

The Guanabara Confession of Faith

ALDERI S. MATOS

The Guanabara Confession, an early statement of the Reformed faith, was written in “Antarctic France,” a sixteenth-century French colony in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. After the discovery of Brazil in 1500, Portugal was slow to protect and settle its new territory. Only in 1549 did the Portuguese crown take direct control of its

South American domains by appointing the first governor general. For decades other European nations had set their eyes upon the new land and its natural resources. Among those nations was France, whose ships came continuously to the Brazilian coast in order to smuggle dyewood and other products.

In the 1550s, Nicolas Durand de Villegaignon, a well-known soldier and adventurer, conceived the idea of establishing a French colony in the bay of Guanabara, the site of the future city of Rio de Janeiro. With the support of Admiral Gaspard de Coligny and King Henry II, he led an expedition that arrived in Rio in November of 1555. Admiral Coligny was a sympathizer of the Reformation and soon would become the leader of the French Protestants. It seems that, besides the economic and political interests, one of the purposes of the new colony was to provide a haven for persecuted Protestants at a time of increasing religious intolerance in France.

Villegaignon built the small Fort Coligny on an island near the entrance of the Guanabara Bay. For some time things went well with the newly-founded Antarctic France. Then several conflicts arose between the colonists and the hot-tempered commander. Being concerned with the improvement of the moral and spiritual conditions of the colony and showing at that time some interest in the Protestant faith, he wrote letters to John Calvin and the Genevan Reformed Church requesting that evangelical colonists be

sent to Brazil. Geneva responded promptly and assembled a small group of volunteers that included two Reformed pastors, Pierre Richier and Guillaume Chartier.

A second expedition, that included the fourteen Huguenots, arrived in Rio de Janeiro in March of 1557. On the 10th of that month, the ministers led what is known as the first Protestant worship service in the Americas. The group sang Psalm 5 from the Huguenot Psalter, and pastor Richier preached on Psalm 27:4. The goal of the Calvinists was twofold: to start a church among the colonists and to evangelize the natives. Unfortunately, soon after Villegaignon started to disagree with the Huguenots regarding liturgical and other issues. Reverting to his Catholic beliefs, he criticized the simplicity of the Reformed Eucharistic rite. Finally, he expelled the small band to the continent nearby.

Among the Calvinists was a humble shoemaker by the name of Jean de Léry, who later recounted these incidents in his book *Histoire d'un Voyage fait en la terre du Brésil* (*History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*, 1578). Besides providing a detailed account of the sad events in the French colony, this famous classic also preserved invaluable information regarding the culture, customs, and language of the native Brazilians.

Frustrated in their purposes in Brazil, the Calvinists decided to go back to their homeland. They boarded a small French ship carrying dyewood, exotic animals, and other goods. As soon as they departed, the captain warned them that the provisions on board would not be sufficient for the long trip. He asked if someone would volunteer to go back to the mainland. Five of them did. They finally made their way back to Antarctic France. Villegaignon welcomed them with sympathy, but a few days later had them arrested under the accusation of being traitors and spies. Looking for an excuse to execute them, he handed them a theological questionnaire and gave them a few hours to answer in writing.

Those simple laymen, having no books of theology, only a copy of the Scriptures, produced in the short time allotted to them a profound and eloquent affirmation of their faith, later known as the Guanabara Confession of Faith. With their statement in hand, Villegaignon found them guilty of heresy and condemned them to death. On February 9, 1558, three of the Huguenots were strangled and thrown into the ocean—Jean du Bourdel (the main author of the document), Matthieu Verneuil, and Pierre Bourdon. Another, André Lafon, the only tailor in the colony, was reluctant to reaffirm his faith and was spared. The fifth man, Jacques Le Balleur, managed to escape and preached his convictions elsewhere in Brazil.

Strictly speaking, this confession of faith is a creed, since most of its

articles begin with the phrase “we believe.” However, its extension and the variety of its themes place it among the confessions of faith which were common at the time of the Reformation. In fact, it is one of the earliest Reformed confessional documents. The Gallican Confession (1559), the Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), and the Westminster Confession of Faith (1648) were all written at a later date. The introduction makes a lovely application of 1 Peter 3:15. The confession itself is made up of 17 paragraphs that deal with 6 topics.

