

**THE CONFESSION OF FAITH AND THE TWENTY-FIVE  
ARTICLES OF RELIGION COMPARED:  
ASSESSING THE EUB CONTRIBUTION TO METHODIST  
STANDARDS OF DOCTRINE**

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In 1968, the Evangelical United Brethren Church (EUB) merged with The Methodist Church to form The United Methodist Church. As a part of this merger, the EUB Confession of Faith was incorporated into the Methodist *Book of Discipline* alongside the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion as standards of doctrine for the newly formed church. The purpose of this essay is to compare the EUB Confession of Faith with the Methodist Twenty-Five Articles of Religion, identifying organizational and material differences between the two statements and highlighting the areas in which the Confession of Faith adds substantially to the Articles of Religion and therefore to Methodist standards of doctrine.

A full treatment of the differences between these two confessional statements would include an analysis of the historical sources from which the statements derive. For example, it is well known that John Wesley derived the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion from the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England. A full treatment would inquire into the historical sources from which the Thirty-Nine Articles were derived, as well as the sources from which the EUB Confession of Faith are derived.<sup>1</sup>

A full treatment would also include an inquiry into the decision making processes that lay behind the canonization of the two statements within their originating traditions, as well as the processes that informed the canonization of the Confession of Faith in 1968. On this front, two issues are especially in need of further exploration. First, there needs to be a full investigation of the editorial changes made to each document in and around the time of canonization. For example, the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion appear to

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<sup>1</sup> The best analysis of the historical sources for the Confession of Faith available to date is J. Steven O' Malley's "The Distinctive Witness of the Evangelical United Brethren Confession of Faith in Comparison with the Methodist Articles of Religion," in *Doctrines and Discipline: United Methodism and American Culture*, vol. 3, edited by Dennis M. Campbell, William B. Lawrence, and Russell E. Richey (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 55-78. For a commentary on the Confession of Faith by Evangelical United Brethren clergy and scholars, see *This We Believe: A Commentary on The Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church*, edited by J. Gordon Howard (Dayton: The Evangelical United Brethren Board of Publication, 1964).

have been altered in at least two places after they arrived in America.<sup>2</sup> These changes need to be documented more fully than they have been to date.<sup>3</sup>

Second, it would be helpful to compare the proceedings that led to the canonization of the Confession of Faith at the merger of the Evangelical and United Brethren churches in 1946 with those that led to its subsequent canonization at the merger of the EUB and Methodist churches in 1968. In the first instance, the Evangelical and United Brethren churches decided to draw upon the confessional materials at hand in their respective traditions, creating a new confessional statement for a newly formed church. The end result was what we now call the Confession of Faith. In the second instance, rather than create a new confessional statement, the EUB and Methodist churches decided simply to canonize the Confession of Faith alongside the Articles of Religion. Again, a full treatment of the differences between these statements would include a comparison of these canonical proceedings.

In what follows, I can only make a start toward a full comparison of the two statements that, taken together, form the standards of doctrine for the United Methodist Church. The additional areas of inquiry just mentioned will have to await another day. For now, I will simply do three things. First, I will provide a chart (see below) by which the two documents can be usefully compared by scholars and students alike. Second, I will provide initial commentary on stylistic and organizational differences between the two documents. Third, I will call attention to those areas in which the Confession of Faith adds significant theological content to the Articles of Religion and therefore to the United Methodist standards of doctrine.

At this stage, I need to say a word about how to read the chart that follows. The reader will notice that the Confession of Faith occurs twice, both to the left and to the right of the Articles of Religion. This is intended as a heuristic device. In the first column, the Confession of Faith appears in its original order. By comparing the Confession in this column with the Articles in the second column, the reader can readily observe crucial differences between the ordering of the Confession and the ordering of the Articles. Also of note in the first column are articles that appear in italics. These articles are entirely unique to the Confession of Faith, i.e., they *are not* contained in the

<sup>2</sup> It is well known that John Wesley sent over twenty-four articles. The American Methodists added Article XXIII. At least one other change appears to have been made after the American Methodists received the articles from Wesley. The clause "begotten from everlasting of the Father" was present in the first edition of the Articles published in America. Beginning with the second edition and continuing to the present day, this clause was omitted. For more on this, see Jason E. Vickers, "'Begotten From Everlasting of the Father': Inadvertent Omission or Sabelian Trajectory in Early American Methodism," *Methodist History* 44 (July 2006): 251-261.

