

## SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARATION OF DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS

Western Seminary

An important goal for theological studies at Western is to help students personalize their theology. Writing a personal statement of your doctrinal beliefs is a good step toward achieving this goal. Furthermore, such a statement will have value to an ordination council, to a pulpit committee, or to a mission board. The theology department desires to help you prepare such a statement by having you write sections of your doctrinal commitment in each one of the theology classes. Each section will serve as a building block toward the completion of the comprehensive statement. The following suggestions will aid you in this task.

1. Its purpose is to state succinctly your personal doctrinal commitment. It should have a feeling of a personal "I believe" rather than a theological treatise. It should be written with local church leadership in mind. Define any terms they might not know.
2. Avoid complications and unnecessary qualifications. Keep it simple.
3. State your view clearly with two or three good Scripture references to support each major statement at the end of the phrase. Do not put long strings of references at the end of paragraphs. Do not give arguments for your position. Do not quote verses. Avoid obscure references unless they are necessary.
4. Do not repeat statements or references any more than necessary; e. g., what is said under "sin" need not be repeated under "salvation." If you treat issues under two different headings (e. g., election), make the different emphases clear.
5. Avoid negative statements. State what you do believe, not what you do not believe. Do not refute objections to your position.
6. Be sure to include statements on all basic doctrines. Do not assume everyone will know that you hold them.
7. Your statements should answer questions, not raise them. Addressing controversial issues requires clarity and courtesy.
8. Correct spelling and grammar will enhance the credibility of your statement.
9. Look at several examples for ideas on both content and wording. Check Western's teaching position and classic statements such as the Westminster Confession in Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*. Examples are on reserve in the Cline-Tunnell library and on the Western Website under faculty papers for download.
10. Do not copy another's statement. Form your own.
11. The following areas should be addressed under the various heads of your statement. Do not follow these mechanically. As you personalize your statement, orderings and specific topics will vary. The entire statement will be about 15 double spaced pages in length. The page lengths for each section are typical rather than definitive.

## 12. Abbreviations:

Gen.	Genesis	Isa.	Isaiah	Rom.	Romans
Exod.	Exodus	Jer.	Jeremiah	1 Cor.	1 Corinthians
Lev.	Leviticus	Lam.	Lamentations	2 Cor.	2 Corinthians
Num.	Numbers	Ezek.	Ezekiel	Gal.	Galatians
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Dan.	Daniel	Eph.	Ephesians
Jos.	Joshua	Hos.	Hosea	Phil.	Philippians
Jdg.	Judges	Joel	Joel	Col.	Colossians
Ruth	Ruth	Amos	Amos	1 Thess.	1 Thessalonians
1 Sam.	1 Samuel	Obad.	Obadiah	2 Thess.	2 Thessalonians
2 Sam.	2 Samuel	Jon.	Jonah	1 Tim.	1 Timothy
1 Ki.	1 Kings	Mic.	Micah	2 Tim.	2 Timothy
2 Ki.	2 Kings	Nah.	Nahum	Tit.	Titus
1 Chr.	1 Chronicles	Hab.	Habakkuk	Phlm.	Philemon
2 Chr.	2 Chronicles	Zeph.	Zephaniah	Heb.	Hebrews
Ezr.	Ezra	Hag.	Haggai	Jas.	James
Neh.	Nehemiah	Zech.	Zechariah	1 Pet.	1 Peter
Est.	Esther	Mal.	Malachi	2 Pet.	2 Peter
Job	Job	Matt.	Matthew	1 Jn.	1 John
Ps. (Pss.)	Psalms	Mk.	Mark	2 Jn.	2 John
Prov.	Proverbs	Lk.	Luke	3 Jn.	3 John
Ecccl.	Ecclesiastes	Jn.	John	Jude	Jude
Cant.	Song of Solomon (Canticles)	Acts	Acts of the Apostles	Rev.	The Revelation of John

### I. THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION (THS 501)

This section will cover general and special revelation and the Bible. Speak to the concept of revelation itself, general revelation (means, content, purpose, nature of the resulting knowledge, result), special revelation (means, content, purpose). The second half will deal with the Bible specifically. Speak to inspiration (plenary, verbal, divine-human nature), inerrancy (be specific as to what this means), canon, sufficiency, clarity, illumination, hermeneutical principle, authority. (2 pages)

### II. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD (THS 501)

You will speak to the nature of God and then the work of God. Speak to His triune nature (one essence, three persons, interrelation of attributes, ontological and economic relationships of the Trinity) and attributes (personal, transcendence-immanence, a representative list of attributes with key ones defined in a brief phrase). Focus the second part on the work of God the Father. Speak to the decree (extent, preceptive/purposeful will, relation to human agency and evil), election (basis, object, relation to unsaved), creation (extent, purpose, *ex nihilo*, its dependent-distinct relationship with God), and providence (government, preservation, concurrence, extent). (2 pages)

### III. THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST (THS501)

Speak to Christ's pre-existence, incarnation, hypostatic union (deity, humanity, relationship), virgin birth, temptation, sinless life, death, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, return. (1 page)

### IV. THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT (THS 502)

Speak to His offices, cause of the atonement, nature (e.g., vicarious, substitutionary, sacrificial, expiation-propitiation, redemption, example, triumph, etc.), intent-extent. (1 page)

### V. THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (THS 503)

State His deity and personhood and then His work during Old Testament times, with Jesus, unbelievers (conviction, calling) and believers (baptizing, indwelling, gifting, filling, fruit, etc.). Clarify your position on sign gifts. Be sure you do not end up repeating material here and in the soteriology section of your statement. (1 page)

## VI. THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS (THS 502)

Speak to their nature (holiness, personality), ministry (God, humanity), Satan-demons (origin, fall, work, power re: believer and unbeliever). (1 page maximum)

## VII. THE DOCTRINE OF HUMANITY AND SIN (THS 502)

Focus first on the nature of humanity. Speak to origin, constitution (unity of person, dualism, di/trichotomy), nature of the image of God. Speak to the beginning of human sin in Eden, the nature of sin, effect of sin on the image, original sin, and its individual and corporate effects in the human race (depravity, inability, actual sin, condemnation, punishment). (2 pages)

## VIII. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION (THS 502)

Speak to the order and nature of the following as you hold them: election (if you've not already done it under God), common grace, verbal calling, prevenient grace/effectual calling, regeneration, conversion (repentance and faith), justification, adoption, union with Christ, sanctification (relationship of divine and human responsibilities, means), security/perseverance, glorification. (2 pages)

## IX. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH (THS 503)

Focus first on the universal Church. Speak of the definition of the universal Church, mission and purpose, the body of Christ, Christ as head, Israel-Church, and relation to the kingdom of God. Then focus on the local church. Speak to the definition of local church, relation to universal church, characteristics, purpose, internal and external organization including offices, ordinances (relation to grace, significance, subjects and mode of each). (2 pages)

## X. THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS (THS 503)

The focus is both individual and general eschatology. Speak to death, intermediate state for both believer and unbeliever, rapture (imminency, participants), resurrection of the body, tribulation (nature, participants), resurrection (purpose and participants), return of Christ to reign, millennium (nature and participants, relation to OT promises and the kingdom of God), judgments (purpose and participants), eternal state (unbeliever and believer). Be sure to show your understanding of the order of these events. (1 page)