



WESTERN SEMINARY



2010-2011 Academic Catalog Gospel-Centered Transformation



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**Faculty
Teaching Position**
Gospel-Centered
Transformation

Faculty Teaching Position

We believe that the Bible is the final standard of faith and practice for the believer in Jesus Christ and for his church. While recognizing the historical, interpretive and guiding value of creeds and statements of faith made throughout the history of the Church, we affirm the Bible alone as the infallible and final authority.

With this in mind, we, the faculty and administration of Western Seminary, recognize a solemn responsibility to give a contemporary confession of our faith. In so doing we acknowledge the formal statement of faith made by the founders of the seminary as God's instrument in establishing his work and providing the scriptural guidelines for that day. We also acknowledge that with the passing of time there is need to refine and restate our faith in terms of the critical and more exacting demands made upon us. Recognizing this two-fold allegiance, first to the Word of God and secondly to the convictions of our forebears who bequeathed to us these challenges, we the faculty undersigned reaffirm our teaching position in the form which follows.

CONCERNING THE SCRIPTURES

We believe that God has revealed himself and his truth by both general and special revelation. General revelation displays his existence, power, providence, moral standard, goodness and glory; special revelation manifests his triune nature and his program of redemption through Messiah for humanity. This special revelation has been given in various ways, preeminently in the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ, and in the inscripturated Word of God, the Bible. We affirm that the sixty-six books of the Bible are the written Word of God given by the Holy Spirit and are the complete and final canonical revelation of God for this age. (Rom. 1:18-32; 2:14-16; Psa. 19; Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31; John 1:1-18; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 1:1-2; 4:12)

These books were written by a process of dual authorship in which the Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and styles, they composed and recorded God's Word without error in the autographs. These books, constituting the written Word of God, convey objective truth and are the believer's only infallible rule of faith and practice. (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-20; John 10:35; 17:17; 1 Cor. 2:10-13)

The meaning of Scripture lies in the canonical text and is that which God intended to convey through the human authors. An interpreter discovers this meaning through careful application of the grammatical-historical method of interpretation of a text in its context, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in the community of Christ. The Holy Spirit illumines the text, enabling the reader to embrace that which God has communicated and to see the glory of Christ in the Word of God. (Jn. 7:17; 16:12, 13; 1 Cor. 2:14, 15; 1 Jn. 2:20)

CONCERNING GOD

The Triune God

We believe there is only one true God who describes himself as compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, full of lovingkindness and faithfulness who forgives sin but does not leave the guilty unpunished. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, knowledge, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, faithfulness, love and truth. He is absolutely separate, exalted above the world as its creator, yet everywhere present and involved in the world as the sustainer of all things. This God is one in essence and eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each equal in nature and attributes and equally worthy of worship, trust, and obedience. (Gen. 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Ps. 100:5; 139:8; Isa. 45:5-7; Matt. 28:19; Mk. 10:18; Jn. 4:24; Acts 17:24, 29; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:6)

God the Father

God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, decrees and works all things according to his own purpose and for his own glory, being sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption. He created the universe out of nothing. He continually sustains, directs and governs all creatures and events, accomplishing this without being the author or approver of sin nor minimizing human responsibility. He has graciously chosen the elect from all eternity, he saves from sin all who come to him through Jesus Christ, and he personally relates to his children as their Father. (Ps. 145:8, 9; 1 Chr. 29:11; Ps. 103:19; Jn. 1:18; Rom. 11:33; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 1:3-6; Heb. 4:13; 1 Pet. 1:17)

God the Son

Jesus Christ is the incarnation of the eternal second person of the Trinity. He is the Son of God and the virgin-born Son of Man. He came as the God-Man to reveal God, redeem human beings, and will as Messiah rule over God's kingdom. (Ps. 2:7-9; Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Jn. 1:1, 3, 18, 29; 10:36; 1 Jn. 1:3)

In the incarnation he is both fully God and fully human without sin, possessing two natures in one person. By his obedient life, miraculous ministry, and substitutionary death, he brings salvation to humanity. He rose bodily from the dead on the third day, the resurrection confirming the Father's acceptance of his atoning work on the cross and bringing resurrection to eternal life to all believers. He ascended into heaven and sat down at the Father's right hand, and he now performs the intercessory aspect of his high priestly work for believers. (Jn. 1:14, 29; Rom. 3:24-26; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3; 4:15; 7:26; 10:5-10; 1 Pet. 2:21-24; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10)

Christ is the only mediator between God and humanity, the head of his Body the Church, the coming Messiah and king, and the final judge of both believers and unbelievers. (Isa. 53:10; Lk. 1:31-33; Jn. 5:27-29; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25; Rev. 20:11-15)

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the eternal third person of the Trinity, is active in creation, the incarnation, the writing of Scripture, and the work of salvation. (Gen. 1:2; Matt. 1:18; Jn. 3:5-7; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21)

Coming from the Father and the Son at Pentecost, he initiated the Church. He convicts unbelievers of sin. He indwells all believers, regenerating them, and exercises his ministries of sealing, sanctification, instructing, transforming into the likeness of Christ, and empowering for service. He gives spiritual gifts which are to be used according to biblical guidelines to build up the Church and to glorify Christ. He is the agent of Spirit baptism which incorporates believers into the Church at their conversion. (Jn. 14:16, 17; 15:26; 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 2:22)