Paragraphs 1 to 4 address the doctrine of the Trinity, in particular the person of Christ with his divine and human natures. Paragraphs 5 to 9 deal with the doctrine of the sacraments, the Lord’s Supper being discussed in four articles, and baptism in one. Paragraph 10 speaks about free will. Paragraphs 11 and 12 address the ministers’ authority to forgive sins and lay on hands. Paragraphs 13 to 15 discuss divorce, the marriage of bishops, and vows of chastity. Finally, paragraphs 16 and 17 address the intercession of the saints and prayers for the dead.

The document makes reference to the councils of the early church and to several church fathers. As such, it shows its authors’ historical knowledge. Paragraphs 1 to 4 use concepts taken from the Nicene Creed (381) and the Definition of Chalcedon (451). The expressions “the Son, eternally begotten by the Father” and “the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son” (*Filioque*) are well-known in the history of theology. Paragraph 3 refers to the “symbol,” that is, the Apostles’ Creed or some other of the ancient creeds. Paragraph 5 refers explicitly to the Council of Nicea (325).

The Brazilian confession of faith also mentions four church fathers or early church writers: Tertullian (*ca.* 160–*ca.* 220) in paragraph 5; Cyprian (*ca.* 200–258) in paragraphs 11 and 15; Ambrose (*ca.* 339–397) in paragraphs 11 and 13; and especially Augustine (354–430), mentioned three times in paragraphs 7, 11, and 17.¹ There are also references to many biblical passages, mainly in the second half of the document.

Considered as a whole, the Guanabara Confession of Faith reveals three characteristics: (a) it is a biblical confession, abounding in references and arguments taken directly from Scripture; (b) it is a Christian confession: it expresses convictions and concepts inherited from the first centuries of the church; (c) it is a Reformed confession: it contains several key emphases of Calvinism such as the centrality of Scripture, the symbolic nature of the

¹ The appeal to the church fathers is certainly related to the apologetic emphasis of the document. Since the authors wrote in response to the Roman Catholic views espoused by Villegaignon, they wisely showed how some of the greatest patristic theologians could be called upon to support the Protestant and Reformed doctrines.

sacraments, the supremacy of Christ, the importance of faith, infant baptism, and election, among others.

After five months of a dangerous voyage, the ship boarded by the Huguenots in Rio de Janeiro arrived in France at the end of May 1558. Some of those who returned months later from the Antarctic France told that they had witnessed the executions. They brought the Confession of Faith as well as the proceedings against the Calvinists. Those documents eventually were obtained by Jean de Léry, who, being interested in their preservation, handed them to the editor Jean Crespin so he could insert them “in the book of those in our day who were martyred in the defense of the gospel” (*Actes des martyrs*, 1564).

The Guanabara Confession was first translated into Portuguese in 1907, by Erasmo Braga, the young dean of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Campinas. He wrote in his introduction to the translation, “This is a Calvinist confession, the confession of our great men; it answers in particular to the heresies of Rome. It is the first confession written in the Americas, in the first church in Brazil. And it was sealed with blood.”²

Braga’s words highlight the significance of this document for the Brazilian church today. It was the first Protestant confessional statement in the history of the country. It marks the early presence of the Reformed faith in what would become one of the largest Christian nations in the world. The confession brings together some of the most meaningful emphases of the Calvinistic tradition: solid biblical content, the appeal to church history, the relevance of theological reflection, and the need to confess the faith. Additionally, it shows the Christian integrity and courage of the authors, who, writing under strong pressure and fully aware of the possibility of martyrdom, gave a bold testimony of their most treasured convictions.

FOR FURTHER READING

Baez-Camargo, Gonzalo. “The Earliest Protestant Missionary Venture in Latin America.” *Church History* 21 (1952): 135–44.

Beaver, R. Pierce. “The Genevan Mission to Brazil.” Pages 55–73 in *The Heritage of John Calvin*. Edited by John H. Bratt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973.

Gordon, Amy Glassner. “The First Protestant Missionary Effort: Why Did It Fail?” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 8 (1984): 12–18.

