

Part One: Theological Views

1. the Inspiration and Canonicity of Scripture

I believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are “God-breathed”—that is, that God so superintended the writing of Scripture as to ensure that each word is His own. Thus, the Bible is the holy, inspired, and inerrant Word of God. I believe that the Bible alone is our rule of faith and practice. The Scriptures are the foundation of the church, and therefore the church rightfully recognizes those books which are inspired by God; however, the canonicity of these books does not rest on the authority of the church, but the church must submit in everything to the Word.

2. the Doctrine of the Trinity

There is only one true and living God. God eternally exists in three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These persons are the same in substance and equal in power and glory, but are distinct as to personhood. The Father begets the Son, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

3. the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ will return again to judge the living and the dead and to gather His people to Himself forever. No man knows the day or hour of Christ’s return. The “last days” have been since Christ’s first coming, and every Christian is commanded to live expectantly, prepared at all times for Christ’s return. I believe that the millennium described in Revelation 20 represents the present church age and that the second coming of Christ will usher in the new heavens and new earth described in Revelation 21-22.

4. the Continuation of the Sign Gifts of the Holy Spirit

Christ rules over and gives gifts to His church. All the gifts of the Spirit are given for the manifestation of Christ so that God’s people can be built up in the faith. Also, there were special gifts given to the apostles to authenticate their unique ministry. These gifts were largely revelatory, and are properly called “sign gifts”: the gifts of prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc. These gifts ceased when God completed His revelation through the apostles. After the New Testament was written, the chief end of God’s revelation—to proclaim Christ—was fulfilled. Therefore, the sign gifts, given to authenticate God’s revelation through the apostles, are no longer exercised in the church. However, spiritual gifts are still given and exercised, and some gifts may be given which are analogous to the sign gifts (i.e., the gifts of preaching and prophecy are related in this way). I believe that God can do all His holy will, and we cannot set our own limits on His work. However, following the teaching of Scripture itself, I affirm that revelation is completed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (i.e., Hebrews 1:1-2).

5. the Five Points of Calvinism (with attention to the extent of the atonement)

I believe that humans are totally depraved and unable to save themselves (or prepare themselves for salvation). Therefore, salvation comes to us through the free choice of God. God chose a multitude of sinners before the foundation of the world to be saved through Jesus Christ—and this election of God is not based on any good thing foreseen in those chosen. In the fulness of time, Christ came into the world to accomplish salvation for all His elect people. Christ’s death atones for the sins of

God's elect only. Christ's death, therefore, is not only a possibility of redemption, but is its actual accomplishment for all who believe. Therefore, all those for whom Christ died are effectually called by the Spirit. This is by God's irresistible grace—that is, God actually achieves His purpose of converting all His elect. Since they are chosen in Christ from the foundation of the world and since Christ saves them by His life, death, and resurrection, I believe that all who are effectually called will persevere to the end, being kept by God through faith in Christ.

6. the Doctrine of the Church (including the proper recipients of the sacraments)

It is appropriate to distinguish the "invisible" church from the "visible" church. The invisible church is all the elect in every time and place united to Christ their head. The visible church—or the church as we see it—is made up of all those who credibly profess faith in Christ and their children. All church members are to be baptized. Believers' children are members of the covenant by virtue of God's promises, and are therefore to be baptized. All church members able to examine themselves, repent of their sins, and believe the gospel are to be admitted to the Lord's Supper. Those who are ignorant or ungodly must not partake of the Lord's Supper. The marks of a true church are the Word rightly preached and taught, the sacraments rightly administered, and discipline.

7. the Role of Women in the Church (including the issue of their ordination to church office)

God made human beings—male and female—in His own image, and women are fellow partakers with men in the covenant of grace and the riches of Christ's benefits in the gospel. However, there is in both home and church an order established by God in which men are called to lead and women to submit to their leadership. That being said, women are recipients of spiritual gifts and are to exercise them for the edification of the body. However, women are not permitted to hold the offices of elder and deacon, because these offices are entrusted with the spiritual leadership of the church.

8. the Doctrine of Creation (including the view of the days of Genesis 1)

I believe that God created all things out of nothing by the word of His power and all very good. I believe the book of Genesis is given by God's inspiration and is true in all that it affirms. I am not sure that the days of Genesis 1 are meant to be taken as literal, 24-hour days. Instead, I favor the view which says that the days of Genesis 1 are God's days, analogous to ours (and the pattern for human work and rest) but not necessarily identical to ours. I think, therefore, that Genesis 1 leaves the question of the age of the earth (whether old or young) unsettled. This analogous view of Genesis 1 has been articulated in various ways by Bavinck, C. John Collins, and Vern Poythress.

Part Two: Exceptions to the Standards

Section of the Confession or Catechism Number	Language to which you take exception	Explanation
WCF IV.1	“in the space of six days”	The authors of the Confession likely interpreted the days of Genesis 1 in terms of literal, 24-hour days. I am not convinced that the passage is to be read in this way. I believe the days of Genesis 1 are more likely describing creation by way of analogy. The days, then, are not meant to be taken literally, but as God’s days—analogueous to ours but not necessarily identical.