

ESSENTIAL TENETS AND REFORMED DISTINCTIVES



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Session Adopts Essential Tenets

After a thoughtful and thorough discussion at their meeting on November 28, 2005, the Session of HPPC passed the following motions:

- that we adopt the “Essential Tenets and Reformed Distinctives,” pages 9 – 23 of the Presbytery of San Diego,
- that the supplemental material connected with the “Essential Tenets and Reformed Distinctives” may be used for appropriate purposes

Why do we need “Essential Tenets.?” The primary reason is this – the truth matters. Our faith has content. Our love for Christ brings with it a mission and desire to tell others the good news. The true gospel, the Word of God, is the power of salvation and it matters deeply that we get it right.

Another compelling reason is that the foundational truths of our faith that “everyone knows” are being directly attacked and rejected, as well as being incrementally eroded, by a post-modern theology that values ambiguity in faith and ethical practices.

Faced with a confusing array of voices from culture and even from the broader Christian community, it is imperative that our Session and our membership be absolutely clear about the essential truths of our faith. We can always graciously agree to disagree on non-essentials, but now, more than ever, we need to stand firmly in love and not waver on the truth of the essentials.

What is encompassed in the Essential Tenets?

The Essential Tenets document distills the 300 pages of the *Book of Confessions* to a helpful summary—six *essentials* and seven *distinctives*. It was developed by the San Diego Presbytery’s Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

ESSENTIAL TENETS

- AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE
- GOD (Trinity, Creation, Providence, Sovereignty)
- HUMANITY – ORIGINAL RIGHTEOUSNESS AND FALL INTO SIN
- JESUS CHRIST – INCARNATION OF THE ETERNAL WORD
- JESUS CHRIST – HIS ATONING WORK
- SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

REFORMED DISTINCTIVES

- ELECTION FOR SALVATION AND SERVICE
- COVENANT AND COVENANT LIFE
- SACRAMENTS
- SANCTIFICATION AND THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
- PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS
- MISSION OF THE CHURCH
- STEWARDSHIP

How will the Essential Tenets be used?

1. As a litmus test or criteria to which we as a church and leadership body can filter and discern our purpose through God's will on key theological issues that we are faced with.
2. Expressing a strong and bold statement of faith by the leadership of this great church; standing for what we believe.
3. As a reference tool for training our prospective church officers (Elders and Deacons) as they prepare to take vows and enter office: a) to teach basic orthodox doctrine; b) to develop a familiarity with working with Scripture, the Book of Confessions and the Book of Order; and c) to encourage the application of Biblical principles to real life situations.
4. As guidelines for communicating theological expectations to prospective ministers regarding our view on what Reformed ministers must sincerely believe and proclaim at our church and for the theological examination and evaluation of candidates.
5. As a tool for instructing our congregation in the foundational truths of our faith.

Summary

The Essential Tenets are our foundational convictions, contained in our creeds and confessions that bear witness to God's grace in Jesus Christ. The Tenets guide the church in its study and interpretation of the Scriptures. They summarize the essence of our Christian tradition. They direct the church in maintaining sound doctrines. They equip the church for its work of proclamation. The tenets will help us better train and equip our leaders and ministers in expressing our foundational theology. Most importantly a clearly understanding of our Essential Tenets will invariably help us fulfill our mission statement – Making Disciples of Jesus Christ.

ESSENTIAL TENETS AND REFORMED DISTINCTIVES

SECTION 1:

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- SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

SECTION 2:

REFORMED DISTINCTIVES

- ELECTION FOR SALVATION AND SERVICE
- COVENANT AND COVENANT LIFE
- SACRAMENTS
- SANCTIFICATION AND THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
- PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS
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SECTION 1

ESSENTIAL TENETS

AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are God's uniquely revealed and written Word, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and are the church's first and final authority in all areas of faith and life including, but not limited to, theological doctrine, mission, church order, character, and ethical behavior. The Bible speaks to us with the authority of God himself. We seek to understand, love, follow, obey, surrender, and submit to God's Word—both Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, and the Scriptures, the written Word of God, which bear true and faithful witness to Jesus Christ.