<sup>3</sup> The standard histories of the Articles attribute most, if not all, of the omissions and alterations to John Wesley. For example, see Henry Wheeler, *History and Exposition of the Twenty-five Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1908). Also see Nolan B. Harmon and John W. Bardsley, "John Wesley and the Articles of Religion," in *Religion in Life* 22 (spring 1953): 280-291. However, there is reason to suspect that persons other than John Wesley altered the Articles in and around the time of canonization in what would become *The Book of Discipline*. See my "Begotten from Everlasting of the Father," *op cit*.

Articles.

The second column contains the Articles of Religion in their original order. Articles that are underlined in column two appear in the Articles but not in the Confession.

Column three represents a revised ordering of the Confession, enabling the reader to compare directly the articles that occur in both the Confession and the Articles. Doing so helps material differences to stand out more than they would otherwise. The reader will observe that the titles of some articles in column three are in italics. Italics in column three indicate that an article in the Confession of Faith has been divided into two or more sections in order to enable direct comparison with the relevant material in the Articles of Religion.

**Table 1 Comparison**

EUB CONFESSION OF FAITH—ORIGINAL ORDER	METHODIST ARTICLES OF RELIGION—ORIGINAL ORDER	EUB CONFESSION OF FAITH—REVISED ORDER
<p><b>Article I—God</b></p> <p>We believe in the one true, holy and living God, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. He is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and love, and rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of men, to the glory of his name. We believe the one God reveals himself as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.</p>	<p><b>Article I—Of Faith in the Holy Trinity</b></p> <p>There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.</p>	<p><b>Article I—God</b></p> <p>We believe in the one true, holy and living God, Eternal Spirit, who is Creator, Sovereign and Preserver of all things visible and invisible. He is infinite in power, wisdom, justice, goodness and love, and rules with gracious regard for the well-being and salvation of men, to the glory of his name. We believe the one God reveals himself as the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable, eternally one in essence and power.</p>
<p><b>Article II—Jesus Christ</b></p> <p>We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering Servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross. He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all men will be judged.</p>	<p><b>Article II—Of the Word, or Son of God, Who Was Made Very Man</b></p> <p>The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man’s nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.</p>	<p><i>Article II—Jesus Christ, Part 1</i></p> <p>We believe in Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, in whom the divine and human natures are perfectly and inseparably united. He is the eternal Word made flesh, the only begotten Son of the Father, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. As ministering Servant he lived, suffered and died on the cross.</p>

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<p><b>Article III—The Holy Spirit</b></p> <p>We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from and is one in being with the Father and the Son. He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He leads men through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church. He comforts, sustains and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth.</p>	<p><b>Article III—Of the Resurrection of Christ</b></p> <p>Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.</p>	<p><i>Article II – Jesus Christ, Part 2</i></p> <p>He was buried, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to be with the Father, from whence he shall return. He is eternal Savior and Mediator, who intercedes for us, and by him all men will be judged.</p>
<p><b>Article IV—The Holy Bible</b></p> <p>We believe the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God so far as it is necessary for our salvation. It is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice. Whatever is not revealed in or established by the Holy Scriptures is not to be made an article of faith nor is it to be taught as essential to salvation.</p>	<p><b>Article IV—Of the Holy Ghost</b></p> <p>The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.</p>	<p><b>Article III—The Holy Spirit</b></p> <p>We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from and is one in being with the Father and the Son. He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He leads men through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church. He comforts, sustains and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth.</p>
<p><b>Article V—The Church</b></p> <p>We believe the Christian Church is the community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. We believe it is one, holy, apostolic and catholic. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by men divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world.</p>	<p><b>Article V—Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation</b></p> <p>The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the church. The names of the canonical books are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of</p>	<p><b>Article IV—The Holy Bible</b></p> <p>We believe the Holy Bible, Old and New Testaments, reveals the Word of God so far as it is necessary for our salvation. It is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice. Whatever is not revealed in or established by the Holy Scriptures is not to be made an article of faith nor is it to be taught as essential to salvation.</p>

