

Officers Training 2002

**FIRST EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
101 MARION STREET
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INTRODUCTION

A NAME AND A GOVERNMENT

The name Presbyterian is from the Bible. This comes as a shock to many as they have never seen this word in their Bible. The New Testament was written in Greek and the Old Testament was translated into Greek by 150 BC. In these Greek versions we find a word some sixty times, that when pronounced in English sounds very much like our word Presbyterian. It is from this word we get our name. A literal translation of this word means "elder." Thus in a very literal sense, a Presbyterian church is a church ruled by elders. To amplify this point, Presbyterian means a church ruled by representatives elected by the people. Does this sound familiar (of the people, by the people, for the people)? The United States has what is essentially a Presbyterian system of government.

THE OLD TESTAMENT CHURCH

Presbyterians say they can trace their church with this form of government all the way back to Moses. Stephen in the seventh chapter of Acts tells us about "The Church in the Wilderness" during the time of Moses. From Exodus 3:16 and Numbers 13:3 we see this "Church in the Wilderness" ruled by elders.

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Acts 14:23 states Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every church they planted. In Acts 20:17 Paul sends for the elders of the church at Ephesus. In Titus 1:5, Paul commands Titus to ordain elders in every city. These passages show that the New Testament church too, was led by elders.

ONE CHURCH

Presbyterian theologians, tell us the Old and New Testament churches are the same church under different dispensations. In Galatians 3:29 Paul says that when we belong to Christ, we are the true seed of Abraham. In Romans 11:17-21 Paul compares the church to the olive tree, whose roots reach back into the Old Testament. Paul says that as Gentiles we become as branches grafted into this ancient tree. Then in Ephesians 2:20 Paul tells us the Christian church is built upon the foundation of the prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. The prophets are from the Old Testament. This unity of the church from its beginning in the Old Testament to now is important to Presbyterians and what they believe the church was then and should be now. It is important now because it is this covenant connection that Presbyterians have, that they freely offer baptism to the infants born into this covenant relationship with God. This belief says children from birth, by birthright have access into this covenant with God, and therefore cannot be denied baptism by the church.

For clarity as you attempt to look at the Scripture references, note that the words elder and bishop are the same in New Testament Greek. Examples: (Acts 20:17 and Acts 20:28 same men, same word, both translations used); (Titus 1:5 and Titus 1:7, same men, same Greek word, translated elder and bishop). Thus it is obvious from Scripture that elder and bishop referred to the same office in the New Testament church. Elder is the most literal translation. Further Scripture is clear that there were two classes of elders (Teaching Elders, clergy, and Ruling Elders, laymen). In every Presbyterian church we have a pastor and ruling elders. I Timothy 5:17 is the authority for having two classes of elders. These make up the Session, or officers of a Presbyterian church. Deacons are only mentioned twice in Scripture. This is not a ruling office within the Presbyterian church. The deacons serve under the church Session, in those churches that have deacons.

Elders Were Elected

In Acts 1:23-26 the disciples take part in an election. In Acts 6:3 the disciples elected the Deacons. In Acts 14:23 the word ordain translated literally means a raising of the hands not a placing of the hands on; thus an election as such. Once we leave Scripture we see this election take no lesser a role in the early church. Clement of Rome, writing circa 100 AD says that, "The church officers received their office by the consent of the whole people." Thus, Presbyterians from Scripture and early church tradition holds to the free election of officers. This form of government has been a

distinctive of the Presbyterian church from its beginning. It is interesting that most of the free governments in the world are modifications of this Presbyterian form of government. From its very beginning the Presbyterian church has contributed greatly to the liberty and freedom of men everywhere. While all denominations claiming the title Presbyterian have some distinct and common beliefs, it is valid to point out that Presbyterian is more about the system of government in the church than what the church believes. A better word for what a Presbyterian church believes would be reformed. We find both of these words in the title chosen by many denominations desiring to make a bold and up-front declaration of both government and system of beliefs.

THE PRESBYTERIAN SYSTEM OF CONNECTION AND OVERSIGHT

A study of the New Testament church will show each church ruled by elders. These elders were not without accountability. When controversy arose, the elders of several churches came together (Presbytery) and the churches obeyed the decisions coming from these meetings (Acts Chapter 15). There was a tie in and through government that held all the churches together. In Timothy 4:14, we find the word Presbytery. While this may not have conformed to our present Presbytery, it served the same purpose. In line with this Biblical base, all Presbyterian denominations are arranged into groups of graduated courts: Local church (Session), several churches in a given area (Presbytery), several Presbyteries (Synod), and finally all Presbyteries (General Assembly). Some branches of the Presbyterian church call these courts by different names, and they may not have all levels in their system. All elders of the local church may serve in any court above the local church. This meets the requirement of representative government in all courts. In other words, each local church will select from among her elders those who will represent their church in the “higher” court.

In Summation: The name Presbyterian refers to the form of government of the church. However, our belief in the Old Testament covenant connection has also led to a distinctive system of beliefs. These are summed up in the Westminster Confession of Faith. In the EPC the Westminster Confession of Faith, The Westminster Larger Catechism, and The Westminster Shorter Catechism along with the Book of Church Order are combined to form the constitution of the EPC. In 2002 the EPC added a short paper called The Essentials to her list of confessional documents. (See Appendixes)

All officers of the church are required to “subscribe” to these standards. Subscribe means they take an oath that they believe these documents teach the doctrine of the Bible. Officers are allowed to file an exception to these standards. This means that if they do not agree with any part of the confessional documents they may make a statement of where they differ and what they do believe concerning that part of the confessional standard. The court of the church that has jurisdiction will decide if that is an acceptable difference. In this area however we should note that all clergy must subscribe to The Essentials without any exceptions. The EPC then is a confessional church. This means we have a confession that is common to all our members. Our particular form of subscription is called “system” subscription as opposed to those who hold to a strict subscription. This means we affirm that the confession contains the biblical doctrines, whereas a strict subscription declares that the confession is the Biblical doctrine.

The EPC Book of Order is made up of three sections: Book of Government, Book of Discipline, and Book of Worship. All officers should be familiar with the Book of Order and know which section deals with what area of church life. All officers should have read the whole Book of Order prior to being installed in office. Officers take an oath to uphold and defend these standards. That should not be taken lightly. A Christian will have their word as their bond, and an oath then takes on an even more significant meaning to them. God will not take violations of oaths lightly, neither should the church or her individual members.

Officers of the church should have the following qualifications:

- Meet the requirements of the Bible as outlined in 1 Timothy chapter 3.
- Be familiar with the Book of Church Order.
- Understand the key doctrines of the church and which are essential to the Christian faith and which should grant liberty for difference of opinion.
- Be a member in good standing and having exhibited their faith in duties within and without the church prior to being considered for office. (Not a new comer to the faith)
- Be called to the office sought. This calling has three elements:

A.. An inward call whereby the person “feels” the call of God for them to enter into this area of service to God.

B. This inward call being recognized by the person’s contemporaries in the church by many different avenues. Such as, allowing them to teach various classes in the church. The appointment of the person to church committees and other places of responsibility. By other members affirming their Christian character in other diverse ways. Finally by the election to the office sought by the congregation.

C. The last element being the examination by the church session and ordination and installation to office in the church.

- Have a working knowledge of church history, particularly as it applies to the Presbyterian churches. In other words an officer should know where their church originated and why. An officer should also know why they chose to be Presbyterian as opposed to other Protestant or Anglo-Catholic churches.
- Have knowledge of the contents of the confessional documents, at least to the level they can rapidly refer to the appropriate standard for the exact wording regarding any doctrine of the church. The intent is not to create a congregation of theologians, but that all are ready to give defense for the faith and hope they have in Christ.
- Be teachable! That is an officer should be willing to examine all areas of their own walk in faith before Christ and to adjust their lifestyle to conform to that commanded by the Scriptures.