Scripture

Matthew 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Confessions

Second Helvetic Confession 5.001, 5.003, 5.010

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.006, 6.009

Larger Catechism 7.113-114

What is Not Affirmed

Any doctrine—

- that seeks to invalidate or subvert scriptural teaching concerning what is to be believed or how we are to live;
- that attempts to subordinate biblical authority to any human authority, cultural norm, or ideology— whether religious, ecclesiastical, governmental, political, economic, psychological, sociological, scientific, historical, philosophical, or other—as though the church should listen primarily to another voice than the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ as expressed in scripture;
- that seeks or asserts a revelation from the Spirit of God which contradicts the Bible as Word of God, or that attempts to separate the Spirit from the Spirit-inspired words of Scripture, or that elevates the authority or modernity of the Spirit's revelation above the revelation of Scripture;
- that rejects as historical fact the witness of Scripture to the incarnation, birth, ministry, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ (as, for example, summarized in 1Corinthians 15:3-7 and Acts 10:38);
- that seeks to follow a “Jesus Christ” apart from the Person, Work, and Will of Jesus Christ revealed in scripture.
- that regards Scripture as subjectively, but not objectively, God's written Word, or that maintains the Scriptures *contain* the Word of God, but are not in themselves the Word of God.

Orthodox reformed faith does not include any notion of a Church “reformed and reforming” that moves outside the boundaries of the authority of Christ and confession of his Lordship which are clearly revealed in Scripture. Or any ecclesiology or morality that attempts to subvert the headship of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture in the interests of

an “inclusive” and overbroad institutional concern for “unity, peace, and purity.” Jesus Christ is Lord of the church, and he rules the church through the written word of scripture, illumined by the Holy Spirit.

GOD

We worship the one only living and true God who is revealed in the Bible and who is the source of all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness.

Trinity. With the holy catholic church in all ages, we confess the mystery of the holy Trinity—that there is one God alone, infinite and eternal, Creator of all things, the greatest good, who is one in essence or nature, yet who exists in a plurality of three distinct persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Creation/Providence/Sovereignty. God in the beginning created the universe and everything in it for the manifestation of God’s glory, eternal power, wisdom, and goodness. He is the sovereign ruler of creation, working all things according to the counsel of his omnipotent and righteous will. In gracious providence God continually upholds, directs, oversees, and governs creation—all creatures, actions, and things.

In sovereignty God has seen fit to accommodate free will among moral creatures, resulting in great cultural and cosmic good and terrible evil, disorder, and disobedience. Nevertheless, God is in no way the author of evil or sin, but continues to govern creation in such a way as to cause all things to work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. God opposes all evil and will certainly triumph over it and bring creation to a glorious consummation.

Grace. God is a God of love. In grace God chooses to show love and mercy. When we were dead in trespasses and sin, God made us alive with Christ, saving us by grace through faith, as a sheer gift of sovereign love.

Worship. God—and God alone—is worthy of worship. We respond to God by consciously and intentionally seeking to declare, explore, celebrate, and submit to God’s righteous and gracious kingship over all of creation and over every aspect of our individual and corporate life, and thereby “to glorify him and enjoy him forever.” (Westminster, 7.01) This is true worship.

Scripture

Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:4-5; Deuteronomy 6:4; Psalm 47:2; Isaiah 45:5
Matthew 28:19; Luke 1:35; John 14:26; Romans 1:23; 8:28; 2 Corinthians 13:14;
Ephesians 1:7-11; Jude 1:25; Revelation 4:11

Confessions

Nicene Creed 1.1, 1.3
Scots Confession 3.01
Heidelberg Catechism 4.027
Westminster Confession of Faith 6.011-6.014
Larger Catechism 7.01
Brief Statement of Faith 10.1

What Is Not Affirmed

Any doctrine—

- that denies this doctrine of God's triune nature, or refuses to confess the Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
- that minimizes this doctrine as an unessential or secondary Christian tenet;
- that asserts that all religions are essentially true, that all religious beliefs are essentially in accord; or that the views of God held by the world's major religions are equally valid;
- that confesses or celebrates belief in multiple gods or goddesses, or that identifies God as a goddess, or that worships God's uncreated glory through idols or images representing creatures or creation.