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	<p>Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less.</p> <p>All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.</p>	
<p><b>Article VI—The Sacraments</b></p> <p>We believe the Sacraments, ordained by Christ, are symbols and pledges of the Christian’s profession and of God’s love toward us. They are means of grace by which God works invisibly in us, quickening, strengthening and confirming our faith in him. Two Sacraments are ordained by Christ our Lord, namely Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.</p> <p>We believe Baptism signifies entrance into the household of faith, and is a symbol of repentance and inner cleansing from sin, a representation of the new birth in Christ Jesus and a mark of Christian discipleship.</p> <p>We believe children are under the atonement of Christ and as heirs of the Kingdom of God are acceptable subjects for Christian Baptism. Children of believing parents through Baptism become the special responsibility of the Church. They should be nurtured and led to personal acceptance of Christ, and by profession of faith confirm their Baptism.</p> <p>We believe the Lord’s Supper is a representation of our redemption, a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ, and a token of love and union which Christians have with Christ and with one another.</p> <p>Those who rightly, worthily and in faith eat the broken</p>	<p><b>Article VI—Of the Old Testament</b></p> <p><u>The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.</u></p>	

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bread and drink the blessed cup partake of the body and blood of Christ in a spiritual manner until he comes.		
<p><b>Article VII—Sin and Free Will</b></p> <p>We believe man is fallen from righteousness and, apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is destitute of holiness and inclined to evil. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. In his own strength, without divine grace, man cannot do good works pleasing and acceptable to God. We believe, however, man influenced and empowered by the Holy Spirit is responsible in freedom to exercise his will for good.</p>	<p><b>Article VII—Of Original or Birth Sin</b></p> <p>Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.</p>	<p><i>Article VII—Sin and Free Will, Part I</i></p> <p>We believe man is fallen from righteousness and, apart from the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is destitute of holiness and inclined to evil. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.</p>
<p><b>Article VIII—Reconciliation Through Christ</b></p> <p>We believe God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The offering Christ freely made on the cross is the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, redeeming man from all sin, so that no other satisfaction is required.</p>	<p><b>Article VIII—Of Free Will</b></p> <p>The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.</p>	<p><i>Article VII—Sin and Free Will, Part II</i></p> <p>In his own strength, without divine grace, man cannot do good works pleasing and acceptable to God. We believe, however, man influenced and empowered by the Holy Spirit it is responsible in freedom to exercise his will for good.</p>
<p><b>Article IX—Justification and Regeneration</b></p> <p>We believe we are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit, but that penitent sinners are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.</p> <p>We believe regeneration is the renewal of man in righteousness through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are made</p>	<p><b>Article IX—Of the Justification of Man</b></p> <p>We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.</p>	<p><b>Article IX—Justification and Regeneration</b></p> <p>We believe we are never accounted righteous before God through our works or merit, but that penitent sinners are justified or accounted righteous before God only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.</p> <p>We believe regeneration is the renewal of man in righteousness through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are</p>

