

1. Trinitarian Theology
  - (A) the full deity and uniqueness of Jesus Christ as having two distinct, but inseparable natures (fully divine, fully human) in one person;
  - (B) the personality, distinct personal status and full deity of the Holy Spirit (whose historical proceeding from the Son as well as the Father reflects the eternal inter-Trinitarian relationship).
2. Reality of cognitive knowledge of God and verbal revelation from Him.
3. Full inspiration, infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible.
4. Sole authority of the Bible for Christian doctrine and living.
5. Historicity of (non-evolutionary) creation, prophesy, miracles.
6. Reality of everlasting damnation as a judgment upon man's guilt.
7. Justification by faith in Christ alone, apart from meritorious good works.
8. Rejection of:
  - (A) Mary's intercession, treasury of merit, prayers to saints, confessional, penance, purgatory, indulgences, as well as
  - (B) papal infallibility and/or apostolic succession.
9. Priesthood of every believer (personal salvation and the religious dignity of one's calling not mediated by, or dependent upon, church officials).
10. God's fore-ordination of every event, yet man's freedom and responsibility.
11. Moral bondage of man's will, indeed, his total depravity.
12. God's eternal predestination of the saved, reprobation of the lost.
13. Denial that Christ's divine attributes are communicated to His human ones.
14. Christ's particular atonement (dying as a substitute only for the elect).
15. Holy Spirit's efficacious (irresistible) call to the gospel.
16. Regeneration solely by the Holy Spirit, apart from man's cooperation or the church's baptism.
17. Underlying unity of all Biblical covenants, supplementing (not supplanting) each other and all centered on Jesus Christ.
18. Unity of God's people in all ages (the church as new Israel).
19. Postmillennialism (the millennium is during the church age and is followed immediately by Christ's return, a general resurrection of saved and lost, then final judgment), thus denial of a military rule of Christ upon earth for a literal thousand years following the rapture.
20. Perseverance of the saints (as well as eternal security).
21. Necessity of sanctification (growth in holiness) for those who are saved.
22. Impossibility of moral perfection in this life, prior to glorification.
23. Rejection of:
  - (A) mystical means of piety and/or
  - (B) charismatic revelations today.
24. Abiding validity of God's Old Testament law (unless Scripture alters it).
25. Rejection of asceticism: cultural legalism and unbiblical binding of the conscience (either in monasticism or prohibitions of "worldliness").
26. Affirmation of the state, just war, private property.
27. Rejection of the physical presence of Christ in or around the communion elements (transubstantiation, consubstantiation) in favor of His presence through the working of the Holy Spirit.
28. Denial that the sacraments are automatically efficacious or necessary as a means of salvation or blessing.

29. Affirmation of the sacraments as a true means of grace (not mere memorials)  signs and seals of the covenant of grace.
30. Baptism of believers' infants as included in the covenant of grace today.
31. Baptism by pouring (sprinkling)  immersion not Biblically required.
32. Regulative principle of worship (whatever is not commanded is forbidden)  thus rejection of superstitious rites, icons, human liturgical innovations.
33. Presbyterian church government (multiple elders, graded courts, no monarchical bishops).
34. Necessity of church discipline (censures).
35. Church government separate from, and independent of, civil government.

## Characteristic Marks of the Reformed Faith

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### **I. The Sovereignty of God**

- A. God all-powerfully created (from nothing) and owns all things.
- B. God wisely foreordained and providentially controls all events, without depriving man of freedom and responsibility.
- C. Salvation is entirely by God's grace (contra Arminianism):
  - 1. total depravity of the natural man
  - 2. unconditional election by the Father
  - 3. limited-atonement by the Son
  - 4. irresistible grace of the Spirit
  - 5. perseverance of the saints
- D. God will establish His dominion in history over all opposition.
- E. At history's end all men will be subject to God as Judge.

### **II. Covenant Theology**

- A. God sovereignly transacted a covenant of grace with His people, calling for trust in His promise and submission to His stipulations, and carrying both blessings and curses.
- B. All post-fall covenants are essentially one, supplementing rather than supplanting each other (contra dispensationalism).
- C. God's revealed commands and principles continue to be binding until He reveals otherwise (e.g., Old Testament law).
- D. The New Testament church has taken the place of Old Testament Israel; thus today believers and their children (households) are to be baptized as God's covenant people.
- E. The Messianic kingdom (millennium) is presently established on earth and will grow to have worldwide, visible success prior to Christ's return, at which time there will be a general resurrection and final judgment of all men, saved and lost (contra pretribulation rapture and premillennialism).

