

Proposal 8: Westminster Confession and Catholicism

Replacement recommendations

1. That, in this time of much better respect and relationships between Protestant and Catholic churches, General Assembly declares that:
 - (a) while it upholds the essential teachings of the Reformed faith, it no longer holds to those statements in the Westminster Confession of Faith which assert that all monastic vows are 'superstitious and sinful snares', that the pope is antichrist, that Protestants may never marry Catholics, and that the Catholic mass is 'abominably injurious'
 - (b) such clauses reflected the very sharp divisions, antagonisms, and dangers of the Reformation era and its aftermath, and no longer apply in today's context
 - (c) 'difficulties and scruples' in subscribing to the Westminster Confession are addressed in (i) the Declaratory Act, which allows 'diversity of opinion ... on such points in the Confession as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith', and in (ii) the ordination Formula, which states that 'liberty of conviction is recognised in this Church but only on such points as do not enter into the fundamental doctrines of Christian Faith contained in the Scriptures and subordinate standards'.
2. That the current 'Important Note' preceding the text of the Westminster Confession on the Church's website be replaced with the following wording:

'NOTE:

 - The historic *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646) is one of the subordinate standards of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, along with the contemporary *Kupu Whakapono* (2010).
 - The Declaratory Act (1892-3) addresses 'difficulties and scruples' in subscribing to the Westminster Confession and allows 'diversity of opinion ... on such points in the Confession as do not enter into the substance of the Reformed Faith', and the ordination Formula (2010) states that 'liberty of conviction is recognised in this Church but only on such points as do not enter into the fundamental doctrines of Christian Faith contained in the Scriptures and subordinate standards'.
 - The 2018 General Assembly confirmed that it no longer holds to those statements in the Westminster Confession which state that all monastic vows are 'superstitious and sinful snares', that the pope is antichrist, that Protestants may never marry Catholics, and that the Catholic mass is 'abominably injurious', and noted that such clauses reflected the very sharp divisions, antagonisms, and dangers of the Reformation era and its aftermath and no longer apply in today's context, where there is much better respect and relationships between Protestant and Catholic churches.

The reasons for this proposal, as printed in the White Book, are unchanged.