CONCERNING ANGELS

We believe the angels are created as personal spirits who worship and glorify God, serve him, and minister to human beings. Although all angels were originally created holy by God, some followed the prideful lead of Satan and fell from their position. Demons attempt to subvert the work of God through such stratagems as temptation, accusation, and deception. (Ps. 148:2; Jn. 8:44; 2 Cor. 2:10-11; 4:3-4; Eph. 2:2; 6:12, 16; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:14; 1 Pet. 5:8; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 12:9-10)

CONCERNING HUMANITY AND SIN

We believe God created Adam and Eve and all humanity in his image with the intention that they should glorify God, enjoy his fellowship, and fulfill his purpose on the earth. Created with integrity and without sin, our first parents fell into sin by disobeying the will of God. "As a result of identification in Adamic sin and individual acts of sinning the human race is dead in sin, separated from God and subject to his wrath. While all people have dignity as the image of God, they are inherently sinful and hopelessly lost apart from divine grace and salvation in Jesus Christ. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-19; Jn. 3:36; Rom. 3:23; 5:12-19; 6:23; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 Jn. 1:8)

CONCERNING SALVATION

We believe that the death of Jesus on the cross is the perfect sacrifice for sin. His substitutionary work satisfied divine justice and is the propitiation of the wrath of God for the sins of the whole world. (Isa. 53:1-13; Jn. 10:27-29; Rom. 3:24; 5:8, 9; 8:38, 39; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 1:7; 2 Pet. 1:3; 1 Jn. 4:10)

Through his death and resurrection, we are redeemed from sin, reconciled to God, justified by grace alone through faith alone, adopted into the family of God, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Salvation is appropriated by personal conversion, consisting of repentance from sin and trust in God's provision in Christ, resulting in full forgiveness of sin and new life with Christ. (Jn. 1:12; 3:5, 7, 16; Acts 16:31; Rom. 8:1-4, 29, 30; 10:8-13; Eph. 1:4, 5; 2:8-10; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14; Heb. 11:6)

Salvation results in righteous living. Believers will grow in Christ-likeness as they keep in step with the Holy Spirit and live in obedience to the Word of God. They are kept by the power of God through faith and will persevere to the end, culminating in their glorification at Christ's coming. (Jn. 5:24; 10:28; Rom. 8:35-39; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 2:10; 5:17-21; Phil. 2:12, 13; Col. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:3-10; 1 Jn. 3:2, 3)

CONCERNING THE CHURCH

The Church is the people of God, initiated at Pentecost and completed at the return of Christ who is its head. The mission of the Church is to glorify God by worshiping corporately, building itself up as a loving, faithful community by instruction of the Word, observing the biblical sacraments, communicating the gospel and making disciples of all peoples. (Matt. 16:18; Acts 1:4, 5; 11:15; 2:46, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 12:4-21; Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:19-22; 3:4-6; 5:25-27; Col. 1:18; Rev. 5:9)

Believers should gather together in local assemblies. They are priests before God and to one another, responsible to serve God and minister to each other. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and leading the assembly are elders and deacons. Although church and state are distinct institutions, believers are to submit to the government within the limits of God's Word. (Matt. 18:15-18; 22:15-22; 28:19; Acts 2:41, 42; 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 14:40; Eph. 4:11, 12; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9; Heb. 10:25; 1 Pet. 2:5-10; 13-17; 5:1-5)

Two ordinances have been committed to the local church and are to be administered to believers. Baptism is the immersion in water into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is a biblically ordained confession of personal faith, portraying death to sin and resurrection to new life. The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ in remembrance of him. This portrays his death, unites believers in fellowship, and anticipates their participation in the marriage supper of the Lamb. These two ordinances are to be observed until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 22:19, 20; Acts 2:41; 10:47, 48; Rom. 6:1-6; 1 Cor. 11:23-29)

CONCERNING LAST THINGS

We believe that at death, the spirits of believers pass immediately into the presence of Christ and there remain in joyful fellowship awaiting their bodily resurrection. The spirits of unbelievers are in misery and torment as punishment for sin awaiting their bodily resurrection. (Dan. 12:2; Lk. 16:22, 23; 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21-26; 3:10, 11, 21; Rev. 20:11-15)

This age will culminate in the rapture of believers and the tribulation, followed by the return of Christ in glory with his saints to the earth to destroy his enemies, to initiate the millennium, and to restore Israel as a nation in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. (Deut. 30:1-10; Isa. 11:1-16; 65:17-25; Ezek. 36:22-38; 37:21-28; Dan. 9:27; 12:1; Jn. 14:2-3; Acts 1:4-8; Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 15:51-53; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; Tit. 2:11-13; Rev. 3:10; 16:1-21; 19:1-21; 20:1-6)

At the close of Messiah's millennial reign the devil, his demons, and the unbelieving dead will be judged and committed to eternal conscious punishment in hell. God will create a new heaven and new earth where all his people will dwell eternally in his presence, giving worship and service to him to whom belongs all glory. (Mk. 9:43-48; Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; 2 Thess. 1:9; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 20:11-15; 21:1-4; 22:5, 11)

(Note: This is not designed to dictate to students the particulars of their orthodox faith, but rather to state clearly the doctrinal commitment of the teaching faculty.)