



APPENDIX

References to the PC(USA) *Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*

The following is intended to demonstrate the relationship between the claims made about what Presbyterians believe in the “Why Presbyterians Are Like That” Bible study series and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)—the *Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*.

For decades, the PC(USA) has used the documents in the *Book of Confessions* to declare “to its members and to the world who and what it is, what it believes, and what it resolves to do. (“Foundations of Presbyterian Polity”, *Book of Order*, F-2.01). The documents in the *Book of Confessions* “affirm a common faith tradition, while also from time to time standing in tension with each other (F-2.02).”

Based on the doctrines articulated in Scripture and the *Book of Confessions*, the *Book of Order* delineates the organization and functioning of the Presbyterian Church at the local, regional, and national level.

This document makes no claim to be exhaustive, but maintains that the generalizations about Presbyterians made in the “Why Presbyterians Are Like That” Bible study series are consistent with articulated positions of the PC(USA).

1. BIBLE

If any man, will note in our Confession any chapter or sentence contrary to God’s Holy Word that it would please him of his gentleness and for Christian charity’s sake to inform us of it in writing, and we, upon our honour, do promise him that by God’s grace we shall give him satisfaction from the mouth of God, that is, from Holy Scripture, or else we shall alter whatever he can prove to be wrong.

From the Preamble to the Scots Confession not included in the Book of Confessions)

From *Why Presbyterians Are Like That*, written by Rev. John Williams, Ph.D. Chaplain and Director of Church Relations Austin College, Sherman, Texas. Copyright © 2022 by UKirk Collegiate Ministries and the Office of Christian Formation in the Presbyterian Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

[Scripture is] the most complete exposition of all that pertains to a saving faith, and also to the forming of a life acceptable to God . . .

Second Helvetic Confession, BC 5.002

We hold that interpretation of the Scripture to be orthodox and genuine which is gleaned from the s themselves (from the nature of the language in which they were written, likewise according to the circumstances in which they were set down, and expounded in the light of like and unlike passages and of many and clearer passages) and which agree with the rule of faith and love, and contributes much to the glory of God and [humanity's] salvation.

Second Helvetic Confession, BC 5.010

[W]e do not permit ourselves, in controversies about religion or matters of faith, to urge our case with only the opinions of the fathers or decrees of councils much less by received customs, or by the large number who share the same opinion, or by the prescription of a long time.

Second Helvetic Confession, BC 5.012

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for [God's] own glory, [humanity's] salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of [humanity]. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are received in the Word . . .

Westminster Confession, BC 6.006

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly,

Westminster Confession, BC 6.009

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death.

Barmen Declaration, BC 8.11

We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides [the] one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation.

Barmen Declaration, BC 8.12

God instructs [the] church and equips it for mission through preaching and teaching. By these, when carried out in fidelity to the Scriptures and dependence upon the Holy Spirit, the people hear the word of God and accept and follow Christ. The message is addressed to [people] in different situations. Therefore effective preaching, teaching, and personal witness require disciplined study of both the Bible and the contemporary world. All acts of public worship should be conducive to [people's] hearing of the gospel in a particular time and place and responding with fitting obedience.

Confession of 1967, BC 9.49

*In the worship and service of God and the government of the church, matters are to be ordered **according to the Word** by reason and sound judgment, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BO F-1.0203

[The documents in the Book of Confessions] are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BO F-2.02

There are truths and forms with respect to which [people] of good conscience may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BC F-3.0105

2. GRACE

God, after the fearful and horrible departure of [humanity] from [. . .] obedience, did seek Adam again . . .

Scots Confession, BC 3.04

By grace alone [God] chose us in his son Jesus Christ before he foundation of the world was laid.

Scots Confession, BC 3.08

To put this even more plainly; as we willingly disclaim any honor and glory from our own creation and redemption, so do we willingly also for our regeneration and sanctification; for by ourselves we are not capable of thinking one good thought, but [God] who has begun the work in us alone continues us in it, to the praise and glory of [God's] undeserved grace.

Scots Confession, BC 3.12

3. RESPONSE

The cause of good works, we confess, is not our free will, but the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, who dwells in our hearts by true faith, brings forth such works as God prepared for us to walk in.

Scots Confession, BC 3.13

Q. 63 *Will our good works merit nothing, even when it is God's purpose to reward them in this life, and in the future life as well?*

A. *This reward is not given because of merit, but out of grace.*

Q. 64 *But does not this teaching make people careless and sinful?*

A. *No, for it is impossible for those who are ingrafted into Christ by true faith not to bring forth the fruit of gratitude.*

Heidelberg Catechism, BC 4.063-4.064

Q. 86 *Since we are redeemed from our sin and its wretched consequences by grace through Christ without any merit of our own, why must we do good works?*

- A. *Because just as Christ has redeemed us with his blood he also renews us through his Holy Spirit according to his own image, so that with our whole life we may show ourselves grateful to God for [God's] goodness and that [God] may be glorified through us; and further, so that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by its fruits and by our reverent behavior may win our neighbors to Christ.*

Heidelberg Catechism, BC 4.086

[W]e do not spurn as useless the means by which divine providence works, but we teach that we are to adapt ourselves to them in so far as they are recommended to us in the Word of God. Wherefore we disapprove of the rash statements of those who say that if all things are managed by the providence of God, then our efforts and endeavors are in vain.

Second Helvetic Confession, BC 5.031

[A]lthough we teach with the apostle that [one] is justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and not through any good works, yet we do not think that good works are of little value and condemn them. We know that [humanity] was not created or regenerated through faith in order to be idle, but rather that without ceasing [we] should do those things which are good and useful.