The biblical doctrine of God's sovereignty excludes:

- the notion that, if God is sovereign, our human efforts are in vain;
- the deistic notion that God created the cosmos like a watchmaker but is no longer personally involved in its operation or unfolding;
- any theology that denies or downplays the reality of evil or the enmity between evil and a holy God or the moral responsibility of humankind for sin.

HUMANITY—ORIGINAL RIGHTEOUSNESS AND FALL INTO SIN

Human beings were created by God in God's own image—in true righteousness and holiness—to know, love, and obey God and be righteous stewards of the creation. Our earliest forebears, instead of acknowledging, worshiping, and obeying God, became disobedient sinners and brought sin and death upon themselves and all creation.

There is now a radical brokenness and corruption in human nature that is the result of and results in sin. Sin is rebellion against God. No human effort can fully resolve or redeem this defect. Sin is destructive, contagious, parasitical, polluting, disabling. Human beings are sinners by nature, by influence, by choice, by action.

While there is an inalienable glory and nobility to human beings because they are God's image bearers, this image is now broken and distorted, and even our best and noblest actions are contaminated by sin. Every part of our human being—our personality, intellect, emotions, will, motives, virtues, and actions—is corrupted by sin. The human will, originally free and righteous, is now crippled and defective. As a result, human beings are in bondage to sin and subject to God's holy judgment. Without God's intervening grace and salvation, they are lost and condemned.

Scripture

Genesis 1:26-27; Psalms 51:5, 143:2; Jeremiah 17:9

Matthew 15:19-20; Romans 3:10-23; 5:18-19; 7:18-23; 8:7; Ephesians 2:1-3

Confessions

Scots Confession 3.03

Heidelberg Catechism 4.005, 4.006, 4.010

Larger Catechism 7.135, 7.137

Confession of 1967 9.12-13

Brief Statement of Faith 10.3

What Is Not Affirmed

- The notion that human nature is basically good and self-redeemable through good effort, discipline, improved environment, etc.
- The notion that man's defective nature is the result of heredity or environment to such a degree that human beings are not morally responsible for their nature or behavior.
- The notion that God is the author of sin or that sin is part of his original plan to educate and improve humankind.

JESUS CHRIST – INCARNATION OF THE ETERNAL WORD

Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Son of God uniquely entered human history and became a real human being. He is truly the Word of God (John 1:1-3)—that is, the perfect and culminating expression of God’s mind and heart, of God’s will and character— present in the intimate fellowship of the Holy Trinity from eternity and fully engaged with the Father in the work of creation and redemption.

Becoming human, Jesus was “all of God in a human body” (Colossians 1:19) and “God with us” (Matthew 1:23)—a living tabernacle of God’s holy presence, “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14-18). His divine-human identity is corroborated by the true witness of scripture—in his divine conception and virgin birth, in God’s own testimony concerning Jesus, in Jesus’ supernatural works of healing and deliverance, in his obedience to the point of sacrificial death, and in his bodily resurrection from the dead, ascension, and exaltation. He is now Lord over everything in creation.

The early church in the creeds of Nicea and Chalcedon accurately interpreted and expressed the apostolic testimony concerning Jesus—fully God and fully human. The significance of this is: in Christ we are dealing with God himself; in Christ we have a human being who truly represents us.

Jesus Christ is God’s only Mediator between God and humankind and God’s unique agent for the salvation of the world. He is also the perfect expression of what humanity was designed to be. In his complete obedience, he became the representative Human Being, a second Adam, modeling for us human life and offering to God on our behalf human life that is rightly in God’s image—reflecting God’s glory in a wholly submitted life of steadfast love and righteousness.

