

## **Brief Evaluation of Harvest Bible Chapel Beliefs**

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This evaluation is based solely on the HBC booklet, *Doctrinal Statement: This is What We Believe*. Further, this evaluation is only an outline -- far more could be said.

### **The Good**

HBC maintains many sound beliefs that come from Scripture. Some examples:

- Gospel, Christ-centered emphasis
- An orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, including the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit
- Inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, sufficiency of Scripture
- Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone
- Total or pervasive depravity
- Preservation and perseverance of the saints, eternal security
- Church government by elders, ministry of mercy led by deacons
- Biblical view of origins, rejection of evolution
- Commitment to church discipline (in connection with task of elders)
- Biblical view of women in ministry

### **The Bad**

HBC maintains some beliefs that are difficult to maintain from a good reading of Scripture. Examples:

- “The Holy Spirit regenerates the sinner upon belief in Christ...” This suggests that the Holy Spirit is not working in a person before he or she believes. Ephesians 2:8 says that faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit. He must regenerate a person before he or she believes. Further, 1 Cor. 2:10-14 teaches us that we cannot understand the gospel, let alone believe in it, without the Spirit. See also Canons of Dort 3/4 articles 11 and 12.
- “We believe in the ‘blessed hope’: the personal, pre-millennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ.” HBC holds to the pre-millennial interpretation of Rev. 20:1-6. They say that Christ will return before the 1000 years. However, Scripture says in Matt. 20:36, “But concerning that day and hour no one knows...” Moreover, various passages speak of the kingdom of Christ as a present reality (see Matt. 11:12, Matt. 12:28, Luke 17:21, Col. 1:13). See also Belgic Confession article 37.
- “Upon accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, a believer becomes part of his body, which is the church.” At face value, this is a true statement. When someone who is an unbeliever becomes a Christian, they are joined to the church. However, from elsewhere in the booklet it is clear that HBC restricts church membership to believers only. It does not include the children of believers. This is related to why they do not baptize the infant children of believers. What does Scripture say about who belongs to the church (and who should therefore be baptized)? See passages like Acts 2:39 and Eph. 6:1-3. The New Testament assumes that, like in the Old Testament, the children of believers belong to God’s covenant and church. Therefore, they should be baptized. See also Belgic Confession article 34, Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 27.

- “Communion is the commemoration by believers of Christ’s death and a reminder – through the bread and the juice – of the Savior’s broken body and shed blood.” The Lord’s Supper is a commemoration, but it is more than that. At the Lord’s Supper, Christ himself is present to nourish us spiritually with his body and blood (John 6:48-51). Thus 1 Cor. 10:16-17 calls it a participation in his blood and body. See also Belgic Confession article 35, Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 28.
- While HBC maintains the sufficiency of Scripture, it does not apply this principle (at least in the Statement of Beliefs) to worship. Scripture teaches that we are not to add or subtract from the Word of God (Deut. 12:32, Prov. 30:6, and Rev. 22:19) and this is especially important for our worship (see Lev. 10:1-7). We must not have any element in worship that has not been mandated by the Word of God. See also Belgic Confession articles 7 and 32 and Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 35.

### **The Questionable**

The Doctrinal Statement of HBC leaves one with some questions:

- “We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, as a representative and substitutionary sacrifice. We believe that each person who by faith receives him as personal Savior is justified on the basis of Jesus Christ’s shed blood.” For whom did Christ die? Further, does his active obedience belong to the basis of justification? These are important doctrinal points because of the comfort they give to believers. See chapter 2 of the Canons of Dort on the first question; Belgic Confession article 22 for the second.
- “It is God’s divine decision to save a person...” This refers to election, but it omits the basis. What is the basis on which God makes this decision? It would be good to have that made explicit. See Canons of Dort chapter 1, articles 9 and 10.
- What exactly is the spiritual position of the children of believers? Are they distinguished in any sense from the children of unbelievers?
- Does HBC allow anyone who feels compelled to partake of the Lord’s Supper? If so, how does that fit with their commitment to church discipline?