

WORD AND SPIRIT COVENANT CHURCH DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Traditional Protestant Reformed creeds and confessions

We hold to historic Reformed Confessions: the **Savoy Declaration of Faith** (1658); the **Heidelberg Catechism** (1563); and the **Canons of Dordt** (1619.).¹ We also hold to the four ecumenical creeds of the early church: the Apostles Creed;² the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed³ (381); the **Creed of Chalcedon** (451); and the Athanasian Creed (A.D. 381 – second half of 5th century).

These Reformed confessions expound the central doctrines of Christianity, such as:

- the full verbal inspiration, inerrancy, and sufficiency of the completed Scripture;
- the Trinity (one God in three Persons);
- the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ (which requires the virginal conception);
- the judicial, substitutionary atonement provided by Jesus Christ;
- justification⁴ by grace alone, through faith alone, on the ground of Christ's work alone;
- the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, i.e., Jesus Christ arose from the dead, within human history, in the same material body of flesh and bones in which He died⁵ (Lk 24:39–43; Jn 20:20, 27); and
- the future, bodily second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, followed by the general bodily resurrection of all the dead, and the final judgment.

Doctrinal positions regarding contemporary theological issues

1. **Bible.** We affirm that the 66 books of the Bible, in their original autographs, are the inerrant and infallible Word of God written (2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Pt 1:19–21; Jn 10:34–35; Mt 15:3–6; Ro 9:6).⁶ We further affirm that the Bible is the objective standard or criterion of truth (Jn 17:17), and that the Bible teaches the basic axioms needed to make sense of every area of life and thought. Truth is absolute (i.e., the same for all people in all places for all time); truth is not relative or subjective. We adhere to the Reformed confessions and early church creeds listed above since they are accurate summaries of what is taught in the holy Bible. God has providentially preserved the Hebrew and Greek text of Scripture, keeping it pure in all ages (Savoy Declaration 1:8): the Masoretic text of the Old Testament and the Byzantine/Majority/Traditional text of the New Testament (as opposed to the modern critical texts). Acceptable English translations should be based on these faithful Hebrew and Greek texts and be translated according to the formal equivalent method (i.e., literal translation, as opposed to the dynamic equivalent method, which is an interpretive paraphrase).
2. **Unity of the Bible.** We affirm the unity of the Bible or “covenant theology,” teaching that there is one covenant of grace throughout history (Heb 13:20). The covenants God made with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David built on each other, and revealed progressively more of this one covenant of grace, until its culmination in the new covenant. We further affirm that God has one people throughout the Bible (Ro 11:16–24, 26, 28; Heb 3:5f; Ac 7:38). We thus reject the theological-hermeneutical system of Dispensationalism as unbiblical. Like the believers in the Older Testament, we affirm that our children are part of the covenant community.⁷

