



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

STATEMENT *of* FAITH

EXTENDED VERSION

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Ligonier Ministries draws from the doctrinal riches of the historic Christian faith that have been passed down through the centuries, and we submit to the Bible alone as our only infallible rule for faith and practice.

In 2015, Dr. R.C. Sproul and the ministry's board of directors adopted an extended statement of faith to summarize the biblical and theological convictions that we have held since the ministry's founding in 1971. We require every board member, teaching fellow, faculty member, and ministry leader, along with any full-time personnel who teach through this ministry, to affirm and adhere to these articles of belief.

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

Ligonier Ministries Is Historically Orthodox

We believe in and adhere to the ancient statements of the Christian faith: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon.

The Apostles' Creed

The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (A.D. 381)

The Definition of Chalcedon (A.D. 451)

Ligonier Ministries Is Confessionally Reformed

We believe that Reformed theology as set forth in the five *solas* and in the consensus of the historic Reformed confessions such as the Westminster Standards and the Three Forms of Unity is the system of doctrine taught in Scripture.

The Belgic Confession

The Heidelberg Catechism

The Canons of Dort

The Westminster Confession of Faith

The Westminster Larger Catechism

The Westminster Shorter Catechism

Ligonier Ministries Has Certain Theological Emphases

Throughout its history, Ligonier Ministries has emphasized certain doctrines confessed by all Reformed Christians.

THE INSPIRATION AND INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE¹

From its beginning, Ligonier has emphasized the importance of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Dr. Sproul was instrumental in the establishment of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in 1977 and had a formative influence on the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

We believe that God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.

We believe that Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

We believe that the Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.

We believe that Scripture, being wholly and verbally God-given, is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.

We believe the authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the church.

THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE²

In close connection with the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture is the proper interpretation of Scripture. Through works such as his book *Knowing Scripture*, Dr. Sproul and Ligonier Ministries have emphasized the importance of understanding how rightly to interpret and apply the Bible.

We believe that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite, and fixed, though capable of multiple applications.

We affirm the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal, sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning that the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text.

We believe that the Bible's own interpretation of itself is always correct, never deviating from, but rather elucidating, the single meaning of the inspired text. The single meaning of a prophet's words includes, but is not restricted to, the understanding of those words by the prophet and necessarily involves the intention of God evidenced in the fulfillment of those words.

We believe that since God is the author of all truth, all truths, biblical and extrabiblical, are consistent and cohere, and that the Bible speaks truth when it touches on matters pertaining to nature, history, or anything else. We further affirm that in

some cases extrabiblical data have value for clarifying what Scripture teaches and for prompting correction of faulty interpretations.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Since its founding, the mission, passion, and purpose of Ligonier Ministries have been to proclaim the holiness of God in all its fullness to as many people as possible.

We believe that it is not enough for Christians to know that God is; Christians must also be driven to know who God is. In order to avoid idolatry, we must know the triune God who reveals Himself in Scripture.

We therefore confess the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity and deny the ancient Trinitarian heresies of modalism, tritheism, and Arianism and their modern variants, such as Unitarianism and Oneness Pentecostalism.

We also affirm the teaching of the Reformed confessions regarding the attributes of God and reject doctrines such as Process Theology and Open Theism, which radically redefine the nature and attributes of God.

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN AND SIN

Throughout its history, Ligonier Ministries has found it necessary to emphasize certain doctrines when those doctrines come under attack in the broader culture. The confusion about the nature of man and sin that is rampant in modern culture requires Christians to articulate carefully the biblical doctrine of man and sin as outlined in the Reformed confessions.

We believe that man is created in the image of God and that this doctrine has important implications for questions faced by the church today. It implies the dignity of all human beings regardless of age, race, mental or physical ability, or

stage of biological development.

We believe that man is created male and female. We believe that a proper understanding of this biblical truth is the only answer to the widespread contemporary confusion regarding sexual identity and gender. God defines what it is to be male or female, and God determines an individual's sexual identity. We reject any legitimacy of so-called same-sex marriage.

We believe that Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God's law and that by this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body. Mankind, therefore, is not inherently good, and a failure to acknowledge this truth is at the root of many theological and social problems.

THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

The person and work of Christ have been central in the teaching of Dr. Sproul and Ligonier Ministries since the beginning of the ministry. In the wake of nineteenth-century liberalism and twentieth-century Neoorthodoxy, these doctrines were the focal points of unbiblical revisions. It was necessary, therefore, for Ligonier to focus attention on proclaiming the truth.

We believe that while finite human beings cannot fully comprehend all that is involved in the incarnation of the Son of God, Christians are still called to believe and teach rightly that which Scripture does reveal about Jesus Christ.