Second Helvetic Confession, BC 5.118

Life is a gift to be received with gratitude and a task to be pursued with courage.

Confession of 1967, BC 9.17

To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as [God's] reconciling community.

Confession of 1967, BC 9.31

Because in Christ the Church is holy, the Church, its members, and those in ordered ministries strive to lead lives worthy of the Gospel we proclaim.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BO F-1.0302

[One of the Great Themes of the Reformed Tradition is] the election of the people of God for service as well as salvation.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BO F-2.05

4. BRAINS

For God in [God's] mercy has permitted the powers of the intellect to remain, though differing greatly from what was in [humanity] before the fall. God commands us to cultivate our natural talents, and meanwhile adds both gifts and success.

Second Helvetic Confession, BC 5.046

*In the worship and service of God and the government of the church, matters are to be ordered according to the Word by **reason and sound judgment**, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BO F-1.0203

5. ASSURANCE

In life and death we belong to God.

Brief Statement of Faith, BC 10.1.1

In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community.

Brief Statement of Faith, BC 10.3.29-32

*Loving us still,
God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.
Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,
God is faithful still.*

Brief Statement of Faith, BC 10.3.47-51

To be thus joined with one another is to become priest for one another, praying for the world and for one another and sharing the various gifts God has given to each Christian for the benefit of the whole community.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BO F-1.0302

6. JUSTICE

The reconciliation of [humanity] through Jesus Christ makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God's good creation.

Confession of 1967, BC 9.46

The church comes under the judgment of God and invites rejection by [humanity] when it fails to lead men and women into the full meaning of life together, or withholds the compassion of Christ from those caught in the moral confusion of our time.

Confession of 1967, BC 9.47

*Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children,
healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts,
forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.*

Brief Statement of Faith, BC 10.9-18

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

- *which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation;*
- *which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of peace while believers of the same confession are in*

effect alienated from one another for the sake of diversity and in despair of reconciliation;

- *which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin;*
- *which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the church.*

Belhar Confession, BC 11.2

We believe

- *that God has revealed [Godself] as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;*
- *that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged*
- *that God calls the church to follow [God] in this; for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;*
- *that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;*
- *that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;*
- *that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering;*
- *that God wishes to teach the church to do what is good and to seek the right;*
- *that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream;*
- *that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.*

Therefore, we reject any ideology

- *which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.*

Belhar Confession, BC 11.4

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups in its membership.

Form of Government, BC F-1.0403

[One of the Great Themes of the Reformed Tradition is] the recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BO F-2.05

7. SIN

All human virtue, when seen in the light of God's love in Jesus Christ, is found to be infected by self-interest and hostility.

Confession of 1967, BC 9.13

*But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.
Ignoring God's commandments,
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,
accept lies as truth,
exploit neighbor and nature,
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.
We deserve God's condemnation.
Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.*

Brief Statement of Faith, BC 10.33-40

8. PRESBYTERIAN

[T]he reason for councils [. . .] was [. . .] to give public confession of their faith to the generations following, which they did by the authority of God's written Word, and not by any opinion or prerogative that they could not err by reason of their numbers.

This, we judge, was the primary reason for general councils.

Scots Confession, BC 3.20

[L]et the ministers of the Church be called and chosen by lawful and ecclesiastical election; that is to say let them be carefully chosen by the Church or by those delegated from the Church for that purpose in a proper order without any uproar, dissension and rivalry.

Second Helvetic Confession, BC 5.150

The various offices in the Church do not establish a dominion of some over others; on the contrary, they are for the exercise of the ministry entrusted to and enjoined upon the whole congregation.

Barmen Declaration, BC 8.20

Christ gives to the Church all the gifts necessary to be his body. The Church strives to demonstrate those gifts in its life as a community in the world.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BO F-1.0301

[One of the Great Themes of the Reformed Tradition is] Covenant life marked by disciplined concern for order in the Church according to the Word of God.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BO F-2.05

Following opportunity for discussion [. . .] a majority shall govern.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BO F-3.0205

9. HOPE

We believe

- *that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity,*
- *that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world;*

Belhar Confession, BC 11.3

The Church is to be a community of hope, rejoicing in the sure and certain knowledge that, in Christ, God is making a new creation.

Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, BO F-.0301

10. HUMBLY

[A]lthough God alone knows who are [God's], and here and there mention is made of the small number of the elect, yet we must hope well of all, and not rashly judge any [one] to be a reprobate.

Second Helvetic Confession, BC 5.055

And when the Lord was asked whether there were few that should be saved, he does not answer and tell them that few or many should be saved or damned, but rather he exhorts every [one] to "strive to enter by the narrow door (Luke 13:24): as if he should say, It is not for you curiously to inquire about these matters, but rather to endeavor that you may enter into heaven by the straight way.

Second Helvetic Confession, BC 5.056

For we know that God had some friends in the world outside the commonwealth of Israel.

Second Helvetic Confession, BC 5.137

*We trust in God the Holy Spirit,
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.*

Brief Statement of Faith, BC 10.52-53

*We believe
that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel,
and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation,
but rather, out of prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief,
denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel,
must be considered ideology and false doctrine.*

Belhar Confession, BC 11.3

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at all levels seeks new opportunities for conversation and understanding with non-Christian religious entities.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at all levels will be open to and will seek opportunities for respectful dialogue and mutual relationships with entities and persons from other religious traditions. It does this in the faith that the church of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is sign and means of God's intention for the wholeness of all humankind and all creation.

Form of Government, BO G-5.0102