This same Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, as attested in scripture, is to be the center of the Christian Church’s proclamation, worship, discipleship, and mission. As we eagerly and prayerfully anticipate that “he will come again to judge the living and the dead” and to establish God’s righteous kingdom in fullness and perfection, we say, “Come Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20)

Scripture

Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:31-35; John 1:1-3, 14-18; Romans 5:18-19; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 1:15-20; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 1:1-3; 1 John 4:2-4

Confessions

Nicene Creed 1.1-1.2

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.044

Confession of 1967 9.07-9.08

Brief Statement of Faith 10.2

What Is Not Affirmed

Any doctrine—

- that affirms the deity but not the full humanity of Christ, or the humanity but not Christ's full deity (as, for example, the Jehovah's Witnesses do);
- that asserts that Jesus was an inspired or extraordinary or holy man, but was merely human in nature and not the incarnation in history of the eternal Son of God;
- that attempts to supplement the authoritative revelation of the Old and New Testament scriptures concerning Jesus Christ and proposes a corrected or revised revelation of Jesus (as, for example, the Book of Mormon and Mormon teaching do);
- that discounts or discredits as untrue or as myth all or portions of the New Testament record concerning Jesus;
- that does not affirm as biblical and true the death of Christ as the central saving act of our Christian faith, or
- that asserts that Jesus is merely one example, however noteworthy, of a divinely approved or divinely enlightened life;
- that asserts that Jesus is one Mediator between God and humankind among other religious options or among other spiritual or enlightened teachers or mediators;
- that contends that the Jesus Christ attested by scripture is essentially and significantly different from the historic Jesus of Nazareth;
- that misrepresents Jesus' mission in terms compatible with pantheism or as a message of human self-fulfillment and divine self-realization, that God is one being with the world or that human beings are essentially divine, and that all religious truth is harmonious and convergent.
- that detracts from Jesus' supreme authority over every human authority, over the church, and over our individual moral lives.

JESUS CHRIST – HIS ATONING WORK

Jesus' death on the Cross was the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world. In this act of obedience to God's will and love for humankind, Jesus acted as the divine agent for the salvation of the world. In his death he perfectly fulfilled the office of High Priest and was also the perfect sacrifice for sins—"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (Jn 1:29) The Cross became an altar on which his life was sacrificed as a substitute for ours, and satisfaction and expiation for sins were completely accomplished. On the sole basis of the finished work of Christ on the Cross, sinners may now be reconciled to a holy God and set free from their bondage to sin and death to live for God in holiness and joy.

Exalted to the place of honor beside God the Father, Jesus Christ the eternal Son, now Lord of heaven and earth, continues his saving work, advocating and interceding on behalf of the church and functioning as our eternal prophet (God's living and revealed Word), priest (ever making intercession and mediation for us), and king (ruling his church by Word and Spirit and with sovereign love and power).

Scripture

Matthew 1:21; Romans 3:25; 1 Corinthians 1:23-25; 2:2; 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21; Galatians 3:13; 6:14; Ephesians 1:19-23; Hebrews 9:11-12; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:2

Confessions

Scots Confession 3.09

Heidelberg Catechism 4.031, 4.037

Confession of 1967 9.09

What Is Not Affirmed

Any theology—

- that does not affirm as biblical and true the death of Christ as the central saving act of our Christian faith, or
- that rejects these teachings—atonement, substitutionary sacrifice, expiation for sins on the basis of Christ's death—as obsolete, unworthy, unessential, or irrelevant, or
- that seeks to substitute some other basis or to promote some "more culturally relevant paradigm" for our salvation, justification, and reconciliation with God than Christ's death on the Cross for us.

We also do not affirm the notion that Christ's atoning work is universally applied to all or most of the human race, so that all or most are saved, regardless of their religion or nonreligion and apart from hearing the gospel and believing in Christ.

SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

Salvation is God's gracious work through Jesus Christ to reclaim humankind and all creation from sin and its consequences. Salvation is a gift of God's grace received by faith. Christ's righteousness and atonement are the sole basis for human salvation. Faith in Christ is the only instrument by which this righteousness is received by individual believers, resulting in their justification.