We therefore believe and confess that traditional Chalcedonian Christology best accounts for all that Scripture reveals about the person of Jesus Christ. We deny the ancient Christological heresies of Ebionism, Docetism, modalism, Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Eutychianism. We likewise reject modern errors such as the rejection of the vir-

gin birth, the claim that Christ assumed a fallen human nature, kenotic Christology, the denial of Christ's preexistence, and the denial of the Son's eternal generation.

We believe that the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement is the doctrine of atonement taught in Scripture. We deny the slanderous accusations that the doctrine of substitutionary atonement amounts to "cosmic child abuse." We further deny doctrines that reduce the atonement to a mere moral example for us to follow.

For more details, see **The Word Made Flesh: The Ligonier Statement on Christology**.

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The twentieth-century renewal of interest in the person and work of the Holy Spirit has required a renewed emphasis on the biblical doctrine of the Spirit in order to respond to the claims of Pentecostals and charismatics.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, of one substance with the Father and the Son. He eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son, He is worshiped and glorified.

We believe that Pentecost was a once-for-all redemptive-historical event and that all believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit. We believe the Pentecostal movement has erred by thinking of Pentecost as part of the *ordo salutis*, rather than the *historia salutis*. This has led to a false two-tier view of Christians: those who are baptized by the Spirit and those who are not.

We believe that an erroneous understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit has also led to errors concerning the perpetuity of spiritual gifts such as prophecy and tongues. Such

revelatory gifts were foundational to the church and tied to the unique and nonrepeatable Apostolic era.

THE FIVE SOLAS³

Throughout his ministry, Dr. Sproul has emphasized the five *solas* of the Protestant Reformation.

SOLA SCRIPTURA: We reaffirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured.

SOLUS CHRISTUS: We reaffirm that our salvation is accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father.

SOLA GRATIA: We reaffirm that in salvation we are rescued from God's wrath by His grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

SOLA FIDE: We reaffirm that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. In justification, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice.

SOLI DEO GLORIA: We reaffirm that because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and that we must glorify Him always. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God, and for His glory alone.

THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM⁴

While recognizing that the so-called five points of Calvinism do not encompass the entirety of Reformed theology (as found in the confessions), these five points do helpfully emphasize some of the key elements in Reformed soteriology. They have, therefore, been one of the emphases in the teaching of Ligonier Ministries.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY: Since the fall, human beings suffer from a corruption that pervades the whole person. Sin has affected our bodies, souls, minds—every aspect of our being.

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION: The election of which the Bible speaks is unconditional. No foreseen actions of the elect cause them to be elect or provide the grounds of their election.

LIMITED ATONEMENT: God's purpose for the atonement was that Christ should die in order to actually atone for the sins of His people, not merely to provide the possibility of salvation to all.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE: At God's appointed time, all of those whom the Father has chosen and for whom Christ died are effectually called and sovereignly regenerated by the Holy Spirit unto saving faith.

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS: Those who have been called, regenerated, and justified can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace because of the gift of God's preserving them.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

The doctrine of justification by faith alone is the article upon which the church stands or falls, and it has likewise been the article upon which Ligonier Ministries stands or falls. Because this doctrine has never ceased to come under attack, it has necessarily been a point of special emphasis.

We believe that justification is an act of God's free grace unto

sinner, in which He pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.

We reject any understanding of justification that grounds justification to any degree on our merits or works. We also reject any understanding of justification that confuses faith with faithfulness. We reject also that making a mere profession of faith justifies anyone or that we are justified simply by affirming the doctrine of justification.

We believe that errors regarding the doctrine of justification strike at the very heart of the gospel, and therefore we reject any suggestion that disagreements over this doctrine are of secondary importance. We reject the claim of Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) to the effect that evangelicals and Roman Catholics stand together on the doctrine of justification or have a unity of faith in the gospel.

SANCTIFICATION

Because the twin errors of legalism and antinomianism continually raise their head in the church, Ligonier Ministries has made a point of emphasizing the biblical doctrine of sanctification—a doctrine that avoids both errors.

We believe that sanctification is a work of God's grace, whereby they whom God has, before the foundation of the world, chosen to be holy, are in time, through the powerful operation of His Spirit applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.

We believe that the moral law, because it perfectly reflects the unchangeable character of God, forever binds all, believers as well as unbelievers. Christ does not abrogate the moral law of God. We reject the antinomian error with its claim that Christians are no longer under obligation to the moral law of God. We also reject the legalist error with its claim that our works and obedience to the law are meritorious before God and earn our salvation.

THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

Since 1973, there have been approximately sixty million abortions in the United States alone. This is an evil on an almost unfathomable scale. Because this is one of the great crimes of the century, Ligonier Ministries has emphasized the need to declare what God's Word has to say about this crime to those who willfully support it.