Léry, Jean de. *Histoire d’un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil*. Edited by Frank Lestringant. Montpellier: Max Chaleil, 1992.

———. *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*. Translated by Janet Whatley. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

² See Jean Crespin, *A tragédia da Guanabara*, trans. Domingos Ribeiro (São Paulo: Cultura Cristã, 2007), 72.

The Confession

According to the doctrine of St. Peter, the apostle, in his first epistle, all Christians must always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Pet 3:15); and to do this in all gentleness and kindness.³ We the undersigned, Seigneur Villegaignon, have unanimously (according to the measure of grace which our Lord has granted to us) given a reason for each point as we have been directed and commanded⁴—beginning with ...

ARTICLE 1. We believe in one God, immortal and invisible, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible as well as invisible; who is distinguished in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; who, nevertheless, are of the same substance, eternal in essence, and who are of the same will. The Father is the source and beginning of all good; the Son, eternally begotten by the Father, who, the fullness of time being achieved, made himself known to the world in the flesh, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, made under the law to redeem those who lived under the law, so that we might receive the adoption befitting sons. [We believe] in the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and from the Son, teacher of all truth, who spoke through the mouth of the prophets, and who inspired all things which have been spoken to the apostles by our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our only comforter in affliction, bestowing steadfastness and perseverance in every good thing.

We believe that it is necessary solely or particularly to worship and perfectly love, pray, and call upon the majesty of God in faith.

ARTICLE 2. Worshiping our Lord Jesus Christ, we do not separate one nature from the other, confessing that the two natures, namely the divine and the human, are inseparable in Him.

³ The text of the translation of the “Guanabara Confession” as translated by James T. Dennison Jr. is reproduced with slight modifications and additional notes from *Reformed Confessions of the 16th and 17th Century in English Translation*, Volume 2, 1552–1566, ed. James T. Dennison Jr. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), 118–24. We are grateful to Reformation Heritage Books for granting us the permission to reproduce this text. The translation was made from the French version found in Jean Crespin, *Histoire des vrais tesmoins de la vérité de l’Évangile* (1570; repr., Liège: Centre National de Recherches d’Histoire Religieuse, 1964), 460–63. For a critical edition of the French text, see Hans Helmut Eßer, “48. La confession de foi Brésilienne de 1557 (1558),” in *Reformierte Bekenntnisschriften*, 1:3, 1550–1558, ed. Heiner Faulenbach and Eberhard Busch (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2007), 379–98. The Portuguese translations can be found in Domingos Ribeiro, *Origens do evangelismo brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Est. Graf. “Apollo,” 1937), 38–47, and online at http://www.monergismo.com/textos/credos/confissao_guanabara.htm.

⁴ Alderi S. Matos: It is quite evident that the authors of the confession are answering a doctrinal questionnaire that was submitted to them by the French commander.

ARTICLE 3. Concerning the Son of God and the Holy Spirit, we believe what the Word of God and the apostolic doctrine, and the Symbol [Apostles' Creed] teach us.⁵

ARTICLE 4. We believe that our Lord Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead, in a visible and human form, just as He ascended into heaven, executing that judgment in the manner which He has foretold us in St. Matthew 25; having all power to judge, given to Him by the Father, since He is a man. And when we say in our prayers that the Father will appear in judgment in the person of the Son, we understand by this that the power of the Father given to the Son will be demonstrated in open judgment; however, not that we wish to confound the persons, inasmuch as they are really distinct one from the other.

ARTICLE 5. We believe that in the holy sacrament of the Supper, with the material signs of bread and wine, faithful souls are really and actually nourished with the proper substance of our Lord Jesus, just as our bodies are nourished with food.⁶ And so we are not intending to say, nor do we believe, that the bread and the wine are transformed or transubstantiated into His body and blood, because the bread continues in its nature and substance, equally with the wine; and there is no change or alteration. However, we distinguish the aforesaid bread and wine from the other bread which is dedicated to common use; since it is a sacramental sign to us under which the truth is infallibly received.