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<p>partakers of the divine nature and experience newness of life. By this new birth the believer becomes reconciled to God and is enabled to serve him with the will and the affections. We believe, although we have experienced regeneration, it is possible to depart from grace and fall into sin; and we may even then, by the grace of God, be renewed in righteousness.</p>		<p>made partakers of the divine nature and experience newness of life. By this new birth the believer becomes reconciled to God and is enabled to serve him with the will and the affections.</p> <p>We believe, although we have experienced regeneration, it is possible to depart from grace and fall into sin; and we may even then, by the grace of God, be renewed in righteousness.</p>
<p><b>Article X—Good Works</b></p> <p>We believe good works are the necessary fruits of faith and follow regeneration but they do not have the virtue to remove our sins or to avert divine judgment. We believe good works, pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, spring from a true and living faith, for through and by them faith is made evident.</p>	<p><b>Article X—Of Good Works</b></p> <p>Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.</p>	<p><b>Article X—Good Works</b></p> <p>We believe good works are the necessary fruits of faith and follow regeneration but they do not have the virtue to remove our sins or to avert divine judgment. We believe good works, pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, spring from a true and living faith, for through and by them faith is made evident.</p>
<p><b>Article XI—Sanctification and Christian Perfection</b></p> <p><i>We believe sanctification is the work of God’s grace through the Word and the Spirit, by which those who have been born again are cleansed from sin in their thoughts, words and acts, and are enabled to live in accordance with God’s will, and to strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.</i></p> <p><i>Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness and true holiness which every regenerate believer may obtain by being delivered from the power of sin, by loving God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength, and by loving one’s neighbor as one’s self. Through faith in Jesus Christ</i></p>	<p><b>Article XI—Of Works of Supererogation</b></p> <p><u>Voluntary works—besides, over and above God’s commandments— which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When you have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.</u></p>	

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<p><i>this gracious gift may be received in this life both gradually and instantaneously, and should be sought earnestly by every child of God.</i></p> <p><i>We believe this experience does not deliver us from the infirmities, ignorance, and mistakes common to man, nor from the possibilities of further sin. The Christian must continue on guard against spiritual pride and seek to gain victory over every temptation to sin. He must respond wholly to the will of God so that sin will lose its power over him; and the world, the flesh, and the devil are put under his feet. Thus he rules over these enemies with watchfulness through the power of the Holy Spirit.</i></p>		
<p><b>Article XII—The Judgment and The Future State</b></p> <p><i>We believe all men stand under the righteous judgment of Jesus Christ, both now and in the last day. We believe in the resurrection of the dead; the righteous to life eternal and the wicked to endless condemnation.</i></p>	<p><b>Article XII—Of Sin After Justification</b></p> <p><u>Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.</u></p>	
<p><b>Article XIII—Public Worship</b></p> <p><i>We believe divine worship is the duty and privilege of man who, in the presence of God, bows in adoration, humility and dedication. We believe divine worship is essential to the life of the Church, and that the assembling of the people of God for such worship is necessary to</i></p>	<p><b>Article XIII—Of the Church</b></p> <p>The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.</p>	<p><b>Article V—The Church</b></p> <p>We believe the Christian Church is the community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. We believe it is one, holy, apostolic and catholic. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by men divinely called, and the</p>



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<p><i>Christian fellowship and spiritual growth.</i></p> <p><i>We believe the order of public worship need not be the same in all places but may be modified by the church according to circumstances and the needs of men. It should be in a language and form understood by the people, consistent with the Holy Scriptures to the edification of all, and in accordance with the order and Discipline of the Church.</i></p>		<p>sacraments are duly administered according to Christ’s own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world.</p>
<p><b>Article XIV—The Lord’s Day</b></p> <p><i>We believe the Lord’s Day is divinely ordained for private and public worship, for rest from unnecessary work, and should be devoted to spiritual improvement, Christian fellowship and service. It is commemorative of our Lord’s resurrection and is an emblem of our eternal rest. It is essential to the permanence and growth of the Christian Church, and important to the welfare of the civil community.</i></p>	<p><b>Article XIV—Of Purgatory</b></p> <p><u>The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping, and adoration, as well as images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.</u></p>	
<p><b>Article XV—The Christian and Property</b></p> <p>We believe God is the owner of all things and that the individual holding of property is lawful and is a sacred trust under God. Private property is to be used for the manifestation of Christian love and liberality, and to support the Church’s mission in the world. All forms of property, whether private, corporate or public, are to be held in solemn trust and used responsibly for human good under the sovereignty of God.</p>	<p><b>Article XV—Of Speaking in the Congregation in Such a Tongue as the People Understand</b></p> <p><u>It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.</u></p>	
<p><b>Article XVI—Civil Government</b></p> <p>We believe civil government</p>	<p><b>Article XVI—Of the Sacraments</b></p> <p>Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of</p>	<p><b>Article VI—The Sacraments, Part I</b></p> <p>We believe the Sacraments,</p>