These are standards that no human being will attain and maintain consistently. However this in no way limits or removes the requirement. It should bring a person humbly to their knees in the knowledge that outside Christ there is no life or hope. As mortals we carry the presence of evil in the will of the creature. The Christian life is a life of constant self-examination and confession to God. The Bible is the only rule and guide for faith and life to all Christians. This is more true for officers who should set the example of a life lived before God and in complete obedience to God.

The church in electing and ordaining to office has bestowed the highest honor that can be given to a person in life. The imperfection of the flesh doesn’t remove from office. The lack of love for and obedience to God does.

Church Courts

In the EPC we have three courts of jurisdiction. These are the local church (Session - currently serving ruling elders and pastor), Presbytery (All churches within a specified geographic area with representation from all local churches in that area making up the court when it meets.), General Assembly (Comprised of delegates from all churches that belong to the denomination wherever they exist on earth.). Actual details of these courts and how they are to conduct their business and their areas of jurisdiction are given in the Book of Order (BCO Book of Church Order).

The pastor is not a member of the local church. The minister is a member of the Presbytery. Ministers do not vote in congregational meetings but do have a vote in meetings of the church session. It should be noted here that in the Presbyterian system of government that it is the session that has the power of order in the church, not the congregation. This means that the elders decide all aspects of church life and are not obligated to seek congregational approval before taking any action. This is similar to the government of the USA where we send representatives to Washington where they make and enforce laws without having to obtain a mandate from the people who elected them to office before taking action. It is wise and prudent for the unity and peace of the church that the elders have a close relationship and be aware of the desires of the congregation. The first duty of the elders in the church is to represent the mind of Christ to the congregation. For this reason none may bind the conscience of an elder with anything less than the very word of God (the Bible). This means that there can be no charge against an elder that cannot be pointed out as sin against God because it violates the Scriptures.

The pastor is called by the congregation, ordained and installed by Presbytery. Therefore no congregational vote can call and install a pastor nor remove them from office without the approval of Presbytery. The only area of responsibility that belongs exclusively to the pastor is the sanctuary of the church. Even then it is wise for the pastor to be aware of and meet the requests of the congregation as represented in the desires of the church session. While the pastor is the

moderator of the session, this is for order only and does not create a higher place within the session. The ruling elders are the ones who hold the power of order within the church. We find that where all concerned are within the boundaries of the Bible there are no conflicts and the pastor then while exercising a general supervision over all of the affairs of the church, is not a chief executive officer but a spiritual leader pointing all to Christ. The combined elders of the church meeting together (session) set and enforce the rules within the church and conducts the business of the church.

Selected Historical Information

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church claims it began when Christ said to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Further, they claim Peter, as the first Pope in Rome from 42 AD through 67 AD. They also contend that Peter thus became the first infallible head of the church in Rome. This they believe is still true of the pope today by right and doctrine of Apostolic Succession. Thereby each pope since Peter became the head of the entire church on earth and is infallible. While early church tradition (which is Roman Catholic), says Peter was in Rome they cannot support their claim of Peter as the first Pope from Scripture (Even the Roman Catholic versions). Example: While they claim Peter is the pope in Rome during 45 AD, Scripture shows Peter attending a council in Jerusalem. At this council Peter had less influence than James. I Peter 5:1 has Peter himself, addressing the elders as an elder also as their equal, not the head of the church. This is the basis used by Protestants to refute the claims of the Roman Catholic church to Peter as the first pope.

The apostolic age closed about 100 AD with the death of John. When John died, he left no one person in charge of the church. There was no single undisputed source of God's wisdom, such as existed while even one apostle lived. While the books of the New Testament existed by 100 AD, they were held by different churches and were not bound to each other as a completed work. Irenaeus, who died around 200 AD is the first of the early church fathers who made use of what appears to have been the entire New Testament in his writings. Under these circumstances it becomes easier to see how the church began to stray from the doctrine of the apostles so quickly after their death.

As we have already seen, the early church was ruled by elders (bishops). Very early in church history certain elders began to rise to the top of church government. These chose the title bishop (overseer). Bishop, is now different from the synonym for elder used in the Bible. It has become a higher rank than the elders of Scripture. In a very natural progression of human events certain bishops began to have an influence upon an ever widening circle of churches. These became known as Diocesan Bishops, each with several churches under their care. By 250AD all Catholic churches were under the control of one of these Diocesan Bishops. The progression again is quite natural, as one of these super bishops gained enough influence he became a patriarch. There soon arose five outstanding patriarchs. These were the Bishops of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. The rivalry continued till one final contest between Rome and Constantinople. Rome won, and by 500AD a pope was in Rome as the Supreme Head of the Roman Catholic Church .

Centuries pass and the power and influence of Rome continued to grow. In 1073 AD Pope Gregory VII claimed the power to crown or dispose kings. It is not only interesting, but important to note that in the early history of the world; there was no separation of state and church. The church (Roman Catholic) exerted tremendous power and control over the events in the world. With such power in the hands of mere mortals, it is not difficult to understand how the church wandered so far from the New Testament church. Sacraments became more important than grace and faith. The belief in purgatory rose to its zenith (a place where Souls went to be purged of their sins before entering heaven). Huge sums of money were paid to Roman Catholic priests to pray (pay) friends and family out of purgatory and into heaven. Ritualism was raised to its highest form. Pictures, statues, and images filled the churches as aids to worship. It came to the point where there seems to have been little connection between the church and everyday life. Religion for its own sake reached an all time high during this period. Nonetheless, God retained His remnant, His seed. There always remained small groups trying to bring the church back to the Scriptures and closer to the apostolic doctrines. Some better known of these earlier groups were the Montanists in Africa and the Culdees in Scotland, during the fifth century. During the seventh century we find the Waldensians in France and Italy. Each of these groups constantly strove to teach a simpler doctrine, a purer life style, in keeping with the apostolic church.

THE REFORMATION

This sets the stage and background for the reformation of the Christian church. Many, many men prepared the way that led to the hour when most historians agree the reformation began. While this is an important part of church history and makes for interesting reading, such details are beyond the scope of this document

The hour arrived and the reformation began when Martin Luther, on the thirty first day of October 1517, nailed his "Ninety-Five Theses to the castle church door in Whittenburg, Germany. It was named the Ninety-Five Theses because it challenged ninety-five beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church.

Martin Luther was brought up Roman Catholic, and was a member of the priesthood. He converted to Protestantism by study of the Bible alone. He preached the Bible in its purest form. Luther became the leader of the reformation. He laid the foundation many others were to build upon. John Calvin became the greatest builder upon Luther's foundation. It was Calvin who worked out the theology and system of government we now call Presbyterian. It was John Knox, a student of Calvin's who fine tuned the details into what we know today as the Presbyterian church.

JOHN CALVIN

You cannot study Presbyterian history without taking the time to study John Calvin's life. Space here does not allow such a full biography. The reader is encouraged to obtain and read any of the many fine works on the life of Calvin (see bibliography).

It was John Calvin who removed centuries of Roman Catholic abuse and ritualism, thus uncovering the Bible again. Most free countries of the world owe their very freedoms to John Calvin and the system of government he worked out for Geneva, Switzerland and the church there. In Calvin's day there was no separation of church and state. The government of one became the government of the other. It is this first freely elected, representative form of government, created by Calvin that became a distinctive of all Presbyterian churches. The government of the United States and most other free nations are patterned after this Calvinistic system. Ranke, a German historian said that, "John Calvin was the virtual founder of America."

John Calvin was born July 10, 1509, of Roman Catholic parents. His father planned to educate him for the priesthood, and gave him the best education to be had. He entered the University of Paris when he was only fourteen. Here he studied Latin, logic, and philosophy. Later he decided to study law, and spent several years at the Universities of Orleans and Bourges. Here he studied law under the greatest professors in France. When his father died, Calvin felt he was free to pursue his own desires. His choice was to study literature. He learned the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages.

