

1901 Declaratory Statement

(i) That in regard to the doctrine of redemption as taught in the subordinate standard, and in consistency therewith, the love of God to all mankind, His gift of His Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and the free offer of salvation to men without distinction on the grounds of Christ's all sufficient sacrifice, are regarded by this Church as vital to the Christian faith.

And inasmuch as the Christian faith rests upon, and the Christian consciousness takes hold of, certain objective supernatural historic facts, especially the incarnation, the atoning life and death (1), and the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, and His bestowment of His Holy Spirit, this Church regards those whom it admits to the office of the Holy Ministry as pledged to give a chief place in their teaching to these cardinal facts, and to the message of redemption and reconciliation implied and manifested in them.(2)

(ii) That the doctrine of God's eternal decree, including the doctrine of election to eternal life, is held as defined in the Confession of Faith, Chapter III, Section 1., where it is expressly stated that according to this doctrine, "neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established"; and further, that the said doctrine is held in connection and harmony with the truth - that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, that He has provided a salvation sufficient for all, and adapted to all, and offered to all in the Gospel, and that every hearer of the Gospel is responsible for his dealing with the free and unrestricted offer of eternal life.

(iii) That while none are saved except through the mediation of Christ and by the grace of the Holy Spirit, Who worketh when and where and how it pleaseth Him; while the duty of sending the Gospel to the heathen who are sunk in ignorance, sin and misery is (3) imperative; and while the outward and ordinary means of salvation for those capable of being called by the Word are the ordinances of the Gospel, in accepting the subordinate Standard (4) it is not required to be held that any who die in infancy are lost, or that God may not extend His Grace to any who are without the pale of ordinary means, as it may seem good in His sight.

(iv) That in holding and teaching, according to the Confession of Faith, the corruption of man's (5) nature as fallen, this Church also maintains that there remains tokens of man's greatness as created in the image of God, that he possesses a knowledge of God and of duty - that he is responsible for compliance with the moral law and the call of the Gospel, and that, although unable without the aid of the Holy Spirit to return to God unto salvation, he is yet capable of affections and actions which of themselves are virtuous and praiseworthy. (6)

(v) That liberty of opinion is allowed on matters in the subordinate standard not essential to the (7) doctrine therein taught, (8) the Church guarding against the abuse of this liberty to the injury of its unity and peace.

(vi) That with regard to the doctrine of the civil magistrate and his authority and duty in the sphere of religion, as taught in the subordinate standard (4) the church holds that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only King and Head of the Church, "and Head over all things to the Church, which is His body." It disclaims, accordingly, intolerant or persecuting principles (9) and does not consider its office-bearers, in subscribing the Confession, as committed to any principles inconsistent with the liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment, declaring in the words of the Confession that "God alone is Lord of the conscience".

KEY

From Presbyterian Church of Victoria Declaratory Act (1882), elements of section (i) are from a resolution of the Presbytery of Melbourne directed to Rev. Charles Strong. From United Presbyterian Church Declaratory Act (1879), via PCV DA (1882)
From United Presbyterian Church Declaratory Act (1879)
From Free Church of Scotland Declaratory Act (1892)
Original to Federal Assemblies in preparation for formation of the PCA (1895-1900)

NOTES

- (1) Replaces words "the Perfect Obedience and Expiatory Death" in PCV DA.
- (2) Sentence re-ordered from PCV DA where the material qualifies a requirement to "profess, defend, and teach this system [of the WCF] in its integrity, and, while giving due prominence in their teaching to all the doctrines which it includes, to give a chief place to the central and most vital doctrines thereof, with those objective supernatural facts on which they rest".
- (3) Words "clear and" committed from UPC DA in PCV DA.
- (4) Replaces "Standards" in PVC DA and UPC DA.
- (5) Word "whole" is omitted from FCS DA.
- (6) UPC DA section 4 has a similar section, with different wording.
- (7) Words "system of" omitted.
- (8) Words "as the interpretation of the ' six days ' in the Mosaic account of creation" omitted from PCV DA & UPC DS.
- (9) UPC DA has "compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles in religion".