Now this confession⁷ is made only by means of faith. And it is not fitting to imagine anything carnal, nor to prepare the teeth to eat, as St. Augustine teaches us saying, "Why do you prepare the teeth and the belly? Believe, and you have eaten it!"⁸ Thus, the sign itself does not give us the truth, nor the thing signified; rather our Lord Jesus Christ, by His power, virtue, and goodness, nourishes and maintains our souls, making them participants of His flesh and of His blood, and in all of His benefits. *Interpretation of the Words: This Is My Body*. Coming to the interpretation of the words of Jesus Christ, "This bread is My body" [Luke 22:19]. Tertullian, in his fourth book against

⁵ Matos: Besides the Apostles' Creed, the authors demonstrate their familiarity with the other creeds of the ancient church (Nicene Creed, Niceno-Constantinople Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon).

⁶ Matos: This paragraph starts the largest portion of the confession dealing with a single subject, namely, the Lord's Supper. This is due not only to the fact that this doctrine was one of the main controversies of the Reformation, but also to the fact that it reflects the difficulties that the Huguenots had with Villegaignon regarding this issue since they arrived in Brazil.

⁷ Ed. note: other versions read "communication" here.

⁸ Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 25.11 (on John 6:29; PL 35:1602; ET, *NPNF*¹ 7:164).

Marcion, explains these words thus: “This is the sign and figure of my body.”⁹ St. Augustine says, “Without a doubt, the Lord made the point saying, ‘This is my body’ [Matt 26:26] when He gave only the symbol of His body.”¹⁰ As was commanded in the first canon of the Council of Nicaea, in this holy sacrament we must not imagine anything carnal, and not distract ourselves either with the bread nor with the wine (which are in themselves offered to us as signs), but to lift our spirits to heaven, to contemplate by faith the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, sitting at the right hand of God His Father.¹¹ In this respect, we could join the article concerning the ascension with many other sentences from St. Augustine, which we are omitting, fearing to be long.

ARTICLE 6. *Mixing the Water with the Wine.* We believe that if it were necessary to mix water with the wine, neither the gospels nor St. Paul himself would have omitted telling us a thing of such great consequence. And as for the ancient teachers who observed it (basing it on the blood mixed with the water which flowed from the side of Jesus Christ [John 19:34]), especially as such a practice has no foundation in the Word of God, being an event which occurred after the institution of the holy Supper; we are not able to allow it necessarily today.¹²

ARTICLE 7. We believe that there is no other consecration than that which is made by the minister when the Supper is celebrated. The aforesaid minister rehearses to the people in a known language the institution of this Supper, joined with the form prescribed to us by our Lord Jesus, admonishing the aforesaid people of the death and passion of our Lord. And St. Augustine says the same thing: the consecration is the word of faith which is preached and received in faith.¹³ Therefore it follows that the words secretly pronounced over the signs cannot be the consecration, as appears from the institution which our Lord Jesus Christ left to His apostles, addressing His words to His disciples present then, whom He commanded to take and eat.

ARTICLE 8. The holy sacrament of the Supper is not a food for the body, but for souls (because we are not to imagine anything carnal, as we have declared in the fifth article) receiving the same by faith which is not carnal.

⁹ Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.40 (PL 2:491; ET, ANF 3:418).

¹⁰ Augustine, *Against Adimantus* 12.3 (CSEL 25/1.140; ET, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, I/19, *The Manichean Debate* [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2006], 192); cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 4.17.28.

¹¹ Perhaps this is a reference to the Council of Nicaea (325), canon 20 (Charles Joseph Hefele, *A History of the Christian Councils* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1894], 434); cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 4.17.36.

¹² Matos: This is a fine example of the priority given to Scripture. The authors appeal frequently to the church fathers, but when their teaching conflicts with God’s Word, it cannot be accepted.

¹³ Cf. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 80.3 (on John 15:3 with Rom 10:10; PL 35:1840; ET, NPNF¹ 7:344) together with Calvin, *Institutes* 4.14.4.