We do not know the exact date Calvin was converted to Protestantism, nevertheless most accept 1533 as the correct year. The conversion appears to have been a gradual experience as he used his ability in the original languages of Scripture to study those versions of the Bible. His studies of these languages would have also placed him among others who were devotees of "the new-learning" who had embraced the Protestant faith. Soon after his conversion he found it necessary to flee Paris in fear for his life. He spent three years hiding under an assumed name. Most of this time appears to have been spent in private libraries studying, and what is more important praying.

In the spring of 1536, Calvin published his institutes. A little book on theology that he named, The Institutes of the Christian Religion. He would continue to revise this book for the next twenty-three years until it grew into two volumes. Calvin lived to see this work translated into every language of Europe. Calvin was twenty-seven when his Institutes were first published. He was immediately recognized as a theologian to be respected by his peers. This work also to a large extent determined his life's work. Because of the book and the Roman persecution in France, Calvin was a marked man. As he fled France, the safest way to Germany, his chosen destination was through Switzerland. God led John Calvin to a small inn in Geneva on an evening of August 1536. Here he met a fiery eyed Protestant named William Farel. Farel, having heard that Calvin, the author of the book was in town, sought Calvin out. Farel had already been preaching, and had accomplished much in Geneva, but needed leadership to continue his work. When Farel could not persuade Calvin to stay and help organize Geneva, he began to pray for God to curse Calvin's retreat from Geneva and upset the tranquillity of his studies, if Calvin withdrew himself from Geneva and refused to give the much needed help. Because of this prayer Calvin says he was so struck with fear he agreed to stay for awhile. Calvin wouldn't assume any particular office, yet he spent the rest of his life in a town he had thought to spend one evening in. There was one incident where he spent three years in exile in Germany.

Calvin began his work in Geneva 1 September 1536 with a sermon preached in St. Peter's Cathedral. This sermon created a sensation, and the people insisted he preach again the next day. Calvin became the greatest of expository

preachers. He opened the Scriptures as the people had never seen nor heard before. He turned to the Bible for every aspect of Christian life and the church. Here was the seat of John Calvin's authority, the Bible.

John Calvin was more than a great preacher, he felt called to reform the morals of Geneva. He prepared a Confession of Faith, a Catechism, and a Book of Discipline. These documents were adopted by the town council on 29 July 1537. All citizens were ordered to live by these standards. Many readily agreed, but many refused. The opposition grew until it resulted in the three year banishment mentioned above. With the banishment of Calvin and Farel the immoral element in Geneva gained complete control. Things became so bad in Geneva, the sins were branded as unspeakable. Many who had visited Geneva because Calvin was there also quit coming. The people then realized that Calvin was not only a religious and moral resource, but had an impact upon the financial condition of the town. They invited Calvin to return. He refused, until the people had Farel write him with another of his curses if Calvin refused the invitation. Calvin again feared the curse, and felt the call must be from God. Calvin returned just as determined the church would have an effect upon all aspects of life. He still had many foes to his cause who continued to trouble his efforts. Because of his unbending position for all of life to follow Scripture, Calvin was labeled by some as the Tyrant of Geneva. Calvin then organized the pastors and churches into a Consistory. It was an odd mixture of civil and church government since the town council insisted upon having a hand in the appointment of the elders. However this group took over the discipline of those who did not conform to the standards set up by Calvin and Farel.

John Calvin insisted upon Christian education and thought the church and education should always be hand in hand. Thus, he also organized a complete system of education for Geneva.

Granted there are some blots upon the historical record of John Calvin. However one of his critics summed up Calvin's life this way, "He succeeded more than all, in an age and in a country which called for reaction towards Christianity, simply because he was the most Christian man of his century." Calvin spent his life in piety before a sovereign God.

John Knox is the next outstanding figure in Presbyterian history. Knox was a student of Calvin's in Geneva. It was Knox who worked out many of the finer details of Presbyterianism as we know it today. Again the reader is referred to his church or public library and encouraged to read more about the life of John Knox. He is a true giant in faith and a leading founder of the Presbyterian church. Some of the highlights of his life are found in the section concerning Scotland.

EUROPEAN PRESBYTERIANS

We will now take a brief look at selected Presbyterian movements in Europe. Each of these movements contributed greatly to the American Presbyterian churches. While one or another branch of this great faith may lay claim to having its roots deeper in one or another of these European groups, all are involved in what makes Presbyterianism distinctive.

FRANCE

The Huguenots were Calvinists with a Presbyterian form of government. They had considerable influence upon the Presbyterian movement in America. The Protestant movement in France that resulted in the Huguenot church began around 1500 AD. Prior to that France was totally Roman Catholic.

A French professor (LeFevre) translated the New Testament into French. The people devoured it eagerly. This resulted in several very notable converts to Protestantism. Among these were John Calvin and William Farel.

At first the King of France was friendly toward the movement. Later under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, he began to persecute members of the Protestant movement. This is when John Calvin was forced to flee France. This persecution caused the blood of these first French saints to become the seed of a new church.

The first Protestant church was founded in 1555. From this seed sprang up hundreds of churches. History reveals that by 1559 there were over two thousand such churches organized. In May of 1559, these churches were organized into a National Synod. These were divided into Synods for each Province. They adopted Calvinistic confessions and a Presbyterian form of government. Their membership included many of the upper class and their future seemed very bright.

Alas, the Roman Catholic Church became very alarmed at such organization and vowed to stop the movement by

military force. The Protestants had many military members, especially Prince Henry of Navarre and the Duke of Conde. They began to organize the church for self-defense. John Calvin pleaded with the church not to resist by military means. Calvin has been quoted as saying, "If one drop of blood is shed rivers will flow;" his predictions became fact.

This is where the name Huguenot was born. Its two root words mean, "Oath-Comrades." They were bound together by their faith, even unto death. The Religious Wars lasted over a century. Many thousands died; either in battle, persecution, or out-right massacres. The worst of the massacres took place August. 24th, 1572. Thousands of Protestants were lured to Paris for the marriage of Prince Henry of Navarre, a Protestant) and Marguerite De Medici, a Roman Catholic Princess. This marriage was supposed to end the war. However, just before dawn on the twenty-fourth of August, 1572, the bell of St. Germain began to sound the signal for the massacre to begin. Soon the carnage spread throughout France. The estimates range from 70,000 to 100,000 Protestants killed within one week. The Pope ordered a medallion struck to commemorate the event. The French Reformed Church never recovered from this blow, and only continued under heavy persecution.

In 1589 Henry of Navarre became the King of France. However, to gain the crown he had to become Roman Catholic. In 1598 he caused the Edict of Nantes to be issued. This Edict called for the toleration of Protestants. During this time of toleration, the Presbyterian movement again flourished. Then in 1610 after Henry IV was assassinated, the Edict of Nantes became only paper. In 1685 Louis XIV completely revoked the Edict of Nantes. Protestant pastors were given two weeks to leave France; their churches burned, their schools closed, their children taken from them, baptized by the Roman Catholic Church, and taught the Roman Catholic faith. All civil rights were taken from all Protestants, their marriages called void, their children branded as illegitimate, and all properties seized. Many Protestants died and many fled the persecution in France. It has been estimated that as many as four million French citizens died or fled France during this time. France as a country never recovered from this loss of some of her great free minds so early in her history. What a difference it would have made to the histories of Scotland, America, and many other countries, without the enrichment of their heritage by this influx of the French Huguenots.

The story of the Presbyterians in France is one of light and dark, mainly darkness and persecution. Speaking in 1888, Pastor Bersier, a famous Paris preacher summed up the history of French Presbyterians this way; " I represent a great Presbyterian church; I may say the greatest when I think of what she has suffered for the cross of Christ and human liberty. And though we are small now, we may say our poverty has been the riches of many nations." With so many martyrs and the rivers of blood shed, the Presbyterian Church of France is rightly called "The Church of the Cross."

THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands included the countries we now know as Holland and Belgium. Martin Luther's Protestantism found its way into the area very early, and was closely followed by the teachings of Calvin. Still, it remained a small movement and did not spread as rapidly as in other areas of Europe. In 1531 there were in existence at least twenty-five translations of the Bible, these included versions in Dutch, Flemish, and French. Thus the Bible was available to, and was even eagerly sought after, by the common people. There were virtually hundreds of Protestant works also in circulation. However, the heavy hand of Rome and persecution was also present very early in history. In July of 1523 the Roman Church had Henry Voes and John Esch burned at the stake. It meant death for a person to own or read the Bible, in public or privately. Tens of thousands of the early Dutch Protestant movement ended their lives in martyrdom. Thus the slow growth should not reflect so harshly upon these early reformed Christians. Nevertheless God was still faithfully building His church, despite the efforts of the world to stop Him.

In 1559 the church began to get itself organized, and separated from the general movement that had been hidden there for years. This was the year that a student of Calvin wrote the Belgic Confession. In 1563 a Presbyterian constitution was drafted by an assembly in Antwerp. Many Presbyterian churches organized under this constitution. These churches formed into a Synod in 1569, at an assembly in Emden, Germany. They were still not free to meet so openly at home. These churches had one feature that made them distinctive even among Presbyterians. All churches within the same city came under the rule of one session. This became known as the collegiate church.

William Prince of Orange became the leader of the Protestant movement during this era. In 1579, the seven northern provinces won their independence under his leadership. The Dutch Presbyterian Church was born and Presbyterianism began its effect upon civil governments.

Very early in history we find that Presbyterians placed great value upon education, especially religious education. They began to founded great universities. These universities became centers not only of learning, but religion as well, the

university at Leyden was such a school. Here many professors became super-Calvinists, and tried to out-Calvin, Calvin. Thus in 1603 an early controversy originated that is still argued today between Calvinist churches and those of the Arminian belief. The name came from the professor who started the movement to discredit some beliefs of Calvin and his followers (James Arminius). He disagreed with Calvin on five points. These were: Total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. Because of the controversy, these became known as the five points of Calvin. This is sad, as it completely ignores the most important one of Calvin's doctrines; that of the sovereignty of God. The other five cannot stand up, without God as sovereign of all things.

Because the controversy was so intense, the government stepped in and called for an assembly to settle the issue. This group became known as "The Synod of Dort" and the confession issued by this assembly as "The Canons of the Synod of Dort/." This confession denounced the Arminian beliefs as heresy. Their preachers were deposed, and some were banished from the country. These Canons, The Belgic Confession, and the Heidelberg Confession became the creed of the Dutch Presbyterian Church. (Note, the majority of these churches use the word Reformed in their name, and omit Presbyterian.)

ENGLAND

For the thousand years preceding 1534, England was Roman Catholic. A few scattered Protestant groups existed, but there was no real movement. In 1534 England passed a law that made the King of England the head of the church rather than the Pope. King Henry VIII thus became the head of The Church of England. This brought few changes to the church government, or its doctrines. The reformation was not taking effect as it was in Germany and Geneva.

With the death of Henry VIII in 1547, his son Edward VI became king. Under the guidance of the Archbishop of Canterbury (Thomas Cranmer) he had a new creed prepared and a book of common prayer created. Other reforms were made and it appeared that England had joined the Reformation.

Edward was followed by Mary Tudor, who was nicknamed Bloody Mary. She was intensely Roman Catholic and proceeded to undo all that her father had done. Archbishop Cranmer and many others were burned at the stake. Many Protestants fled to the continent to escape her persecution. A group emigrated to Geneva where John Calvin was at the height of his work. There they organized into a Presbyterian church, with John Knox as pastor. They learned Calvinism firsthand. It was here that Miles Coverdale and his associates translated the Bible into a version known as the Geneva Bible. This Bible would later be widely used in England. It was the first Bible of small size, and the first to use chapter and verse divisions.

Mary Tudor died in 1558. Queen Elizabeth followed with a long reign through 1603. She reestablished herself as the head of the church; Protestants were allowed to return. They did return, with the Geneva Bible and a clear understanding of Calvinism and Presbyterianism. The common people began to demand that the Church of England become purer in doctrine, worship, and a purer life style established. These Protestants were first called Puritans in 1565. Queen Elizabeth became alarmed at their growth and boldness. She brought the full force of government to bear upon them. She tried to force them to conform to the government and worship of the Church of England. She failed, and the movement now fully born continued to grow. History shows that no greater moral change ever took place within a nation than the change the Puritans brought upon England. England became a land that went by the book. God's book, the Bible was widely read and accepted for what it was.

In 1603 James VI of Scotland also became James I of England, King of England and Scotland. Though raised Presbyterian, James was not the great light the early church thought he would be. Instead we have this quotation from him, "They will conform or I will harry them out of the country or worse." We know some did leave, coming to Plymouth Rock. James also failed in his attempt to bring all into conformity with the Church of England.

Charles I, was next upon the throne from 1625 through 1649. He was even more determined that the Presbyterians should conform. The Scottish Presbyterians signed a covenant to stand by their faith till the death. The determined Scots proved more than a match for the armies of Charles. The English Parliament did not exist. Charles, to increase his power and raise the money and men needed to confront the Scottish Presbyterians, called for the election of a Parliament. The people elected a Puritan Parliament. Charles declared this election void and called for another election. This one was even more Puritan. Charles then ordered this Parliament dissolved. When they refused, Charles found himself in a civil war and with the Scottish Presbyterians to face. The Scots retired inside their own borders and left England to sort out her own affairs.

The Puritans for nearly a century had been demanding a purer Church of England. In 1643 an assembly was called together to this end. This group of men became known as The Westminster Assembly. Most members were ordained Bishops, and all but two were ministers in the Church of England. However, of the 121 members, most were Puritan, Calvinists, and university graduates. While the majority believed in the Presbyterian system, all systems found representation within the assembly. (See the section concerning the history of the Westminster at the end of this chapter on England.)

The civil war was going against the Puritans so they asked Scotland for help. The Scots agreed to help only if the parliament and the Westminster Divines agreed to sign a covenant drawn up by the Scots. This document called for the Scots to have representation in the Westminster Assembly and for the defense of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Also, they wanted work to begin immediately to reform the Church of England and Ireland. This agreement was made, allowing the Scots six members in the Westminster Assembly. They sent four ministers and two elders, who could speak, but not vote in the assembly.

The Church of England became Presbyterian and remained so for twelve years (1648-1660). The Puritans won their civil war, with the help of the Scots, and Charles was beheaded in 1649. The Commonwealth was established and Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector of England and Scotland. He died in 1658 and Charles II became King of England and Scotland. He disestablished Presbyterianism as the religion of the government, throwing out some two thousand Presbyterian ministers. They were forbidden to live within five miles of their former churches and could not teach school. As scholars, there was little other work they were suited for. The persecution of Presbyterians under Charles II and James I was the worst in our history. Even so, Presbyterianism would not perish. In 1688 a toleration act was passed. Still, there could be no Presbyterian Synods, each minister was a power unto himself. Without the oversight and connection that have always been a part of Presbyterian government, many heresies crept into the churches.

In 1876 an evangelical revival resulted in the union of the various Presbyterian groups. The Presbyterian Church of England began with two hundred and seventy congregations and approximately fifty thousand members. Because of the lack of oversight during her early formative years, and the unity the Presbyterian system creates; the Presbyterian Church of England was, and has remained a liberal Presbyterian church. In spite of this liberal spirit, the world and many thousands of churches shall ever be grateful for the system of government and confession of faith worked out by the Westminster Assembly. This link makes England one of the keys in Presbyterian history.

THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

To understand the origin of the Westminster Confession we need to go back just a little way and look at the historical events which led to this document being drawn up. Some of this is a duplication of history given under "England," but repeated here to insure understanding of the sequence of events.

The beginning of the foundation for the assembly which would ultimately pen this document begins with the death of Queen Mary of England (Bloody Mary) in 1558. With her death Queen Elizabeth succeeded to the throne. She would reign until 1603. Elizabeth reenacted the Act of supremacy, which made her the head of the Church of England, rather than the pope, thus the Church of England was in effect a Protestant church. She also allowed the English exiles to return to England with their Protestant religion. This is the beginning of the "Puritans". With their pure and simple ways the movement grew rapidly in England.

Elizabeth was succeeded by James I in 1603. He was the son of Mary Stuart and James VI of Scotland, thus England and Scotland became united under one king. The Puritans had high hopes in King James, he had been educated by Presbyterians in Scotland, thus he would be their friend.

Even so James did not succeed in putting the movement down, even with the persecution and all the people who fled England, the movement seemed to gain strength, not weaken. James was succeeded by his son Charles who reigned from 1625 to 1649. Charles I as he was known, also sought to force the puritans to submit to the Church of England.

The Assembly had only begun when the tide of war turned against the parliament. Parliament turned to the Scots for help. The Scots agreed to help only if certain conditions were met. However most church historians believe that the "Calvinist" and "Presbyterian" tone of the over all document are a direct result of the input from these members from Scotland. The first meeting of the Assembly was held July 1, 1643. There followed 1163 meetings of the full assembly

and untold hundreds of smaller committee meetings. The Westminster Assembly often spent entire days in prayer without any other discussion or work being done. It is felt by most familiar with the facts that this is perhaps the most pure document to come from the pen of man since the canon of Scripture was closed.

The Westminster Assembly penned several documents, these are: December 1644, The Directory for Public Worship of God; November 1644, The Form of Church Government and Ordination; December 1646, The Confession of Faith; Fall 1647, The Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Together these make up what is known as the Westminster Presbyterian Standards.

The romance will not last and there will be other persecutions of the Puritans/Presbyterians in England and Scotland as new powers come to the throne of England. However this is more church history than of the Westminster Confession of Faith. We can see from the dates here that the Geneva Bible and the Westminster Confession precede the King James Bible and other forms of Protestant religions by some number of years. It was our Puritan forefathers who not only laid the foundation for the government of this country and its constitution, but also insured the religious freedoms government is so rapidly putting aside today. Our forefathers in England drafted the documents which would become the foundation for the system of worship and government for not only many churches, but even nations in the free world. The United States has a "Presbyterian" system of government created by John Calvin for Geneva, Switzerland. In England, our revolutionary war was called the Presbyterian war. This is why these documents have been revered by so many past generations of not only Presbyterians, but all who adopt this system of representative government. The Westminster Confession is not so much a statement by men of their beliefs, as the collection into one document all the various Scripture references, restated to make an orderly and logical sense in the English language. It addresses all areas of our faith, providing God's answers from His word, to help all of us live a life that would be more pleasing to God.

SCOTLAND

The Presbyterian Church of Scotland has been called the mother of churches. The Presbyterian Church of Ireland, several different ones in the United States, The Presbyterian churches of Canada, Australia, South Africa, and many other countries and mission fields can trace their beginnings to Scotland.

The Presbyterian Church of Scotland was founded by John Knox, who learned the system of government and doctrines directly from Calvin. This church has produced more great preachers, scholars, and writers than any other.

The exact history of the arrival of Christianity to Scotland is unknown. We know that as early as 563 AD Columba had established a Christian center on the Isle of Iona off the west coast of Scotland. From this center he and his followers were able to have an effective missionary effort to the mainland. His church had no connection to the Roman Catholic Church. Records show that circa 750 AD another movement forming on the east coast, based around St. Andrews. This group was to be known as the Culdees. Some historians have claimed the Culdees as Presbyterian, but there is no historic proof for this, and the Scottish Presbyterians have never claimed the connection. They also had no connection to Rome. It is significant that St. Andrew, not Peter was their patron saint.

The Old Celtic Church came about as the result of the work of Columba and the Culdees. A Scottish king named Malcoln married a Saxon princess named Margaret. She was a devout Roman Catholic, and used her influence to turn Scotland from the Celtic Church to the Roman Catholic Church. In eleven fifty AD we find Scotland firmly under Roman Catholic influence. The next four hundred years finds in Scotland, a country that is as close to totally Roman Catholic as possible. During this period Scotland was widely known for her widespread ignorance, superstition, and wickedness in high places; especially the priesthood. Before the reformation Scotland was considered one of the darkest places in all of Europe.

Patrick Hamilton was the rising sun of the reformation of Scotland. Educated in France and Germany, he began to teach Protestant doctrines as a professor in St. Andrews University. For this "crime" he was burned at the stake. His faith and fortitude as he slowly died in the fire made a deep and profound impression upon all of Scotland.

Hamilton was followed by George Wishart a man of great scholarship, who for a time taught at Cambridge University. He is the immediate predecessor of John Knox. Local tradition says that John Knox stood by him with a two handed sword to keep the mob back while Wishart taught Protestant doctrines. He was burned at the stake in 1546. His death also made a lasting impression upon the Scottish people. As a result of his death some of his followers broke into St. Andrews castle and murdered Cardinal Beaton. They then hanged his body from the wall of the castle. It was this act

of revenge for the death of Wishart that alarmed John Knox and some other leaders of the Protestant movement and caused their flight to St. Andrews castle where they locked themselves in for safety. The Protestants locked in the castle feeling the need for a preacher and church services appointed John Knox to lead these services. Before this time we know very little about John Knox. We cannot even be sure of the date of his birth.

The Scottish Catholics were not able to retake the castle. They sent for French soldiers who battered the gates down and took John Knox and his followers prisoners. Knox served two years as a slave on a French galley ship. Here he learned French, an accomplishment that would be very useful later. He was then released or escaped and appears in England. Here he becomes court preacher to Protestant King Edward. Edward was followed by Mary Tudor (Bloody Mary). Mary soon after her ascent to the throne was burning Protestants by the scores. Many Protestants, including John Knox fled to the continent. Knox spent about five years in exile. Three of his years in exile were spent in Geneva with John Calvin. It was here that the time spent on the slave ship learning French came to be recognized as a gift from God to Knox. Calvin of course was French, and the ability to handle the language let Knox study directly under John Calvin. Knox was appointed preacher for a group of English-speaking exiles in Geneva, and they were formed into a Presbyterian church. An interesting note here is that this first church organized by Knox elected all officers, including the preacher for one year terms.

In 1559 John Knox returned to Scotland and became the leader of the reformation in Scotland. It is during his trials in organizing the Presbyterian Church of Scotland he is quoted as praying, "God give me Scotland, or I die;" God gave Knox Scotland. In December 1560, the first General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland was organized under the leadership of John Knox. At this meeting there were only six ministers and thirty-six ruling elders present. In all of Scotland only twelve Protestant ministers could be found. At this General Assembly a Book of Discipline was prepared, largely the work of Knox. It provided for the government of the church by Sessions, Synods, and the General Assembly. The individual churches were to have a pastor, elders, and deacons. The elders and deacons were elected for only one year at a time. "Lest that by long continuance of such offices men presume upon the liberty of the church" (Perhaps some of the old traditions should not have been put aside.) This first book of church order also provided much space for Christian education. "Every" church was to have a schoolmaster who was able to teach Latin, grammar, and the catechism. High schools were provided for, and as the crown of the educational system there were three universities. This book also dealt with the manners and morals of the people. Knox agreed with Calvin that religion should profoundly affect the everyday life of the people. It also provided guidance in assisting the poor.