Justification is the righteousness of Christ imputed to a sinful woman or man *through faith alone* in Christ. Their faith appropriates Christ's atonement, resulting in their sins atoned for and forgiven and God reckoning them to be righteous.

Scripture also describes salvation as a ransom or redemption from slavery (Mark 10:45); a sacrificial substitution (Christ's death for our death); reconciliation of sinners with a holy God; our sins being sacrificially expiated, satisfied, covered over, forgiven, and removed. All of these ways describe how God has given us "the forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation out of sheer grace solely for the sake of Christ's saving work." (Heidelberg, 4.021)

Faith is (1) accepting the message of salvation as true and (2) trusting God to apply this salvation to us. Faith is "certain knowledge" and "wholehearted trust," that is created in us by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. In faith we accept, receive, and rest "upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace." (Westminster, 6.080)

Scripture

Mark 10:45; John 3:16; Acts 4:12; Romans 3:22-26; 5:1; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9

Confessions

Second Helvetic Confession 5.107-109, 5.112-113

Heidelberg Catechism 4.021, 4.060

6/8/03 16

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.080

Brief Statement of Faith 10.4

What is Not Affirmed

Any doctrine—

- that asserts that salvation can be obtained through other religions or that other religions have equally valid solutions to the human problem, or that there is salvation in some other name besides Jesus Christ
- that denies the radical sinfulness of human beings, their condemnation before a holy God, that denies that human beings are lost apart from Christ, or denies their need for a Savior
- that teaches that God saves or will save everybody (or nearly everybody) regardless of their faith in Jesus Christ or whether they hear the gospel or not or whether they put their faith explicitly in Jesus Christ or not.

SECTION 2

REFORMED DISTINCTIVES

ELECTION FOR SALVATION AND SERVICE

Our salvation and sanctification are based entirely on God's initiative and God's grace. It is not primarily about *our* choice but *God's* choice. The Reformed understanding of election is that God has chosen us *in Christ* for salvation and service—

- To be redeemed,
- To be God's own "treasured possession," a holy nation and a kingdom of priests,
- To live holy and exemplary lives, zealous for good works,
- Resulting in praise for the glory of God's grace.

Our salvation is not an accident we stumble into or a destiny we create. It is God's gracious purpose for our life and it is for God's glory.

God has elected us out of grace.
God has elected us from eternity.

We are elected *in Christ*, that is—

Christ is God's elected Son, chosen to redeem God's creation and to be Mediator and Savior for humankind. Our election is not direct, but indirect—we are elected on account of Christ, with the result that those who are now grafted into Christ by faith are also be elected.

As those chosen by God, we are predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus. Our purpose, then, is to glorify God by our redeemed and sanctified life.

Our faith in Christ and our good works are evidence and confirmation that we are chosen by God to be His.

Election is a doctrine intended to reassure Christians of the security of their salvation and of the steadfast love of God for them, and to instill in them a sense of divine purpose and a zeal for good works.

A person may know with complete assurance, on the basis of the promises of scripture and God's faithfulness, that if they are trusting in Christ for their salvation, they indeed are in Christ and are elected.

Scripture

Psalm 139:16; John 15:5, 8, 16; Ephesians 1:4-7, 11-13; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Timothy 1:9

Confessions

Scots Confession 3.08

Second Helvetic Confession 5.052, 5.053, 5.059-60

What Is Not Affirmed

Any doctrine—

- That denies God’s initiative in calling persons to Himself.
- That asserts that all people will ultimately be reconciled to God.
- That asserts a profession of faith without bearing any fruit.

COVENANT AND COVENANT LIFE

Covenant, in the cultural context of the Bible, described the strongest relationship of love and loyalty between persons. It was a solemn relationship and bond, often with explicit oaths and obligations, often sealed solemnly with the blood of sacrifice. Reconciliation after hostility and conflict was often marked by a covenant ceremony. A covenant was entered into by faith as a relationship of trust and solemn promises; it was held together by faithfulness. Covenant faithfulness led to blessing and life; breaking covenant invoked a curse. Covenants described the relationship between rulers and subjects, wife and husband, business partners, neighboring nations. God adapted this covenant model to describe his special relationship and bond with the people he redeemed.