3. **Jurisdictional separation.** We affirm the jurisdictional separation of family, church, and state⁸—with all three being required to submit to the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ and required to obey God’s written Word (the Bible).
4. **God’s law.** God is the only ultimate Lawgiver and Judge (Ja 4:12). He alone determines and defines good and evil, justice and injustice. We thus affirm that both civil law and ethics must be derived from the unchanging moral law of God as revealed in the Bible. We further affirm that this moral law of God includes the just principles embedded in the Old Testament civil case laws. We deny that natural law, rather than the Bible, should function as the basis for civil law and societal ethics. We oppose communism, socialism (Ex 20:15; Ac 5:4), fascism, anarchy, political pluralism, secularism, and all forms of political and economic tyranny as violations of God’s Word and as usurpations of the absolute sovereignty of Jesus Christ (Mt 28:18–20; Rv 11:15), the King of kings and the Lord of lords (Rv 19:16; 1:5).
Biblical ethics are absolute (i.e., the same for all people in all places for all time) and objective—not relative or subjective. We oppose abortion⁹ and homosexuality¹⁰ on the ground that they are morally incompatible with the absolute, universal, and invariant ethical teachings of the infallible Bible.
5. **Men and women.** We affirm that men and women were created equally in the image of God (Gn 1:26–27) and are therefore equal in personhood, importance, and dignity before God (Gal 3:28). We further affirm that God created men and women to have different and complementary roles, and that men are to have the headship of their family, of the church (1 Tim 2:11–14; 3:2ff; 1 Cor 11:3–16; 14:33–38; Tit 1:6),¹¹ and of the state.¹² Women play a vital role in the life of the church, but in keeping with God’s created design, they are not permitted “to teach or to have authority over a man” (1 Tim. 2:12). Leaders in the church (including all church officers) must therefore be men. Thus we promote the covenantal headship of the husband by practicing male-only, head-of-household congregational voting. We oppose the teaching, practice and promotion of feminism in any form.¹³
6. **Families.** Masculinity, femininity, marriage, and family were ordained by God at creation (Gn 1–2). God’s Word: (a) distinguishes between male and female; (b) defines what constitutes a family; (c) sets the rules for who can marry whom; (d) defines the roles and responsibilities of husbands, wives, parents, and children (and extended family members); and (e) limits the grounds for divorce and the freedom to remarry.
We encourage our families to learn, worship, fellowship, and serve together as families.¹⁴ We seek to assist fathers fulfill their role as covenant heads and spiritual leaders of their own families.
7. **Education.** We affirm that God has delegated to parents the authority and the responsibility to teach, instruct, train, and discipline their own children in accordance with God’s covenantal Word (e.g., Gn 18:19; Dt 6:1–9, 20–25; 11:19–22; Pr 1:8 4:1–4; 6:20–22; Eph 6:1–4). We deny that God has delegated the authority to educate children to the state or to the church.¹⁵ We further deny that education can be religiously, epistemologically, or ethically neutral: education is either Christian or non-Christian, subject to the Lord Jesus Christ or against Him. Only education that is founded upon the comprehensive Christian worldview—and that imparts this worldview—is Biblically acceptable for covenant children.
8. **Gifts of the Holy Spirit.** We affirm that the gifts and ministries of the Holy Spirit (Ro 12:6–8; 1 Cor 12:8–10, 28–30; Eph 4:11) continue throughout the church age,¹⁶ and that Scripture commands all Christians to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, “especially that you may

prophecy” (1 Cor 14:1, 39; cf. vv. 5, 12, 24, 31; 1 Th 5:19–21). We deny that post-canonical revelations can add anything to the Bible or can have authority equal to, or greater than, the Bible.¹⁷

9. **Worship.** We affirm that worship must be God-centered, and that it must be done in the manner God prescribes in His written Word.¹⁸ We deny that Biblical worship can be man-centered, entertainment-oriented, or “seeker-friendly.”
10. **Creation.** We affirm that the triune God created the entire universe: out of nothing; in six literal days (i.e., in six twenty-four hour, consecutive, contiguous days); “very good” (Gn 1; Ex 20:11; Ps 33:6; Jn 1:3, 10; Ac 4:24; 14:15; 17:24; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16; Heb 11:3; Rv 4:11; 10:6). We also affirm a young earth (approximately 6,000–7,000 years old) and a world-wide flood (Gn 7). We deny all interpretations of Genesis 1–11 that treat this portion of Scripture as myth, legend, or non-historical/non-chronological literary devices.¹⁹
11. **Mission.** We affirm that the mission of the Church is to proclaim the good news of the sovereign reign of the Lord Jesus Christ (Mt 24:14; 13:31–33; Ac 2:30–36; 8:12; 10:36; 17:6–7; 19:8; 28:23, 31), discipling all nations under His lordship (since Jesus Christ has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, Mt 28:18–20; Eph 1:20–22; Jn 3:35), until every enemy is put under Christ’s feet and He alone has the preeminence in everything (Ps 2:10–12; 110:1–3ff; Dn 7:13–14; Ac 2:34–36; 1 Cor 15:23–28; 2 Cor 10:5; Phil 2:9–11; 3:21; Col 1:18; Heb 10:12–13; Rv 1:5; 11:15; 19:16).

We reject the following theological positions as incompatible with Biblical Christianity: Roman Catholicism; Neo-Orthodoxy; Freemasonry; Open Theism (Open-View-of-God); New Perspective on Paul²⁰ (including Auburn Avenue Theology/Federal Vision/[Norman] Shepherdism²¹); Emergent Church, and hyperpreterism.