In August 1561 Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots arrives upon the scene. A devout Roman Catholic, she celebrated mass the first day after installing herself in Holyrood Palace, though it was against the laws of Scotland at the time. John Knox said in a sermon after this mass that it placed more fear in his heart than the arrival of ten thousand soldiers in Scotland. Hearing of his sermon, Mary summoned Knox to come and give an account of himself. This began the conflict between Knox and Queen Mary. At times it looked as if Mary would bring Scotland back under the Roman Catholic Church. However her own follies and misdeeds led to her having to abdicate the throne and flee the country. Knox and Presbyterianism had won the day against the Queen and the Roman Catholic Church.

John Knox died in 1572. Regent Morton at the side of the open grave of Knox is quoted as saying, "Here lies one who never feared the face of man."

Andrew Melville was to succeed Knox as leader of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. He was a far more scholarly person than Knox. He was fluent in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French. He had also studied directly under Calvin. He rapidly became first the head of the University of Glasgow, and six years later head of the University of St. Andrews. He brought progress to the Presbyterian church. He revised their book of discipline, making it much more Presbyterian than it already was. His work as the leader of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland caused him many bitter struggles with a young James VI, King of Scotland. James would later also become James I of England, King of Scotland and England. James was an infant when Mary abdicated, and the Presbyterians had taken charge of his education in the hopes of one day having a true Presbyterian king. This was not to be. James fought the Presbyterians in Scotland, and the Puritans of England every step of the way. James was determined to place bishops over the Presbyterians of Scotland. Melville would have none of it. Melville told James there were two kingdoms in Scotland, the commonwealth of which James was king, and Jesus Christ, King of the church. They would yield to James in his place, but he was not the head of the church, Christ was. When he assumed the throne of England, James had Melville arrested and locked in the Tower of London for four years. He then banished him, with Melville going to France to begin a Divinity school at Sedan, France.

The rest of the Scottish Story is much the same as England's and is covered in the section about England. The one

major difference is that unlike her English sister, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland was never considered liberal in any fashion whatsoever. Most agree it was the purity demanded by Knox and his immediate followers, that has always been maintained by the Church of Scotland that has won it the reputation they have always had, and contributed to the earned name, "Mother of Churches." (Sadly this report from past histories of the church is not as true today concerning Scotland and the mother church.)

AMERICAN PRESBYTERIANS

As a result of the persecution in Europe, many emigrated to America. The majority of these emigrants from Europe were of the Protestant religion, and many Presbyterians. We should note here that all true Presbyterians are Calvinistic, but all Calvinists are not Presbyterian. It was at Jamestown, Virginia, the first English settlement in America we note the first Presbyterian minister's work. The Rev. Alexander Whittaker was Presbyterian in his beliefs. Whittaker began his ministry in 1611. A few years later the Pilgrims and Puritans began arriving in Massachusetts. They also were Calvinists, but held to the congregational form of government. There were some Presbyterians in this group, and after many years most of these would come into the Presbyterian fold.

The year 1623 brings the Dutch directly from Holland to New York. The majority of these new settlers were Presbyterian. They along with their first descendants began the Dutch Reformed Church in America. This period also introduces the French Huguenots fleeing persecution in France. They settled both in the New England area and New York. The Huguenots were Presbyterians.

In the earliest of the colonial days the Scottish Presbyterians also emigrated to America. Their largest concentrations were in New Jersey, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The Scottish Presbyterians were to play a large part in the founding of the Presbyterian Church in America (Meaning Presbyterianism, not the denomination now using this name).

The largest group of Presbyterian emigrants to America was the "Scotch-Irish." This group came directly from Northern Ireland. However there was not a drop of Irish blood in the lot. They were Scotsmen, who lived in Northern Ireland prior to their coming to America. They settled primarily in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. A significant number settled in the Carolinas and Virginia. Between the years of 1705 and 1775 it has been estimated that over five hundred thousand of the Scotch-Irish emigrated to America. The Scotch-Irish influx entered the new land from the North and South. Those who began in the northern provinces began migrating South. Those who began their life in the South (Charleston, SC) began migrating North. These two streams of Scotch-Irish came together in Mecklenburg County, NC and York County, SC. These two counties became the centers of the Scotch-Irish in the South. It was the Scotch-Irish who would be the leaders and backbone of the soon to be Presbyterian Church in America. The Scotch-Irish and these southern centers were also to play important roles in the American revolution.

Add to this a large group of German Calvinists who landed in the northern part of the country between 1700 and 1770. They belonged to the German Reformed Church, but were Presbyterian in all but name.

From this mixture of culture and nationalities, but with common beliefs, these early settlers began the task of organizing a church from the ground up. Language was also a problem during this time in the life of the Presbyterian Church in America. Add to this the lack of a unifying culture in America, the vast distances between settlements, and the complete lack of organized communications between the far flung outposts in the wildernesses of the Americas, and the task would seem insurmountable.

Those first ministers and missionaries defied man, beast, and nature to obey God's command and be used of Him to build His church. Perhaps the most outstanding name among these early martyrs is that of Rev. Francis Makemie, who has been called the father of American Presbyterianism. He began his ministry in 1683 after being ordained by the Presbytery of Lagan, Northern Ireland; he was Scotch-Irish. He first organized a number of Presbyterian churches on the eastern shore of Maryland. He also traveled from New York to Georgia many times, preaching the Gospel at every opportunity. He taught and encouraged Presbyterianism everywhere he went. This landed him in jail more than once. It is noteworthy that the practice of having a state religion has followed the emigrants to America. In those days the Episcopal Church was the religion of most colonies. It was against the law in many of the colonies to teach contrary to their doctrines.

There is some debate over exactly which year, 1705 or 1706 that the first Presbytery was organized by Rev. Makemie; nor is the exact location known. We do know it was of the two and was in or near Philadelphia. It was known as the

Presbytery of Philadelphia. At almost this time the great influx of Scotch-Irish Presbyterians began. The Presbyterian church grew rapidly with the addition of these Scottish Presbyterians. The year 1717 saw four Presbyteries organized in Philadelphia as the first synod; the Synod of Philadelphia. At this point the official statistics of the Presbyterian Church in America were: nineteen ministers, forty churches, and three thousand men.

The fledgling church had its first division in 1745. It is interesting that this division was over "evangelism." This was the first of many such divisions and reunions, only to divide again that the Presbyterian Church in America has known. Today there are over thirty denominations that embrace the Reformed traditions and Presbyterian system of government. Some claim direct lines to the mother churches of Europe, the majority had their beginning here in this first synod.

It is beyond the scope of this work to detail all these divisions and provide the lines of continuity for each separate Presbyterian denomination. The chart included in Appendix A outlines the Presbyterian movement in the United States.

Again this is not an all inclusive history, nor listing of reformed denominations. The reader is directed to the bibliography where the attempt has been to provide suggestions adequate for the further investigation of any area of our great heritage and history. This list is not intended to be exhaustive either. Most church or public libraries contain many volumes not listed here.

THE FUTURE

Much more time could be well spent with either of the early groups we have covered here. We have also completely left out some smaller groups. Though small their history too has played an important part in the heritage of what has become the American Presbyterian church. However in keeping with our original intent to be as brief as possible, we will end our look into our past here.

Even from this brief look at our past the answer to the question of who and what Presbyterians are should be much clearer. Presbyterian is a form of government as explained earlier. However, it is so much more. The obvious fact that this form of government and worship had to come directly from the hand of God to have survived the centuries should ignite the fire within all our hearts.