God’s covenants had different forms and details at different times in salvation history (for example, with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David), but they reflected a single sovereign and gracious purpose to redeem, sanctify, and preserve a people who belonged to God. The divine covenant was always initiated by God; it was sustained by God’s faithfulness in spite of humankind’s history of unfaithfulness; it was an expression of God’s steadfast love (Hebrew, *hesed*); and it reached a culmination and fullness in the “new covenant” (Luke 22:20) established and perfected by Jesus Christ.

In Jesus, the promised Messiah, we encounter personally and directly the Mediator of God’s perfect and everlasting covenant (Hebrews 9:15). Jesus has perfectly fulfilled the obligations of the covenant for us; he has demonstrated complete faithfulness to God as a covenant partner. In his substitutionary death he took on himself the curse for our covenant breaking, ended the hostility our sins had caused, reconciled us and made us right with God. Those who put their faith in Christ are spiritually united with him, enter the new covenant where there is salvation and redemption, become members of the covenant community called *the church*, and enjoy the covenant promises of eternal life and blessing.

Every believer is called to be a faithful and participating member of a local church, where “the community of the new covenant” has local expression and where they can be discipled into holiness and maturity. The community of the new covenant is to be a demonstration of the supernatural reality and power of the kingdom of God—what the world looks like and might become where God is acknowledged as King; a community of love and wholeness; a ministry extending the healing, deliverance, and grace that marked the life of Jesus and his disciples.

Scripture

Genesis 6:18; 9:8-17; 17:1-8; Exodus 19:3-6; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 31:31-34

Luke 22:20; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:12-13; Hebrews 9:15; 1 Peter 2:9-10

Confessions

Scots Confession 3.16

Second Helvetic Confession 5.125-5.126

Confession of 1967 9.31

What Is Not Affirmed

Any doctrine—

- that promotes a covenant life which is to be lived out in a solitary manner, devoid of community;
- that suggests that covenant life need not be different than the life of the unbeliever in any profound way;
- that would seek to lay the foundation of our covenant life on anything other than or contrary to God's Word.

SACRAMENTS

The church receives from the Lord Jesus Christ two sacred and symbolic actions, called sacraments, which enact and perform (symbolize and seal) the promises of the gospel. These sacraments are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is the sign and seal of incorporation into Christ and of the washing away of sin through his sacrifice. Baptism publicly acknowledges that the one baptized is part of the covenant community of faith. Baptizing infants reminds us that God reaches out to us even before we are able to respond in faith.

The Lord's Supper, using bread and wine, is the sign and seal of our ongoing communion with the living Christ and of his life continuing to nourish us. Celebrating the Lord's Supper, we give thanks as we remember that Christ lived for us, Christ died for us and Christ will come again.

Both sacraments point to and remind us of the holy sacrifice of Christ for us. The Holy Spirit uses these sacraments—the common signs of water and of bread and wine, combined with the promises in the gospel of eternal life and forgiveness through Christ—to convey grace, salvation, and the real presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, which are received in faith by the believing community in their worship together.

Scripture

Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2: 38-39,42; 16:31-33; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-26; 12:13

Confessions

Heidelberg Catechism 4.066, 4.069-4.071, 4.074, 4.075-4.079

Second Helvetic Confession 5.169, 5.175, 5.205

Shorter Catechism 7.094, 7.096

Confession of 1967 9.51, 9.52

Brief Statement of Faith 10.4

What Is Not Affirmed

- That the physical body and blood of Jesus are actually present in the Lord's Supper.
- That there are other sacraments besides the two instituted by the Lord Jesus.
- That other sacraments can be instituted as the church deems suitable such as milk and honey, etc.
- That these sacraments are mere symbols or do not involve a supernatural presence of Christ or do not supernaturally perform what they signify, that is, *wash from sins* and *nourish us with Christ's very life*.
- That the sacraments confer grace whether or not they are received in faith.