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<p>derives its just powers from the sovereign God. As Christians we recognize the governments under whose protection we reside and believe such governments should be based on, and be responsible for, the recognition of human rights under God. We believe war and bloodshed are contrary to the gospel and spirit of Christ. We believe it is the duty of Christian citizens to give moral strength and purpose to their respective governments through sober, righteous and godly living.</p>	<p>Christian men’s profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God’s good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him.</p> <p>There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.</p> <p>Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.</p> <p>The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith.</p>	<p>ordained by Christ, are symbols and pledges of the Christian’s profession and of God’s love toward us. They are means of grace by which God works invisibly in us, quickening, strengthening and confirming our faith in him. Two Sacraments are ordained by Christ our Lord, namely Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.</p>
	<p><b>Article XVII—Of Baptism</b></p> <p>Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.</p>	<p><b>Article VI—The Sacraments, Part II</b></p> <p>We believe Baptism signifies entrance into the household of faith, and is a symbol of repentance and inner cleansing from sin, a representation of the new birth in Christ Jesus and a mark of Christian discipleship.</p> <p>We believe children are under the atonement of Christ and as heirs of the Kingdom of God are acceptable subjects for Christian Baptism. Children of believing parents through Baptism become the special responsibility of the</p>

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		Church. They should be nurtured and led to personal acceptance of Christ, and by profession of faith confirm their Baptism.
	<p><b>Article XVIII—Of the Lord’s Supper</b></p> <p>The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ’s death; inasmuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.</p> <p>Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.</p> <p>The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.</p> <p>The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was not by Christ’s ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.</p>	<p><b>Article VI—The Sacraments, Part III</b></p> <p>We believe the Lord’s Supper is a representation of our redemption, a memorial of the sufferings and death of Christ, and a token of love and union which Christians have with Christ and with one another. Those who rightly, worthily and in faith eat the broken bread and drink the blessed cup partake of the body and blood of Christ in a spiritual manner until he comes.</p>
	<p><b>Article XIX—Of Both Kinds</b></p> <p><u>The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord’s Supper, by Christ’s ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.</u></p>	
	<p><b>Article XX—Of the One Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross</b></p> <p>The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption,</p>	<p><b>Article VIII—Reconciliation Through Christ</b></p> <p>We believe God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The offering Christ</p>

EUB CONFESSION OF FAITH— ORIGINAL ORDER	METHODIST ARTICLES OF RELIGION— ORIGINAL ORDER	EUB CONFESSION OF FAITH— REVISED ORDER
	<p>propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.</p>	<p>freely made on the cross is the perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, redeeming man from all sin, so that no other satisfaction is required.</p>
	<p><b>Article XXI—Of the Marriage of Ministers</b></p> <p><u>The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.</u></p>	
	<p><b>Article XXII—Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches</b></p> <p><u>It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.</u></p> <p><u>Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.</u></p>	

EUB CONFESSION OF FAITH— ORIGINAL ORDER	METHODIST ARTICLES OF RELIGION— ORIGINAL ORDER	EUB CONFESSION OF FAITH— REVISED ORDER
	<p><b>Article XXIII—Of the Rulers of the United States of America</b></p> <p>The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.</p>	<p><b>Article XVI—Civil Government</b></p> <p>We believe civil government derives its just powers from the sovereign God. As Christians we recognize the governments under whose protection we reside and believe such governments should be based on, and be responsible for, the recognition of human rights under God. We believe war and bloodshed are contrary to the gospel and spirit of Christ. We believe it is the duty of Christian citizens to give moral strength and purpose to their respective governments through sober, righteous and godly living.</p>
	<p><b>Article XXIV—Of Christian Men's Goods</b></p> <p>The riches and goods of Christians are not common as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.</p>	<p><b>Article XV—The Christian and Property</b></p> <p>We believe God is the owner of all things and that the individual holding of property is lawful and is a sacred trust under God. Private property is to be used for the manifestation of Christian love and liberality, and to support the Church's mission in the world. All forms of property, whether private, corporate or public, are to be held in solemn trust and used responsibly for human good under the sovereignty of God.</p>
	<p><b>Article XXV—Of a Christian Man's Oath</b></p> <p>As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden <u>Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.</u></p>	