We believe that human beings are creatures made in the image of God. They are, therefore, worthy of protection under the law from the first moment of their existence. There is no dispute that the fetus is a genetically distinct individual human being from the moment of conception and from the earliest stages of embryonic development. Since the fetus is a human being, and since the unjust killing of an innocent human being is murder, then abortion is murder.

THE SANCTITY OF THE FAMILY

Our culture is witnessing an attack on the family like it has never seen, and because of this, it is absolutely necessary that the church reemphasize the biblical teaching on marriage and the family. Ligonier has long attempted to come alongside the church to assist in this task.

We believe that God gave man the institution of marriage in the garden and that this institution has been under attack by the evil one ever since. We reject the idea that the redefini-

tion of marriage by judges, legislatures, executives, philosophers, or anyone else changes the reality of what God created. Since God defined marriage to be between one man and one woman, there is no such thing, therefore, as a homosexual marriage.

Ligonier Ministries Has Certain Distinctives

Throughout its history, Ligonier Ministries has taken distinctive positions on certain issues that have sometimes divided Reformed Christians.

RENEWING OUR MINDS

From the beginning of his ministry, Dr. Sproul has made it a distinctive of his ministry to attack the irrationalism and anti-intellectualism that are rampant in our culture today.

We believe that there is no conflict between faith and reason rightly understood. We believe that we must be on our guard at every moment against the intrusion of irrationalism in any form.

We believe the result of allowing anti-intellectualism into the church is a “contentless religion, thoughtless action, and vacuous zeal.”⁵ We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind.

CLASSICAL APOLOGETICS

One of the major facets of Dr. Sproul’s ministry has been helping Christians know what they believe and why they believe it. As Dr. Sproul explains in *Defending Your Faith*, “This is the work of apologetics.” There are disagreements among Reformed believers regarding the best method of apologetics. One of the distinctives

of Ligonier Ministries has been its promotion of classical apologetics. The task of classical apologetics begins with the existence of God. From there, this approach moves to an argument for the authority of Scripture. Once the existence of God and the authority of His revealed Word are established, then other questions related to Christianity can be resolved.

We believe that the classical apologetic work of Dr. R.C. Sproul and Ligonier Ministries has advanced the cause of defending and propagating the faith, both in its philosophical foundations and its theological applications, and is of great value for the church today.

WORSHIP

Dr. Sproul has argued that we are in the midst of a worship crisis in the church today. A particular distinctive of his ministry, therefore, has been to refocus the eyes of believers on our holy God.

We believe that many Christians have allowed the culture rather than Scripture to shape the form of their worship. Every aspect of our worship, however, is to be formed by Scripture.

We believe that every form communicates something, and therefore, we must think clearly and biblically about the forms that are used in worship. The forms used should communicate God's beauty and excellence.

SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY

There is enormous misunderstanding today, both within the church and without, regarding the relationship between theology and science. For some, science and theology are in a perpetual state of war. For others, the two should be kept in separate compartments. For most, there is simply confusion. Dr. Sproul has advocated a distinctive (yet traditional) approach to the question in an attempt to bring clarity.

We believe that all truth is God's truth, and that He is the infallible source of both general and special revelation. Because God is the one revealer, His general revelation and His special revelation cannot ultimately conflict.

We believe, however, that human interpretations of either general revelation or special revelation can be in error and thus come into conflict. This is because the human interpreters of revelation are fallible. Therefore, if there is a conflict between an interpretation of general revelation and an interpretation of special revelation, it is because of a mistake in the human interpretation of one or both forms of revelation.

CHRIST AND CULTURE

The church exists in the midst of a fallen world and sinful cultures. It is, therefore, continually confronted with new questions and challenges. Ligonier Ministries has a distinctive approach to questions concerning Christianity and culture that is neither triumphalistic nor retreatist.

We believe that the church as an institution and Christians as individuals are called to be salt and light. We are to submit to lawful authorities, but we are also to speak out when these authorities or others with cultural influence call good evil or evil good.

¹ Adapted from "A Short Statement" in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

² Borrowed articles from the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics.

³ The Cambridge Declaration.

⁴ Adapted from R.C. Sproul, *What Is Reformed Theology?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2005), 117–216.

⁵ R.C. Sproul, "Burning Hearts Are Not Nourished by Empty Heads," *Christianity Today* 26 (September 3, 1982): 100.

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Ligonier Ministries is an international Christian discipleship organization founded by theologian Dr. R.C. Sproul in 1971. Our mission is to proclaim, teach, and defend the holiness of God in all its fullness to as many people as possible.

Learn more at Ligonier.org