The very Biblical, very pure base upon which it was established should cause all of us to stop and look before we toss aside tradition to conform to the modern liberal world. Our founders died rather than compromise what they believed was God's will for His church. As drastic as that sounds to the modern western man, such commitment to God and the body of Christ must still exist today. It is man who must conform to God's will, and His plan, not the church conform to man. The reverse of this will never work, because the result would be anything but a church dedicated to the Lord, Jesus Christ.

This very simple, very pure beginning of the Presbyterian church has been maintained over the centuries. It is this sure foundation of God's Word, the Holy Bible, upon which we must build today if it will survive for the next generation. Either the entire system is correct, having been preserved by the will of God, or none of it is right. The entire moral fiber of the world crumbles around us. Never before in modern history has the world needed the Presbyterian church with its purity and freedoms of government as it does today. Let us, as the next generation in this great story of history, pick up this torch of pure light, God's light and march boldly into that future. With great thanksgiving to God for the heritage He has given us, let each of us pick up this torch of the Spirit, so precious paid for by the blood of many martyrs, and press forward in truth and Spirit. This torch has set the world on fire for Christ before. It can and will again, if we as individuals will honor our covenant with God and boldly stand our ground in His truth and light. We are the only restraint in a very vile world. God did not preserve this church these past five hundred years, to see her swallowed up by a very liberal world. God's word is pure, God's word is truth, God's word does not change. Either God is total sovereign in our lives, or we are not of God. We must understand where we came from, learning the lessons from these first Presbyterians and stand firm, come what may; as we follow our Lord into whatever time He allows the world to continue, if a faith is not worth dying for, it is not worth having. These are strong words, but God has never demanded less. The Bible says, "Pickup your cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). This Presbyterians have always done. This we must continue to do without wavering.

CONCLUSIONS

How do we maintain this purity of worship and spirit? How do we maintain this tradition passed to us by our very rich

history and heritage? The answer to both questions is the same. Return the teaching of the creeds and catechisms to their proper place within our churches, especially our Sabbath schools. Insure that all new converts to our faith are given proper instruction in these documents and why they mean so much to the Presbyterian church. Insure that all our members understand the meaning of at least these seven points of Calvinism (Presbyterianism)

1. The entire Bible is God's Word, period. We must have this foundation to build upon.

2. God is total in His sovereignty over man, nature, and the universe, both seen and unseen.

A. Without this sovereignty of God, meaning the total Lordship of Jesus Christ in our lives, the next five points cannot stand. These are important because they are doctrines that set Presbyterians apart in their understanding of God's will for mankind.

B. These are also the five points we are most often called upon to explain or defend to the non-presbyterian world. We cannot explain what we do not understand.

C. When we do not understand something, we tend to be indifferent to it. In today's world we cannot afford the luxury of indifferent members. We must have the fire of God's Spirit ignited in our hearts. Understanding what we believe and why keeps these fires burning.

3. The total depravity of man This does not mean man has become as bad as he can it means his spiritual nature is dead and he can in no way save himself, and is destined to become worse.

4. Unconditional Election: This does not mean our election was because God foresaw the good works we would do, nor His foreknowledge of our faith to be. It means God elected us out of His grace and mercy for His own reasons and purposes, which reasons and purposes need not be revealed to us; He is God.

5. Limited Atonement: This means that the atonement of Christ was made for the elect. John Calvin taught that the atonement was great enough for all mankind, but it was only effective for the elect.

6. Irresistible Grace: This means that when God under takes to save us by grace, His grace is irresistible. Consider Paul on the road to Damascus; or the adverse circumstances of life that lower even great men to their knees, where they see Christ clearly.

7. Perseverance of the Saints: This means once saved and adopted into the family of God no power can remove us from God's hand.

This is not the total theology of Presbyterianism. These are however some of the areas of our beliefs less acceptable to modern man. While we must understand how to apply God's word to today's world, we do not change God's truth to fit this world, or man's rationalization. Some things we must accept because God says so. If man could fully understand God and all His ways, He would not be God and worthy of our worship.

While not complete in any single area, it is hoped this brief work will stimulate all to ask the right questions, and to dig deeper into the meanings of our creeds and confessions. We are confident with this knowledge, you too will believe that this river is God's water of life upon this earth, and that you too will do your utmost to see it is kept pure and free running for the benefit of all mankind, till our Lord returns.

What does it mean to be Evangelical?

To be 'Evangelical' is to understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ as expressed in His word and to preach this Gospel to all peoples. To evangelize means to follow out the Great Commission as ordered by Christ by bringing the good news to the lost, exhorting them to repent and turn back from their wickedness done in rebellion to the Most High, and imploring them to beg for forgiveness, that His judicious wrath might not fall upon them. The lost must understand that in fact they are lost, and in such a state will spend eternity in the fires of hell. The glad tidings are for those who will fall before God's throne and ask for the atonement that His own Son has made in their stead. They must be instructed to believe in and rest upon the grace of God for their salvation, and be encouraged to pursue a life of faith in service to their new Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. The term 'Evangelical' also refers to a basic or fundamental understanding and appreciation of the Gospel. This message is defined and explained in the Holy Bible, and these particulars separate the true Gospel from other gospels. Throughout the history of the Church there have been many who have questioned and rebelled against what is clearly taught in the scriptures, so as to confuse the body of Christ and to tear apart the flock as ravenous wolves are want to do. Servants of Christ have fought heresies through much toil so that Christ's church might remain pure.

An Evangelical church typically believes in the following

1. The completed word of God, the Holy Bible, is inerrant, infallible and authoritative. Its purpose is to teach who God is and what God expects from man.
2. God is of three natures - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, but is of one substance. He alone is due all glory, honor, and worship.
3. God has redeemed all believers through the work of His Son, who was born of the virgin Mary, who fulfilled the law, who died a vicarious (substitutionary) death and whose blood was once for all an atonement, and who was bodily resurrected and is at the right hand of the Father.
4. Those redeemed have been saved by God's grace alone through faith alone. There is none who can merit salvation in any way, for all are guilty under the law.
5. The Lord Jesus has promised to return one day and judge both the living and the dead.

See Matthew 28.18-20; 2 Timothy 3.16; Deuteronomy 6.4-5; Colossians 1.9-23; Romans 2:1-10, 4:1-5; Ephesians 2:8-9; Revelation 22:12-16

What does Presbyterian mean?

The term 'Presbyterian' refers to the form of government that is used by a church or a group of churches. It derives its meaning from the Greek word 'presbuteros,' which is used throughout the New Testament in connection with the rule of the church, and is usually translated 'elder.' A Presbyterian church governs its congregation by both teaching elders (the pastor) and ruling elders (mature Christian men in the congregation gifted accordingly). Together they make up the 'Session' and join with 'Sessions' of other regional churches in their denomination forming a 'Presbytery.' The role of the elders or session in each church is to promote and protect the purity and peace of its members. Its rule is of an ecclesiastical (pertaining to the church) and spiritual nature. Those ordained have been charged to watch diligently over the flock in their care by being a good and humble example, by teaching, exhorting, and encouraging the congregation with sound doctrine, by praying continually for its people, by visiting the sick, by administering the sacraments, by disciplining the disobedient and unrepentant, and by governing the worship service and church gatherings in a manner which reflects the love and care of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. Presbyterian churches find their roots in Scotland during the Reformation of the mid 1500's. John Knox, a disciple of John Calvin, helped reform the churches in Scotland to this form of government. Many other churches throughout Europe also reformed their church rule according to the model in the New Testament, though only the Scottish churches and some English churches used the name 'Presbyterian.' Presbyterian church government is in contrast to two other forms of church government, Hierarchical and Congregational. The hierarchical form was and is seen most clearly in the Roman Catholic church, where there are many different ranks of office, each rank subordinate to a higher rank, and headed by the pope. Congregational churches, on the other hand, are separate and autonomous from each other in rule. Reformers believed that the sole head of the Church was Christ Himself, who works through offices which He has clearly instituted in His word, and not a single leader on earth. They also believed in maintaining a sense of unity and purpose with other churches, especially in matters of appeal and denominational policy. See Acts 20.17-36; 1 Timothy 3.1-7, 5.17; Titus 1.5-9; 1 Peter 5.1-7

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Appendix A

1643	Westminster Assembly	
1705	Presbytery of Philadelphia born	
1717	First Synod formed	
1741		First division
	<u>Old Side Philadelphia</u>	<u>New Side New York</u>
1758	Reunion Philadelphia & New York	
1789	Became PCUSA	
1801	Congregational union	
1810	Split over 1801 union	
	<u>New School</u>	<u>Old School</u>
1857	(Civil War)	
	New South -- New North	Old South-- Old North
1865	New/Old South union PCUS	
1870	New/Old North union PCUSA	

The PCA separated from the PCUS and the EPC was born from conservatives in the PCUSA in the decades of the 70s & 80s.