## COMMENTARY

**Stylistic and Organizational Differences**

One of the fascinating, if rarely noted, differences between the Confession of Faith and the Articles of Religion has to do with literary style. Despite similarities in content, the Confession of Faith and Articles of Religion may be said to represent two different literary-theological genres. On the one hand, there is the genre of confession. On the other hand, there is the genre of articles.

Regarded as different literary-theological genres, the difference between confessions of faith and articles of religion may at first glance appear insignificant. It is not. The primary difference has to do with the relationship between the documents themselves and their audiences. Confessions of faith are written in the first person plural, inviting audiences to own the content for themselves. Confessions of faith naturally and readily lend themselves to use in catechesis and worship. Articles of Religion, by contrast, are declaratory statements written in the third person. As such, they do not naturally and readily invite audience to own the content for themselves, and they do not commend themselves for use in catechesis and worship.

There is an entire history of usage that needs to be explored here. My own instincts are to suggest that the Articles of Religion' third person literary style may help to explain why, in the words of one scholar, United Methodists are suffering from a severe case of "doctrinal amnesia."<sup>4</sup> Unlike the EUB Confession of Faith, which was widely used in settings of catechesis in the EUB church and the predecessor United Brethren Church, the Articles of Religion do not appear frequently or consistently to have functioned in similar settings.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the unpacking of this history of usage will have to wait. For now, we need to note some of the organizational differences between the Confession of Faith and the Articles of Religion.

The Confession of Faith differs organizationally from the Articles of Religion in at least two important ways. First, the Confession of Faith has nine fewer articles than the Articles of Religion. This does not mean that the Confession does not speak to a particular doctrine, although in a few cases it does not. Rather, the Articles of Religion have a tendency to subdivide doctrines into smaller units whereas the Confession tends to confine material related to a particular doctrine to one larger unit. For example, the Confession has one article on the person of Jesus Christ that includes the doctrines of the resurrection and ascension, as well as the doctrine of Christ's role as

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<sup>4</sup> William J. Abraham, *Waking from Doctrinal Amnesia: The Healing of Doctrine in the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> For the usage of the Confession of Faith in catechesis, see J. Steven O' Malley, "A Distinctive German American Credo: The United Brethren Confession of Faith," *Asbury Theological Journal* 42 (spring 1987): 51-64.

judge (Article II).<sup>6</sup> By contrast, the Articles of Religion divide Christology into two articles, one on Christ's relationship to the Father, the Incarnation, crucifixion, and death, the other on Christ's resurrection and ascension (Articles II and III respectively). Similarly, the Confession has one lengthy article on the sacraments (Article VI), whereas the Articles of Religion subdivide the material on sacraments into four separate articles (Articles XVI-XIX).

The second organizational difference is more important than the first. The careful observer will notice an important difference in the sequencing of the articles in the Confession by contrast with the sequencing in the Articles of Religion. Like the Articles of Religion, the Confession of Faith begins with the Trinity and then proceeds to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and to Scripture. At this point in the sequencing, the Articles of Religion proceed directly to matters related to the doctrine of the Christian life, including articles on original sin, free will, justification, good works, works of supererogation, and sin after justification. Only then does the Articles of Religion take up the doctrine of the church. Thus six articles stand between the doctrine of God and the doctrine of scripture on the one hand and the doctrine of the church on the other. Furthermore, after the article on the church (Article XIII), the Articles of Religion cover purgatory (Article XIV) and speaking in tongues (Article XV) before taking up the sacraments (Articles XVI-XIX).