SANCTIFICATION AND THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the individual and collective life of believers effects real transformation—a life of increasing holiness, righteousness, power, and love, as we are changed more and more into the image of Christ. Though Christians are marred by sin and imperfect until Christ returns, there is a substantial manifestation of the righteousness and power of the kingdom of God in the believer, the church, and the world through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit connects us to the life of Christ and releases in us the supernatural and saving power of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and glory.

Scripture

Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; Galatians 5:22-25; Philippians 2:12-13; 2

Thessalonians 2:13

Confessions

Scots Confession 3.12

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.075-6.077

Shorter Catechism 7.035

Larger Catechism 7.188

What Is Not Affirmed

Any doctrine—

- That proclaims that total perfection occurs in this lifetime. (1 Corinthians 13:10-12)
- That proclaims "As though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords—areas in which we do not need justification and sanctification through Him." (Barmen Declaration, 8.15)

PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

Every believer, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, is called to participate in his priestly ministry. A priest functions to reconcile people to God. Jesus Christ is the eternal high priest of God's new covenant, who offered himself as an atoning sin offering on our behalf and who is our eternal advocate before the throne of God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." All believers are called as disciples to do this ministry of Jesus—to participate in his priestly work of reconciling the world to God by proclaiming the gospel, doing the works of Jesus, and manifesting the reality and power of the kingdom of God in the world. This ministry is not reserved exclusively for ordained clergy and officers, but is the vocational privilege and responsibility of every Christian.

Scripture

Exodus 19:6

Matthew 10:1, 6-7; 28:18-19; 1 Corinthians 12:7, 14, 27; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20, 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:5-6

Confessions

Second Helvetic Confession 5.153

Confession of 1967 9.31, 9.38

MISSION OF THE CHURCH

God's redeeming and reconciling work in the world was accomplished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and continues through the church, the body of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven in the world.

Jesus Christ, as the Lord of the church, calls the church into being, declares its mission, and supernaturally equips it for its work. Its mission is:

- To be the provisional demonstration of the new reality God intends for humanity;

- To proclaim the good news of salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, leading persons to repentance, acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord, and new life as his disciples;
- To make disciples of all nations;
- To demonstrate new life in Christ tangibly through its love for one another and the quality of its common life together, sharing in worship, fellowship, and nurture, practicing a deepened life of prayer and service under the guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- To participate in God's activity in the world through its life for others.

The church is to commit itself fully to this mission, waiting for and hastening the Lord's coming again.

Scripture

Matthew 9:36-38, 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:13-15; 2 Peter 3:10-13

Confessions

Westminster Confession of Faith 6.058

Confession of 1967 9.06, 9.43, 9.44-9.46.

What Is Not Affirmed

Any witness of the Church—

- that distorts the gospel message or holds it captive to culture;
- that seeks justice apart from the truth of Christ;
- that elevates sociology, psychology, education or any other discipline above the clear witness of Scripture;
- that self-righteously appeals to others to live faithful and obedient lives rather than acknowledging the Church's reliance on the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit in its own life and witness;
- that is motivated by anything other than the love of Christ.

STEWARDSHIP

God has given us all that we have and all that we are. He charges us with the responsibility of using all our abilities and gifts in his faithful service and to his glory—and especially to further the work and mission of the church, to relieve suffering and help the poor, to resist the devil and overcome evil. In particular God has ordered us to manage and care for creation as grateful stewards and obedient servants.

Jesus Christ is Lord of every area of our life—our spiritual life and our physical life; our social life including marriage, politics, justice, and culture; our intellectual life; our work life and our recreational life; the use of our bodies, our possessions, our resources, and our money. We are to be stewards of all of these things to manifest and extend the kingdom of God in the world, to extend the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, and to bring glory to the name of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Scripture

Psalms 24:1

Romans 12:1; 1 Corinthians 4:7; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 4:8-11

Confessions

Larger Catechism 7.251

Confession of 1967 9.46

Brief Statement of Faith 10.33, 10.38