



ECO

A Covenant Order
of Evangelical
Presbyterians

THE CONFSSION OF 1967

INTRODUCTION - BACKGROUND

- **1957: General Assembly was asked to provide an updated, contemporary language, version of the Westminster Shorter Catechism**
- **committee concluded they would not revise the shorter Catechism but would create a new, brief confession.**
- **Several reasons:**
 - Felt the church must confess its faith afresh for this time
 - Shared a critical view of Scripture that recognized historical and cultural influences upon the biblical writings bringing a different understanding of inspiration than traditionally expressed
 - A theological renaissance had brought fresh and dynamic expressions of the Reformed tradition
 - A belief that the church needed to address the profound current social issues
 - Belief that Westminster Standards were dated, harsh, and silent to contemporary issues
- Resulted in a *Book of Confessions* with C67 as the most modern expression



THEME AND CONTENT

- **Main theme: Doctrine of Reconciliation**
 - **Preface and then Three parts:**
 1. “God’s Work of Reconciliation,” through Christ’s redemptive work, The Holy Spirit’s power and the role of Scripture
 2. “The Ministry of Reconciliation,” the life, order, and mission of the church and the agent for reconciliation in the world
 3. “The Fulfillment of Reconciliation” speaks of the ultimate fulfillment of the rule of Christ.
- 

CONTROVERSIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Conservatives believed that C67 diminished the authority of Scripture**
 - C67 places the Bible in the third section under the Holy Spirit
 - It makes declaration that Scripture were “words of men” conditioned by their historical setting
 - C67 depreciated the authority and inspiration of the Bible and overemphasized the role of human interpretation
- **The creeds and confessions were seen more as statements of faith in specific times and contexts than expressions of eternal truths.**
 - As no creed or confession was perfect or capable of expressing all the church might hold true, fresh expressions were seen as necessary.
 - The role and authority of the Westminster Standards were reduced
 - Ordination questions were changed to reflect the new perspective.

CONTROVERSIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

- The confession rejects Westminster's doctrine of limited atonement, holding the "risen Christ is the savior of all" people.
- It includes ethical calls to respect other religions and recognition that all religions, including the Christian, possess a "human character,"
- It de- emphasizes the divine nature of the Christian faith
- Is viewed as promoting relativism and universalism.
- Yet, the confession calls for Christians to live lives that model the reconciliation they have been given.
- It alone in *The Book of Confessions* addresses such ethical issues as employment, housing, education, racial discrimination, and political rights.
- The confession makes no distinction between men and women, declaring that the Spirit endows all members of the church with gifts for ministry.

REFERENCES FOR THE ESSENTIAL TENETS IN THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS

- **Jesus is the Word, that is, God's authoritative self-revelation. 9.27**
 - **The Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to confess Jesus as Lord and God. 9.49**
 - **God made the world good. 9.46**
 - **Our free rebellion against God's will is the source of the world's present misery, disorder, and evil. 9.12**
 - **The Fall distorts our relationships with the created world, with each other, and with God: our natural tendency is now to exploit the creation, treat other people with injustice, and fall into idolatry. 9.12, 47**
 - **Sin poisons all of human life. 9.12**
- 

REFERENCES FOR THE ESSENTIAL TENETS IN THE BOOK OF CONFESSIONS

- **Christ sends us into the world to make disciples, to care for the natural world, to claim all areas of culture in the name of Jesus, to serve the poor, feed the hungry, visit the prisoner, and defend the helpless. 9.43–47**
 - **We are called to live out our faith within the covenant community of the church. 9.36**
 - **The church must already now begin to reflect the eschatological reality of including people from every tribe, and tongue, and nation. 9.44–45**
 - **God's grace is extended through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful practice of mutual discipline. 9.36**
 - **Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the word preached may become God's direct speech to us. 9.30, 49**
 - **No part of human life is off limits to the sanctifying claims of God. 9.53**
- 

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: *HOW DOES*

- **the system of doctrine in the Confession of 1967 accurately and faithfully reflect the theological teaching of the Scriptures?**
 - **the C67 reflect the grace, love, and joy of the gospel?**
 - **it enable the church to confess what it believes and hold the church to believe what it confesses?**
 - **C67 speak in a clear, concise, accessible, and warm manner to the whole church?**
 - **it call for both affirmation and rejection?**
 - **it represent merely the interests of one group in the church, or does it take responsibility to speak from and to the one universal Church?**
 - **it speak only to its own temporal context or does it speak of the eternal truths of Scripture?**
 - **it allow the eternal truths of Scripture to speak into our context?**
- 