By contrast, the Confession of Faith moves from the doctrine of God and the doctrine of scripture directly to the doctrine of the church (Article V). Immediately after the doctrine of the church in the Confession is the doctrine of the sacraments (Article VI). Only then does the Confession of Faith take up the doctrine of the Christian life, including sin and free will, reconciliation through Christ, justification and regeneration, good works, and sanctification and Christian perfection. The resulting impression is that, in the Confession of Faith, the Christian life is something that happens within the Church and by means of the sacraments. Put literally, in the Confession of Faith the church and the sacraments precede the Christian life. In the Articles of Religion the church and the sacraments come after the Christian life, leaving room for the impression that the church and sacraments are incidental to salvation.<sup>7</sup>

The difference in the ordering of doctrinal material related to the church and salvation in the Confession of Faith and the Articles of Religion raises at least one crucial theological question. Where do United Methodists stand with regard to the theological axiom *extra Ecclesium nulla salus* (outside the

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<sup>6</sup> Despite mentioning Christ's role as judge in Article II, the Confession adds an article devoted exclusively to the coming judgment of Christ (Article XII). Article XII is rightly seen as a statement about eschatology and not a separate Christological statement.

<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that the Articles of Religion should be read in this way or that the original framers of the Articles (Methodist and Anglican) intended such a reading. It is simply to say that the progression of the Articles might suggest such a reading, whereas the progression of the Confession mitigates against it.

Church, there is no salvation)? Neither organizational pattern would seem to require adherence to this theological axiom, especially if it is understood to mean that there is literally no hope of salvation apart from participation in the Church and her sacraments. However, whereas the ordering of the Articles of Religion can make the church appear *incidental* to salvation, the ordering of the Confession of Faith suggests that the church is *instrumental* to salvation. To be sure, there is a rich theological discussion to be had here, but that only strengthens the case that we stand to benefit from a direct and careful comparison of the two doctrinal statements of the United Methodist Church.

### Significant Theological Differences

Three significant theological differences are worth mentioning at this time. Other differences exist, and further exploration of the content and origins of these differences is needed in the future. For example, further exploration is needed of the more extensive statement on infant or children's baptism in the Confession of Faith.<sup>8</sup> For the time being, I have opted to highlight differences that enhance substantially the Articles of Religion. These differences are crucial theological contributions of the EUB Confession of Faith to the United Methodist standards of doctrine.

First, the Confession of Faith's article on the Holy Spirit (Article III) is a significant enhancement over the material on the Holy Spirit in the Articles of Religion (Article IV). The Articles of Religion rest content with affirming the unity of the Holy Spirit with the Father and Son, noting the manner of distinction as well (the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son). As such, the Article of Religion on the Holy Spirit is limited to the nature of the intra-trinitarian relationships between Spirit, Father and Son. The Article of Religion does not say anything about the economic relationship between the Holy Spirit and human persons.

By contrast the article on the Holy Spirit in the Confession of Faith includes crucial material on the Holy Spirit's relationship with human persons. After describing the intra-trinitarian relations between Spirit, Father and Son, the Confession goes on to discuss the Spirit's work in convincing the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. Further, the Confession says that the Spirit "leads men [*sic*] through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church." The Spirit also comforts, sustains, and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The article on baptism in the Articles of Religion merely says that infant or children's baptism should be "retained in the church." By contrast, the Confession goes on to stress the importance of the ongoing nurturing of baptized children by parents and church alike. The Confession places the responsibility squarely on the church.

<sup>9</sup> This three-fold content reflects the content of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, one of the crucial historical sources for the EUB Confession of Faith. For more on the relationship between the Confession of Faith and the *Heidelberg Catechism*, see J. Steven O' Malley, "A Distinctive German American Credo," *op cit.*



It is worth noting that the material content of the Confession's statement on the Holy Spirit supports the sequencing discussed above. By virtue of sequencing, the Confession suggests that human persons are brought to God by the Holy Spirit through the church. The article on the Holy Spirit confirms what the sequence or ordering suggests. The Spirit leads persons through "faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church."