ARTICLE 9. We believe that baptism is a sacrament of penitence, and is like an entrance into the church of God in order to be incorporated into the body of Jesus Christ. This represents to us the remission of our sins past and future, which is completely acquired only by the death of our Lord Jesus. Moreover, the mortification of our flesh is signified to us, and washing represented by the water poured upon the child, which is a sign and seal¹⁴ of the blood of our Lord Jesus, who is the true cleansing of our souls. This institution is taught us in the Word of God, which was observed by the holy apostles, taking water in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. As for exorcisms, the adjuration of Satan, consecrated oil, spittle, and salt, we reject these as traditions of men. We are content solely with the form and institution left by our Lord Jesus.

ARTICLE 10. As for free will, we believe that since the first man was created in the image of God, he had liberty and will as much to good as to evil, and only he understood the nature of free will, standing in his integrity. Now, he failed to guard this gift of God, but was deprived of it by his sin, with all those who are descended from him, so that not one of the seed of Adam has anything¹⁵ of good in him. For this reason, St. Paul says that the carnal (*sensuel*) man does not understand the things of God (1 Cor 2:14). And Hosea cries to the children of Israel: “Your destruction is of yourselves, O Israel!” (13:9). Now we understand this of the man who has not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God. As for the Christian man, baptized in the blood of Jesus Christ, walking in newness of life, our Lord Jesus restores a free will in him and reforms his will to all good works; not, however, in perfection because the performance of a good will is not in his power, but comes from God. As the holy apostle amply declares in the seventh chapter of Romans, “I have the desire, but in me is not found the performance” (7:18). The man predestined to eternal life, although he sins through human weakness, nevertheless cannot fall into an impenitent state. This is why St. John says that he does not sin because election remains within him [cf. 1 John 5:18].

ARTICLE 11. We believe that forgiveness of sins belongs only to the Word of God, of which, as St. Ambrose says, man is only a minister. If he condemns or absolves, it is not of him, but the Word of God which he declares.¹⁶ In this regard, St. Augustine says that it is not by the merit of men that sins are

¹⁴ Lit., “a sign and mark.”

¹⁵ Lit., “any spark [*esteincelle*].”

¹⁶ Ambrose, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke* 10.180 (CSEL 32/4:526; ET, Saint Ambrose of Milan, *Exposition of the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke*, trans. Theodosia Tomkinson, 2nd ed. [Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2003], 452); cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 4.11.1.

forgiven, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. For the Lord has said to His apostles, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22); later He added, “If you forgive anyone his sins, they shall be forgiven” (v. 23).¹⁷ Cyprian said that the servant is not able to remit the offense committed against his master.¹⁸

ARTICLE 12. As for the laying on of hands, it served in its time, but there is no need to retain it now. For by the laying on of hands, one is not able to confer the Holy Spirit because it is by God alone. Regarding ecclesiastical order, we believe that which St. Paul wrote in the first epistle to Timothy and elsewhere.

ARTICLE 13. The separation of a man and a woman lawfully united by marriage may not occur except in the case of fornication, as our Lord Jesus taught us (Matt 5:32; 19:9). Not only may separation take place for the aforesaid fornication, but also the case being examined before the magistrate, should the innocent party not be able to contain himself, he may remarry; as St. Ambrose says in his commentary on chapter 7 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.¹⁹ The magistrate, however, must proceed after mature consideration.

ARTICLE 14. St. Paul, teaching that a bishop ought to be the husband only of one wife (1 Tim 3:2), does not propose by this that after the death of his first wife, he is not allowed to remarry. Rather, the apostle disapproves of bigamy, to which men of that time were greatly inclined. However, we leave this to the judgment of those more versed in the Holy Scriptures. Our faith is not founded on this point.²⁰

ARTICLE 15. It is not permitted to make vows to God, save in what He permits. Thus, monastic vows tend only to corrupt the true service of God. It is also very reckless and presumptuous for a man to make vows which go beyond his vocation, in view of the fact that Holy Scripture teaches us that continence is a special gift (Matt 19 and 1 Cor 7). It follows that those who impose this necessity, renouncing marriage all their life, cannot be excused of extreme recklessness and presumptuous effrontery. By this means, they tempt God, since the aforesaid gift of continence is only temporary in some; and he who has it for a time may not have it for the rest of his life.

¹⁷ Cf. Augustine, “Sermon 49” (on Luke 7:39ff.; PL 38:600; ET, *NPNF*¹ 6:419) and Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 121.4 (on John 20:22–23; PL 35:1958; ET, *NPNF*¹ 7:438).