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¹ We further acknowledge the wisdom and usefulness of: the British Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) with its Larger and Shorter Catechisms; the Belgic Confession (1561, revised 1619); the Swiss Helvetic Confession (1566); and the French Gallican Confession (1559) as standards which express the same faith of the Reformation Church but differ in their Presbyterian church polity. We recognize the two principal Reformed Baptist confessions, i.e., the London Confession of Faith (1677) and the Philadelphia Confession of Faith (1688) as standards which express the same faith of the Reformation Church, but differ in the practice of baptism. These fine Reformed confessional statements may be found on the web at <http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html>.

The Savoy Declaration of Faith (1658) is nearly identical to the Westminster Confession of Faith, with the exception of its church government, which is local presbyterian rather than hierarchical, national Presbyterian. This Confession was framed by the great Puritan scholar and pastor, John Owen, together with some Independents/Congregationalists who had been part of the Westminster Assembly. Like almost all Reformed confessions, the Savoy Declaration of Faith asserts the Roman Catholic papacy to be the antichrist. However, we do not believe that the papacy is the Antichrist (although it should be viewed as an antichrist). We also do not make as

sharp of a distinction between pastor (minister of the Word/teaching elder) and ruling elders as is made in the historic Reformed confessions.

² The problematical phrase “he descended into hell” is not attested in the earliest versions of the Apostles’ Creed. It first appears in the 6th century. See: Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 2:40f, 46f, 54; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), pp. 585–594. For a discussion of crucial doctrines omitted or not defined by the Apostles’ Creed see Clifton R. Loucks, “Rethinking the Apostles’ Creed,” *The Trinity Review* # 218 (April 2003) <http://www.trinityfoundation.org/journal.php?id=108>.

³ John Calvin and later Reformed theologians corrected some inadequacies in the language of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed’s Christology and Pneumatology. See Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), pp. 317–338.

⁴ The Savory Declaration reads: “Those whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but **by imputing Christ’s active obedience to the whole law, and passive obedience in his death for their whole and sole righteousness**, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God...” (bold added).

⁵ Cf. the Evangelical Theological Society’s survey of its members, in Norman L. Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), p. 190.

⁶ See The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978, <http://reformation.net/>). Word and Spirit Covenant Church affirms that all churches or denominations that deny the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, and/or the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, are considered apostate churches, having departed from the faith “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

⁷ Baptized children of believing parent/s are received as non-communing (and non-voting) church members. Upon credible profession of personal faith in Jesus Christ and commitment to live under His Lordship (further described in the By-Laws), they may be admitted by the Board of Elders to the Lord’s Table. Communion with the Lord Jesus Christ at the Lord’s Table is a picture of personal union with Him. Therefore, spiritual union with Christ (which follows regeneration) is a prerequisite for believers’ communion (contra paedocommunion).

⁸ We reject the errors of both Erastianism (in which church government is subordinate in ecclesiastical matters to the civil magistrate) and of prelacy (in which the civil magistrate is subordinate to church government). We reject churches incorporating under the state, since incorporation, as legally defined, is existence as a legal, fictitious person by authority of the civil magistrate and thereby required to submit to civil law in matters pertaining to areas of jurisdiction which were given by God to the Church.

⁹ Including abortion for rape or incest.

¹⁰ Including lesbianism, sodomy, sex-change operations, cross-dressing and/or transvestitism. See: Gn 19:1–27; Lv 18:22–29; 20:13; Dt 23:17; Ro 1:26f; 1 Cor 6:9f; 1 Tim 1:9f; 2 Pt 2:6; Jude 7. The civil government removing homosexuality from the nation was a crucial component of Biblical reformations (1 Ki 15:12; 22:46; 2 Ki 23:7).

¹¹ See the Danver’s Statement of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, <http://www.cbmw.org/about/danvers.php> (also used by the International Church Council, <http://churchcouncil.org/>).

¹² Cf. William Einwechter, “Should Christians Support a Woman for the Office of Civil Magistrate?” *Chalcedon Report* # 368 (March 1996) pp. 20–22.

¹³ See Wayne A. Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006) for a devastating critique of the myths and lies perpetrated by contemporary evangelical feminist scholars (of both sexes) to reject the Bible’s clear teaching regarding male headship.

¹⁴ “We deny that God’s people should treat His Word as inadequate for church and family life by supplementing His completed revelation with humanistic psychology, corporate business models, and modern marketing techniques. ... We deny/reject the church’s implementation of modern individualism by fragmenting the family through age-graded, peer-oriented, and special-interest classes, thus preventing rather than promoting family unity” (Vision Forum, “A Biblical Confession for Uniting Church and Home,” http://www.visionforumministries.org/projects/ncfc/a_biblical_confession_for_unit.aspx).

