

Isaiah 49:18

Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gathered themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, though shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.

Gen. 1:28

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth

Note: In order that Christ be served in excellence, the following is compiled to define and identify the efforts to establish a reformed church in St. Clair County, Alabama. This document merely presents the ideas and doctrines but does not claim to provide a thorough defense of these ideas in this short text. That would require volumes and is not the purpose of this short briefing. Thus, to a degree, we assume a common understanding of church history and theology. This is not a formal document, but rather the first step to record the vision that has, to this date, been served through prayer and discussion. Since the vision of a reformed church has moved past the stage of discussion and since specific actions for the church are underway the principles and ideas of previous discussions need to be recorded. This is the first step.

We hold the entire Bible to be without error, infallible and inspired word of God. Its truths are applicable to every area of life. We hold to the Scriptural doctrines presented in the Westminster Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and the Confessions of Dordt not as being scripture, but as being accurate and systematic interpretations of the Bible. The following summary is by no means as detailed as the Westminster, Heidelberg and Dordt Confessions. However it is useful for an introduction to our reformed doctrine.

### **Summary Statement of Faith**

We are Calvinistic. We hold to historic, orthodox, catholic Christianity and the great Reformed confession. We believe God, not man, is the center of the universe and beyond; God, not man, controls whatever comes to pass; God, not man, must be pleased and obeyed. We believe God saves sinners. We do not help save ourselves. We believe the Faith should apply to all of life, not just the "spiritual" side. It applies to art, education, technology, and politics no less than to church, prayer, evangelism, and Bible study.

We adhere to God's law as found in the Bible and believe it has not been abolished as a standard of righteousness. It no longer accuses the Christian, since Christ bore its penalty on the cross for him. But, the law is a statement of God's righteous character. It cannot change any more than God can change. God's law is used for three main purposes: First, to drive the sinner to trust in Christ alone, the only perfect law-keeper. Second, to

provide a standard of obedience for the Christian, by which he may judge his progress in sanctification. And third, to maintain order in society, restraining and arresting civil evil.

We are Presuppositionalist. We do not try to "prove" that God exists or that the Bible is true. We hold to the Faith because the Bible says so, not because we can "prove" it. We do not try to convince the unconverted that the gospel is true. They already know it is true when they hear it. They need repentance, not evidence. Of course, we believe there is evidence for the Faith--in fact there is nothing BUT evidence for the Faith. The problem for the unconverted, though, is not a lack of evidence, but a lack of submission. We begin and end with the Bible. We do not defend "natural theology" and other inventions designed to find some agreement with covenant-breaking, apostate mankind.

We are Postmillennialists. We believe Christ will return to earth only after the Holy Spirit has empowered the church to advance Christ's kingdom in time and history. We have faith that God's purposes to bring all nations, though not every individual, in subjection to Christ cannot fail. We are not utopian, nor do we believe the kingdom will advance quickly or painlessly. We know that we enter the kingdom through much tribulation. We know Christians are in the fight for the "long haul." We believe the church may yet be in her infancy, but we believe the Faith will triumph. Under the power of the Spirit of God, it cannot BUT triumph.

We take seriously the Bible's commands to the godly to take dominion in the earth. This is the goal of the gospel and the Great Commission. We believe the earth and all its fullness is the Lord's and that every area dominated by sin must be "reconstructed" in terms of the Bible. This includes: first, the individual, second, the family, third, the church, and fourth, the wider society including the state. We therefore believe fervently in Christian civilization. We believe firmly in the separation of church and state, but not the separation of the state, or anything else, from God. We are not revolutionary, nor do we believe in the militant, forced overthrow of human Government. We have infinitely more powerful weapons than guns and bombs: we have the invincible Spirit of God, the infallible word of God, and the incomparable gospel of God, none of which can fail.

We press the crown rights of the Lord Jesus in every sphere, expecting eventual triumph.

### **Mother Kirk and Community**

Today's culture has abused many truths mandated in scripture. However, by grace, we must accept the responsibility for such wrongs and return to an understanding and practice of God's law. The area we are addressing is the failure of much of today's church to recognize the comprehensive nature of Christianity. It is because of this that the church has been greatly stripped of her impact on society as a whole. C.S. Lewis described the church (Isaiah 49, 50-ff.) as a mother, Mother Kirk, so that the implication of the church went beyond that of a sequestered Sunday social. A mother is involved in the life of her children far more than just an advisor against sin. A mother feeds, nurtures cleans and instructs her children in every area of their lives. In the same way the church takes on the mantle of a comprehensive worldview. The Biblical teaching clearly demonstrates that

the church's catholic nature is a picture of the church as the universal body of Christ. To be sure, the Apostle's Creed speaks of the universal nature of the church and that is precisely where the individual congregations should find unity in a common calling. It is with this in mind that we can firmly hold to the above statement of faith. It is here that we find the importance of community in the health of a church.

A church is a natural community. "Community requires a common basis of faith and character, a relationship of man to man in terms of God." (Rushdoony, Institutes, Vol. II, p.101) This statement implies that the only true community will be based on the common acceptance of God's law. And that is a church. Moreover, this obedience to God's law will include that specific congregations follow the three signs of a church (these were specially articulated throughout the Reformation):

1. Proclamation of God's word
2. Administration of the sacraments: The Lord's Supper and Baptism
3. Church discipline.

A church of this sort necessarily involves the intermingling of the brethren through community. We believe this community is a necessary part of a church. The community should provide a wall of protection from ungodly influence and a base position for a united ministry. This ministry should actively involve local evangelism, but that is just the starting point. The reality is that a community should be a place where truth, beauty, and goodness dwell. This is not utopian - it is the promise of the goodness of God's grace manifest in faithful families. Christians in community should be in business with each other. Schools should flourish in the realm of academics so those children are raised faithfully according to the promises of the covenant. In such a community the maturity "bar" will be raised, and a more developed culture ensues. Just as the cathedrals built during the medieval age still exist, architecture will once again be awesome and worshipful. The arts will be recognized and Christ will direct all men to use all things for worship in Christ.

We believe that a proper understanding of land and geography are necessary for achieving the fully potential of a church's community. Put simply, it is not practical to be in communion with someone that is separated by a large distance. Children of the covenant often grow up in the strength of their homes, but they are separated from the other covenantal families. This is little more than a breakdown in the tools of keeping the covenant. God gave us the land (Gen 1:28) and we are fools to separate ourselves on earth from the very people we plan to worship with in eternity. It is with this in mind that we wish to see a close geographical residence of the church body. We do not claim that this geographical identity is a specific law of God. Rather we wish to encourage the principle of being wise stewards in all areas of life. To better understand this idea we would be remiss not to note the example of our forefathers, the Southern Agrarians. Their understanding of land as the basic tool for covenant establishment is marvelous explanation of the principle we seek to solidify in Christ Church.