Second, the Confession of Faith's article on the church (Article V) is substantially longer than the same material in the Article of Religion (Article XIII). The Confession of Faith enhances the doctrinal standard on the church in two important ways. On the one hand, the Confession of Faith adds the Nicene marks of the church, according to which the church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. By contrast, the Articles of Religion limit the marks of the church to the right preaching of the Word and the due administration of the sacrament (the classical Protestant marks, which are also included in the Confession of Faith's statement on the Church). On the other hand, the Confession of Faith stresses the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the church, saying "Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world." Thus, while the Confession of Faith's statement on the Spirit (Article III) points to the Church, its statement on the Church (Article V) points back to the Holy Spirit, making clear the intimate relationship between the two.

Third and finally, the Confession of Faith enhances the Methodist standards of doctrine in a most peculiar and ironic way. Unlike the Articles of Religion, the Confession of Faith includes an article on sanctification and Christian perfection. To be sure, the fact that the Articles of Religion lack a statement on sanctification and Christian perfection should not be taken as a sign that their original framers did not regard these doctrines as important. On the contrary, John Wesley went so far as to say that God raised up the Methodists specifically to proclaim the doctrine of sanctification.<sup>10</sup> The fact that Wesley did not add a statement on sanctification to the revised version of The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion that he sent over to the American Methodists may simply reflect a general dislike of unnecessary innovations. For example, with regard to the changes that Thomas Coke made to the Prayer Book, Wesley says,

Dr. Coke made two or three little alterations in the Prayer-Book without my knowledge. I took particular care throughout to alter nothing merely for altering's sake. In religion I am for as few innovations as possible. I love the old wine best. And if it were only on this account, I prefer 'which' before 'who' art in heaven.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, if Richard P. Heitzenrater is correct in saying that, prior to 1968, the phrase "standards of doctrine" refers exclusively to the Articles of Religion

<sup>10</sup> *The Letters of John Wesley*, 8 vols., ed. John Telford (London: Epworth Press, 1931) 8:238.

<sup>11</sup> See *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. VIII, John Telford, ed. (London: The Epworth Press, 1960), 144-145.

and not to Wesley's standard sermons or *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, then Methodists are faced with what can only be called a rather ironic and unfortunate situation.<sup>12</sup> From 1784 to 1968, the people whom God raised up to promote the doctrine of sanctification lacked a doctrinal standard on the subject. The so-called *Grand Depositum* did not appear in the standards of doctrine. The inclusion of the Confession of Faith in 1968 remedied this situation, recovering a vital component in the Methodist theological heritage at the level of the doctrinal standards.<sup>13</sup> This is surely a significant part of the ongoing gift and legacy of the EUB to The United Methodist Church today.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, more work needs to be done on the origins and confessional antecedents of both The Twenty-Five Articles of Religion and the EUB Confession of Faith. The purpose of this essay was two-fold. First, the essay was meant to serve as a heuristic device for comparing and contrasting the basic shape and contents of the two confessional statements that make up The United Methodist Church's standards of doctrine today. Second, the essay was meant to provide initial commentary on some of the more significant theological differences between the two documents. The latter task was done with a view toward deepening readers' understanding and appreciation of the contributions that the EUB Confession of Faith makes to the standards of doctrine of the United Methodist Church. It is the author's sincere hope that this essay will spur additional conversation about these matters.

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<sup>12</sup> See Richard P. Heitzenrater's "At Full Liberty: Doctrinal Standards in Early American Methodism," in *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism*, Richard P. Heitzenrater, ed. (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1989), 189-204. The Methodist Protestant statement on sanctification that was appended to the Articles of Religion at the Uniting Conference of 1939 was "not one of the Articles voted upon by the three churches." See *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (2004), 66.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the contents of the Confession of Faith's article on sanctification and Christian Perfection, see Scott J. Jones, *United Methodist Doctrine: The Extreme Center* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), chapter 7.