God and to flee for refuge to Christ crucified**; to mortify the flesh more and more by the spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of piety; and to press forward to the goal of perfection, until at length, delivered from this body of death, they shall reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 3.** By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and also because the temptations of the world and of Satan, those who are converted could not persevere in that grace if left to their own strength. **But God is faithful**, who, having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end. **(Philippians 1:6)**

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 4.** Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, so as to be seduced by and to comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer **(2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10)**, that they may not be led into temptation. When they fail to do this, not only can they be carried away by the flesh, the world, and Satan, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually be drawn into these evils. This, the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 5.** By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes for a while lose the sense of God's favor, until, when they change their course **(Matthew 18:15-20)** by serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 6.** But **God, who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people even in their grievous falls (Hebrews 12:5-11)**; nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit; nor does He permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 7.** For in the first place, in these falls He preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing or being totally lost; and again, by His Word and Spirit He certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, **that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator**, may again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore His mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 8.** Thus **it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy**, that they neither totally fall from faith and grace nor continue and perish finally in their backslidings; which, with respect to themselves is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen; but **with respect to God, it is utterly impossible, since His counsel cannot be changed nor His promise fail**; neither can the call according to His purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be obliterated.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 9.** Of this preservation of the elect to salvation and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they surely believe that they are and ever will continue to be true and living members of the Church, and that they have the forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 10.** This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God (**Romans 8:16**); and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 11.** The Scripture moreover testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that they may be able to endure it (**1 Corinthians 10:13**), and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 12.** This certainty of perseverance, however, is so far from exciting in believers a spirit of pride, or of rendering them carnally secure, that on the contrary it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God; so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as appears from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 13.** Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness or a disregard of piety in those who are recovered from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which He has ordained, that they who walk therein may keep the assurance of persevering; lest, on account of their abuse of His fatherly kindness, God should turn away His gracious countenance from them (to behold which is to the godly dearer than life, and the withdrawal of which is more bitter than death) and they in consequence thereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 14.** And as it has pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, and by the use of the sacraments.

**FIFTH HEAD: ARTICLE 15.** The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and the certainty thereof, which God has most abundantly revealed in His Word, for the glory of His Name and the consolation of pious souls, and which He impresses upon the hearts of the believers. Satan abhors it, the world ridicules it, the ignorant and hypocritical abuse it, and the heretics oppose it. But the bride of Christ has always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her so to continue to the end. Now to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.