¹⁵ Of course, children are to be with their parents in the church assembly, worshipping together and listening to the reading and exposition of God’s Word (Dt 29:9–13; Jos 8:35; 2 Ch 20:13; 31:18; Jl 2:15f). Furthermore, God “commanded various religious ceremonies to be observed by the household as a unit: the Passover (Ex 12:3f; 2 Ch 35:6); the sin offering on the Day of Atonement (Lv 16:17); the sacrifice of the firstborn of the flocks (Dt 15:20); tithing (Dt 14:26; 12:7); and eating of the Levitical tithe (Nu 18:31)” (ISBE, rev., 2:773; cf. TDOT 2:114).

¹⁶ The New Testament distinguishes between two types of apostles: those (approximately 15) male Apostles of Jesus Christ who were foundational to the establishment of the New Testament church; and other men who were apostles/messengers of the churches (2 Co 8:23; Phil 2:25; cf. Jn 13:16), functioning primarily as cross-cultural church planters (*Didache*, 11:3–6, in ANF, 7:380). Foundational apostles: were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus Christ; were commissioned by the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ to be His authorized personal representatives (*shaliach*) and the vehicles of His revelation; infallibly spoke and wrote God’s inerrant Word (by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit), whose writings became “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). These Apostles of Christ were unique because they were an essential part of the central point of history—God fulfilling the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament and giving the final revelation of Himself (Heb 1:1f) by sending His Son into the world as Redeemer—events in the history of redemption that can never be repeated. Thus, there are no more foundational Apostles. Paul was the last of the foundational Apostles (1 Cor 15:8). That is why Christ’s foundational Apostles appointed elders/overseers/shepherds (not more Apostles) as their successors to lead Christ’s church (Ac 14:23; Tit 1:5). But there are still apostles of churches who are cross-cultural church planters. These lower level apostles may also have some role in relationally networking the body of Christ together. However, since few Christians today clearly understand the Biblical distinction between the two types of apostles, using the term “apostle” to describe a contemporary church leader is bound to cause confusion, and it often promotes the exercise of unbiblical authority. [For further documentation see: Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 907–911; Joseph B. Lightfoot, “The Name and Office of an Apostle,” in *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* [repr.: Lynn, MA: Hendrickson 1982], pp. 92–101; K.H. Rengstorf, “*apostolos*,” TDNT 1:398–447; Ernest Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1964), pp. 364–384.] New Testament prophets were subject to, and judged by, the unquestioned, authoritative teaching of the foundational Apostles of Christ (1 Cor 14:36–38; Gal 1:8f; etc.). Thus, New Testament prophets did not wield the same authority as the true Old Testament prophets; instead, it was the foundational Apostles of Christ who were the successors to the Old Testament prophets as the God-appointed vehicles of His infallible Word. See Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000).

As an historical note, the Scottish Covenanters are a clear example of outstanding Reformed theologians who affirmed, experienced, and defended the supernatural gifts of the Spirit—including the gift of prophecy and the working of miracles. For example, two brilliant Scottish theologians at the Westminster Assembly, Samuel Rutherford and George Gillespie, believed there was no contradiction in signing the Westminster Confession of Faith, while defending the validity of the ongoing gift of prophecy.

¹⁷ The Scriptures are the sum total of the revelations of God which were infallibly recorded in a God-breathed, written form, designed to be the deposit of divine truth and the permanent rule of faith and life to the universal Church. There is no further content to be added to the Biblical revelation of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. Thus we hold to the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, as historically understood by the Reformers: “Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains everything we need God to tell us for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994], p. 127).

¹⁸ We understand Biblically-approved worship to include “new songs,” i.e., songs in addition to the Psalms, and to include the use of musical instruments. See John M. Frame, *Worship in Spirit and Truth* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1996), pp. 123–134.

¹⁹ For example, the “Framework Hypothesis” and the “Day-Age Theory.”

²⁰ Guy P. Waters, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004). Eds. Gary L.W. Johnson and Guy P. Waters, *By Faith Alone* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).

²¹ See http://www.rpcga.org/index.php?p=aboutus&sub=justification_1&sub_nav=OSS. Guy P. Waters, *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006).