Additionally the OPC split in 1936; from this division was born the BPC in 1938. The BPC spawned the EPC, which united with the RPC (General) and formed the RPC Reformed Synod. This Synod united with the PCA, but leaving the OPC and BPC in place too. In almost every division the old denomination continued with the same name. Today we have over thirty Reformed denominations, and numerous independent churches. Most fit into this chart some where. The objective here is to bring the reader to 1981 and the formation of the EPC.

HISTORY OF THE EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The history of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church begins with the Protestant Reformation in Europe. More specifically, the branch of the Reformation under the leadership of John Calvin in Geneva stressed several key doctrines which became the hallmarks of Reformed Theology. •The Sovereignty of God •Man's inability to save himself •The Bible as the supreme authority for faith and practice •Salvation by grace through faith.

Meanwhile, in Scotland, a young man named John Knox came to faith and became involved in the Protestant movement. In a conflict between England and France, Knox was captured and made a galley slave in a French ship. He managed to escape and made his way to Geneva, where he met and studied under Calvin. John Knox returned to Scotland, bringing the teachings of John Calvin with him. Out of a tumultuous period of conflict between Catholic and Protestant, King and Parliament, England and Scotland, arose the Presbyterian form of church government.

Presbyteros is the Greek word for elder. In Presbyterian church government locally elected elders form a church session, the sessions in a region form a presbytery, and the presbyteries form a General Assembly. In 1643, the English parliament summoned a group of church leaders to draw up a theological summary of faith. 1647 saw the publication of The Westminster Confession of Faith and a Larger and Shorter Catechism. A modern edition of these documents has been adopted by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church as a statement of belief.

Presbyterian immigrants have played an important role in shaping the church and the civil government in America. John Witherspoon, a Presbyterian minister and president of Princeton University, was the only clergyman who signed the Declaration of Independence, and Presbyterians were generally strong supporters of the American Revolution. Some commentators see the Presbyterian form of government, with its limits on authority and separation of powers, as playing a formative role in the development of American democracy. The history of Presbyterian denominations in the U.S. is long and, frankly, convoluted. Disputes over slavery, theological conformity, qualifications for ordination, modernism, revivalism, and other issues gave rise to a variety of denominations which differ in theology and style of worship.

The EPC is a recent arrival on the scene. In the early 1980's, as two major Presbyterian churches moved toward uniting as the Presbyterian Church, USA, a small but growing group of pastors began to meet to discuss the formation of a new Evangelical Presbyterian Church. As Evangelicals, these leaders were uncomfortable with the liberalism being expressed by church leaders. On the other hand, their theological differences with existing conservative Presbyterian groups effectively prevented them from joining those denominations. In 1981, a new church was formed, taking the historic Westminster Confession of Faith as its statement of belief. A shorter document, The Essentials, identifies the core beliefs that are understood as defining what it means to be a Christian. Today, the EPC has over 55,000 active members in some 175 congregations. Besides eight presbyteries in the U.S., the St. Andrews Presbytery encompasses the state of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

EPC History by Knox Presbyterian Church Ann Arbor, MI.

APPENDIX B

The Essentials Of Christian Faith

All Scripture is self-attesting and being Truth, requires our unreserved submission in all areas of life. The infallible Word of God. The sixty-six books of the Old and New testaments, is a complete and unified witness to God's redemptive acts culminating in the incarnation of the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible, uniquely and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, is the supreme and final authority on all matters on which it speaks.

On this sure foundation we affirm these additional Essentials of our faith:

1. We believe in one God, the Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To Him be all honor, glory and praise forever!

2. Jesus Christ, the living Word, become flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. He who is true God became true man united in one Person forever. He died on the cross a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. On the third day He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Mediator.

3. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to our hearts. He convicts us of sin and draws us to the savior. Indwelling our hearts, He gives new life to us, empowers and imparts gifts to us for service. He instructs and guides us into all truth, and seals us for the day of redemption.

4. Being estranged from God and condemned by our sinfulness, our salvation is wholly dependent upon the work of God's free grace. God credits His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, thereby justifies them in His sight. Only such as are born of the Holy Spirit and receive Jesus Christ become children of God and heirs of eternal life.

5. The true Church is composed of all persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy spirit are united together in the body of Christ. The Church finds her visible, yet imperfect, expression in local congregations where the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered in their integrity; where scriptural discipline is practiced, and where loving fellowship is maintained. For her perfecting, she awaits the return of her Lord.

6. Jesus Christ will come again to the earth - personally, visibly, and bodily - to judge the living and the dead, and to consummate history and the eternal plan of God. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," (Rev. 22:20)

7. The Lord Jesus Christ commands all believers to proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and to make disciples of all nations. Obedience to the Great Commission requires total commitment to "Him who loved us and gave Himself for us." He calls us to a life of self-denying love and service. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10)

These Essentials are set forth in greater detail in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

EXAMINATION

1. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only way to eternal salvation?
2. Do you with no mental reservations rely upon Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?
3. Have you read the Westminster Confession of Faith?
4. Do you have any reservations concerning any of the doctrines as explained in the Westminster Confession of Faith or Catechisms?
5. Do you with no reservations or exceptions accept the tenets of faith outlined in The Essentials of faith as written to be essential parts of the beliefs of a Christian?
6. What is the first duty of an elder of the church?
7. Where would you find answers concerning who may hold office in the church and how they are elected, ordained, and installed?
8. Where would you find information concerning filing a charge against a church member or minister that was in violation of the constitution of the church or engaged in sin they would not repent of?
9. Where was the First Presbytery in the USA?
10. Who were the Scotch-Irish?
11. Who were the Huguenots?
12. Who was John Knox?
13. When do most historians claim the 16th century reformation began?
14. Name one group that was teaching reformed principles before the 16th century.
15. According to the Book of Worship who is eligible to receive baptism?
16. According to the Book of Worship by whom and where is baptism normally administered?
17. What are sacraments?
18. According to the Book of Worship, name three times other than regular Sunday morning services it is proper for the church to come together to worship?
19. Name two things that should be a part of family worship times?
20. How can a person join the church?
21. Who may join the church?
22. What rolls of church members does the church maintain?
23. According to the Book of Discipline what are the three grounds for a judicial case to be filed against a person?
24. According to the Book of Discipline what is the purpose of discipline?
25. What three kinds of offenses require discipline?
26. Who may call a meeting of the congregation?

27. Who may call for a meeting of the session?
28. What may be discussed and dealt within a called session meeting?
29. What is the minimum time that must elapse before a congregational meeting can be called?
30. What may be discussed and handled in a called meeting of the congregation?
31. Under normal circumstances, who is the moderator of a congregational meeting?
32. When may a session meet without the pastor or Presbytery appointed moderator of session being present?
33. Who may vote in congregational meetings?
34. Give a brief description of the office of ruling elder as defined by the Book of Government.
35. Give a brief description of the office of deacon as defined by the Book of Government.
36. Who may be elected to office in the local church?