### **III. Affirmation of This World**

- A. The physical world was created good; matter is not evil.
- B. All areas of life are sacred and are to be subdued to God's glory; Christ is Lord over all (contra pietism and sacred/secular dualisms).
- C. All vocations are equally dignified (contra priestly exaltation).
- D. In the world we are at liberty within Scripture □ thus whatever is not forbidden is permitted (contra asceticism).
- B. Nobody but God may bind the Christian's conscience (contra monasticism, fundamentalist cultural taboos, political tyranny).

### **IV. The Church's Government, Worship and Sacraments**

- A. Christ, as Head, has ordained a presbyterian government for His church (contra monarchical bishops or congregational independency).
- B. The perpetual offices within the church are elders and deacons; those who fill them must be males, spiritually mature and gifted, who are nominated by the people and approved by the elders (session or presbytery).
- C. The worship of the church is regulated by the word of God, thus in worship, whatever is not commanded is forbidden.
- D. The worship of the church is centered on the word of God, thus must be

- intelligible, for edification of the body, done decently and in order.
- E. The sacraments are signs and seals of the covenant of grace, effective through the Holy Spirit to bless or curse (contra mere memorials or automatic blessings through the church).

### *A Basic Comparison of Churches*

For clarity some readers will find it helpful to contrast the theological position of Covenant Community Church with that of other religious bodies on basic points. To be brief, these descriptions are generalizations (not taking account of every exception) and not exhaustive (dealing with every variation). The first three religious groups which are described below cannot be considered manifestations of the true church of Christ. Nevertheless, the groups described thereafter are very much deemed genuine fellow-believers -- but Christians with whom we differ to some degree in interpreting the Bible.

#### **1. Various cults, world religions**

We differ by adhering to Trinitarian theology, the full deity of Jesus Christ, salvation exclusively by faith in Him, and the sole authority of the Bible.

#### **2. Liberal, neo-orthodox theology**

Every mainline denomination today is infected to one degree or another with teaching which denies the full inspiration, infallibility, and/or inerrancy of the Bible as a verbal revelation from God, maintaining the impossibility of any cognitive (rational knowledge of Him). Likewise the deity and uniqueness of Christ is compromised, the object and purpose of saving faith distorted, the teaching of (non-evolutionary) creation, prophecy, miracles, and everlasting damnation are denied.

(Groups will be considered below according to their traditional positions, rather than liberal or neo-orthodox versions.)

#### **3. Roman Catholicism**

The essential reason that Romanist doctrine is not truly Christian is that it denies the heart of the gospel: justification by faith apart from meritorious works -- as well as denying the sole authority of the Bible, and the priesthood of every believer. We disagree with many Romanist doctrinal conceptions (e.g., of God's sovereignty, man's sin, redemptive satisfaction, personal merit, purgatory, intercessory position of Mary), as well as with its practice of the sacraments, worship, and episcopal church government (especially the authority of the pope).

#### **4. Lutherans**

We differ with their views of limited fore-ordination, the relation of the divine and human natures in Christ, the universal intent of the atonement, synergistic regeneration, the "real presence" of Christ in the Lord's Supper, episcopal church government and worship (see below).

#### **5. Anglicans (Episcopalians)**

We disagree with their view of apostolic successions, church government (the one-man rule of a bishop), the sacraments and worship (its elements or rites not being restricted to those ordained by Scripture).

#### **6. Methodists (Wesleyans)**

We disagree with their *Arminianism*: i.e., their particular conception of man's free will, rejection of predestination, view of the atonement as indefinite, seeing grace as inefficacious, and believing it possible to fall from grace. We also do not accept their teaching of perfectionism ("entire sanctification," a view shared by the Nazarene Church) and episcopalian church government.

**7. Brethren, Mennonites, other Anabaptist groups**

We disagree with their rejection of infant baptism, their Arminianism, perfectionism, mystical piety, rejection of the state, pacifism, (occasional) socialism, and congregational church government.

**8. Charismatic (Assembly of God, etc.)**

We disagree with their view of continuing revelation through tongues, prophecy, and miraculous gifts; also with their Arminianism, baptistic view of the sacraments (see below), congregational church government, (usual) premillennial dispensationalism, and (again usual) mystical piety and antinomianism.

**9. Most Baptists**

We disagree with their (usual) Arminianism, rejection of covenant theology, view of the sacraments (necessity of immersion, rejection of infant baptism, Lord's Supper as mere memorial), congregational church government and premillennialism.

**10. "Fundamentalists"**

Apart from the "fundamentals" on which all Christians should agree (e.g., Biblical infallibility, Christ's deity, virgin birth, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection), we disagree with certain characteristics which usually accompany the fundamentalist mentality, such as: Arminianism, a baptistic view of the sacraments, congregational church government, premillennial dispensationalism, antinomianism regarding Old Testament law, yet legalism regarding cultural practices deemed "worldly" (drinking, dancing, smoking, movies, card-playing).