



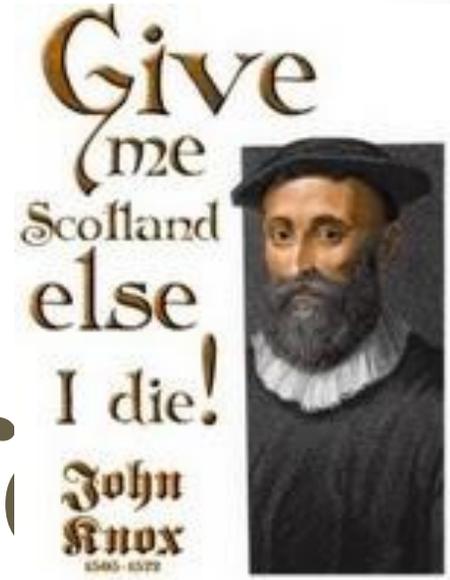
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A Covenant Order
of Evangelical
Presbyterians

Understanding the Confessions
The Scots Confession

The Scots Conf 1560

The Reformation Period



The historical and political context

- In the 40 years prior to 1560, the Kirk in Scotland had been impacted by:
 - the distribution of Tyndale's New Testament,
 - internal calls for church reform,
 - the death of a significant number of protestant martyrs,
 - Luther's writing on justification by faith alone,
 - and the rise of a protestant nobility reflected in the ascendancy and centrality of John Knox and The Lords of the Congregation.
- Scotland's relationship with England and France, and the roles of Mary of Guise and her daughter, Mary Queen of Scots, also shade the historical context for the Scots Confession.
- The Scottish Parliament, after the Queen's death in 1560, declared Scotland a Protestant nation and asked six clergy, including John Knox, to frame a confession of faith. They completed their work in four days.
- The document was ratified by Parliament as "*doctrine grounded upon the infallible Word of God.*"
- The Confession became the chief subordinate standard of the Church of Scotland until superseded, but not annulled, by the Westminster Confession in 1647.

The distinctive nature of Reformation theology in Scots

- The Scots Confession's 25 articles and reflects the Calvinistic theology of Geneva and Zürich, rather than the emphasis of Luther at Wittenberg.
- The opening article demonstrate the heart of Reformed theology, intentionally focusing on he who *“is eternal, infinite, immeasurable, incomprehensible, omnipotent, invisible; one in substance and yet distinct in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.”*
- The remaining articles focus on:
 - humanity as integral to the created order,
 - the nature of original sin and God's covenant promises,
 - God's preservation of the Kirk (church),
 - and the incarnation, life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

- Emphasis on the immutable decrees of God are reflected in:
 - the doctrine of election,
 - the depravity of humanity
 - the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit
 - The function of the Law and good works;
 - the immortality of the soul,
 - the authority of the scriptures, the sacraments,
 - and the place of councils and civil magistrates.
- The Confession concludes by underlining the gifts given to the believer through union with Christ.

The 25 Chapters

1. Of God
2. Of the Creation of Man
3. Of Original Sin
4. Of the Revelation of the Promise
5. Of the Continuance, Increase, and Preservation of the Church
6. Of the Incarnation of Christ Jesus
7. Why it behoved the Mediator to be very God and very Man
8. Of Election
9. Of Christ's Death, Passion, and Burial
10. Of His Resurrection
11. Of His Ascension
12. Of Faith in the Holy Ghost
13. Of the Cause of Good Works
14. What Works Are Reputed Good before God
15. Of the Perfection of the Law, and the Imperfection of Man
16. Of the Church
17. Of the Immortality of Souls
18. Of the Notes, by Which the True Church Is Discerned from the False; and Who Shall Be Judge of the Doctrine
19. Of the Authority of the Scriptures
20. Of General Councils, Of Their Power, Authority, and Cause of Their Convention
21. Of the Sacraments
22. Of the Right Administration of the Sacraments
23. To Whom Sacraments Appertain
24. Of the Civil Magistrate
25. Of the Gifts Freely Given to the Church

References for the Essential Tenets in the Book of Confessions

- **Glorifying & enjoying God are the end of human life 3.01**
- **The Scriptures of the Old & New Testament are the infallible and inspired Word of God, teaching all that is necessary for faith and life. 3.19**
- **God is Triune, that is, one being, three persons. 3.01**
- **God is infinite, eternal, immutable, impassible, ineffable, undivided, the source of goodness, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. 3.01**
- **Human beings are made in God's image. 3.02**

References for the Essential Tenets in the Book of Confessions

- **Jesus Christ is truly God and truly human. 3.06**
- **Jesus' two natures are distinct and distinguishable. 3.06**
- **Jesus is ascended in his resurrected body and remains truly human. 3.11**
- **Jesus will return visibly in the body to judge the living and the dead. 3.11**
- **The Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to confess Jesus as Lord and God. 3.12**

References for the Essential Tenets in the Book of Confessions

- Sin poisons all of human life. 3.15
- We are born dead in our sin; therefore, salvation must be at God's initiative. 3.02
- We are each deserving of eternal condemnation. Jesus offered Himself for us on the cross, saving us from sin and death by bearing our punishment and by offering God the perfect obedience due to Him. 3.09
- We lost true freedom of the will in the Fall and cannot turn to God on our own. In Christ, our freedom is restored. 3.03

References for the Essential Tenets in the Book of Confessions

- God chooses us for Himself in grace before the foundation of the world, not because of any merit on our part, but only because of His love and mercy. 3.08
- We are called to live out our faith within the covenant community of the church. 3.16
- God's grace is extended through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful practice of mutual discipline. 3.18
- In the Lord's Supper, the Spirit unites us to the ascended Christ and nourishes us with His resurrection life. 3.21
- We must worship God alone, renouncing idolatry and inordinate loves. 3.01

Reflection Questions~ How does:

- the system of doctrine in the Scots Confession accurately and faithfully reflect the theological teaching of the Scriptures?
- the Scots Confession 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?
- Is it clear, and does it speak in a 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?

Short Video summary link

- <https://vimeo.com/40355089>