¹⁸ Cyprian, *The Lapsed* 17 (CSEL 3/1:249; ET, *ANF* 5:442).

¹⁹ Cf. Ambrose, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke* 8.2, 8 (on Luke 16:18 with 1 Cor 7:15; CSEL 32/4:392, 395; ET, Ambrose, *Exposition*, trans. Tomkinson, 335, 337); or Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, on 1 Cor 7:15 (PL 17:219; ET, Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1–2 Corinthians*, trans. Gerald L. Bray, Ancient Christian Texts (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 151–52.

²⁰ Matos: This is quite a balanced statement. The authors mention the two basic interpretations of the passage, state their preference, but remain open to new light on the subject.

Thus, monks, priests, and other such persons, who obligate themselves and promise to live in chastity, make a false vow before God, because it is not within them to fulfill what they have promised. St. Cyprian, in the eleventh epistle, says: “If virgins dedicate themselves from a good heart to Christ, they persevere in chastity without sham; if they are thus strong and constant, they await the reward prepared for their virginity; if they do not care for or cannot persevere in their vows, it is better that they marry rather than to be hurled into the flames of lasciviousness through their pleasures and delights.”²¹ As for the passage of the apostle Paul, it is true that widows, chosen to serve the church, should agree not to remarry, as long as they are subject to the aforesaid responsibility. Not that in this, one reputes them or attributes to them some kind of sanctity; it is simply that they could not carry out their assignments well, being married. And when they wish to marry, they should renounce the vocation to which God has called them, so much that they ought to accomplish that which they have promised in the church, in order not to violate the promise made at baptism, in which is contained this point—that everyone should serve God in the vocation to which he has been called [cf. 1 Cor 7:20]. Widows, then, do not take a vow of continence except in so far as marriage is recognized to be not suitable to the office to which they are presenting themselves, and have no other consideration than to fulfill it. They are not to be so far constrained as not to be permitted to marry rather than to burn and to fall into infamy and dishonesty. Moreover, in order to avoid such an unseemly thing, the apostle St. Paul, in the chapter already referred to, prescribes that such persons should not assume such vows unless first they are at least sixty years of age, which is an age, generally speaking, beyond unchastity. He adds that those elected should have been married only once so that they would already have demonstrated their chastity [cf. 1 Tim 5:9].

ARTICLE 16. We believe²² that Jesus Christ is our only mediator, intercessor, and advocate, through whom we have access to the Father, and that standing justified in His blood, we will be delivered from death, and by whom standing reconciled, we will obtain full victory over death. As for the saints who have departed, we say that they desire our salvation and the fulfillment of the kingdom of God, and that the number of the elect be completed. However, we do not need to address ourselves to them through intercession in order to obtain certain things; because this would be contravening the commandment of God. We who are alive, who are united as

²¹ Cyprian, *Epistles* 4.2 (CSEL 3/2:474; ET, *ANF* 5:357); cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 4.13.17.

²² Matos: Technically, this confession is also a creed, since ten of the seventeen articles start with the phrase “we believe.”

members of one body, ought to pray one for the other, as we are taught in many passages of Holy Scripture.

ARTICLE 17. As for the dead, St. Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 4, prohibits us from sorrowing for them because this is the behavior of pagans who are without any hope of the resurrection. The holy apostle does not command us or teach us to pray for them—which he would not have forgotten, if it were expedient. St. Augustine, on Psalm 48, declares that the spirits of the dead only receive what they have done during their life; that since they have done nothing while they were alive, they receive nothing when they are dead.²³

This is the answer we give to the articles you sent to us, according to the measure and portion of faith that God has given to us, and we pray that it may please Him that our faith not die until it produce fruits worthy of His children, such that give us an increase and perseverance in that faith. We give thanks and praise to Him forever. And so may it be.

Jean du Bourdel
Matthieu Verneuil
Pierre Bourdon
André La Fon

²³ Augustine, *Enarrations on the Psalms* 48.15 (on Psalm 49:11 MT; PL 36:554; ET, *NPNF*¹ 8:173).