

The Westminster Confession of Faith

Developed in 1647 by the Church of England, the Westminster Confession of Faith represented the fruits of Protestant scholasticism that “refined and systematized the teachings of the Reformation.” In 1729, the confession was adopted as the confessional standard of the Presbyterian synod in the colonies. The Confession continues today with a few modifications as the Confession of the PCUSA and other Presbyterian denominations in the Reformed churches today.

Team 1 has discussed the Westminster Confession and determined that it is best to divide it into three headings.

1. The Lordship of Jesus

2. The Authority of the Scripture

3. Sin and Salvation

The Lordship of Jesus is presented throughout the Confession.

Ch. 2 – Of God and of the Holy Trinity

Ch. 4 – Of Creation

Ch. 5 – Of Providence

Ch. 7 – Of God's Covenant with Man

Ch. 8 – Of Christ the Mediator

Ch. 10 – Of Effectual Calling

Ch. 11 – Of Justification

Ch. 14 – Of Saving Faith

Ch. 18 – Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation

Ch. 25 – Of the Church

Ch. 26 – Of the Communion of the Saints

Ch. 27 – Of the Sacraments

Ch. 28 – Of Baptism

Ch. 29 – Of the Lord's Supper

Ch. 32 – Of the State of Man after Death, and of the

Resurrection of the Dead

Ch. 33 – Of the Last Judgment

The Authority of the Scripture is also presented throughout the Confession.

Ch. 1 – Of the Holy
Scripture

Ch. 9 – Of Free Will

Ch. 12 – Of Adoption

Ch. 13 – Of Sanctification

Ch. 14 – Of Saving Faith

Ch. 16 – Of Good Works

Ch. 17 – Of the
Perseverance of the Saints

Ch. 19 – Of the Law of God

Ch. 21 - Of Religious
Worship and of the Sabbath
Day

Ch. 24 – Of Marriage and
Divorce

Ch. 25 – Of the Church

Ch. 31 – Of Synods and
Councils

Sin and Salvation

Ch. 3 – Of God's Eternal
Decree

Ch. 5 – Of Providence

Ch. 6 – Of the Fall of Man

Ch. 15 – Of Repentance
unto Life

Ch. 20 – Of Christian Liberty
and Liberty of Conscience

Ch. 22 – Of Lawful Oaths and
Vows

Ch. 23 – Of the Civil
Magistrate

Ch. 30 – Of Censures

Ch. 33 – Of the Last
Judgment

The divisions above are by no means final interpretations of the Westminster Confession. You should note that several chapters fall under more than one of the headings. Beyond that, one can argue that the three divisions are not a fully accurate presentation of the Confession. That may be true but there had to be some way to consolidate the Confession into a short presentation after realizing it took the full summer elective time to go through the Westminster Confession chapter by chapter.

Consider the chapters of the Westminster Confession in light of the Apostle's Creed. As the Creed is recited, the chapters of the Westminster Confession would expand on what is being said. For example,

I believe in God, the Father Almighty (Ch. 2),
Maker of heaven and earth (Ch. 4, Ch. 5, Ch. 7).
And in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son (Ch.
2, Ch. 8) who was conceived by the Holy Ghost
(Ch. 2, Ch. 4, Ch. 5), born of the virgin Mary
(Ch. 1, Ch. 5), suffered under Pontius Pilate (Ch.
7), was crucified, dead and buried (Ch. 3, Ch. 5,
Ch. 6, Ch. 8)....

Going on you will see more of the Confession in the Apostle's Creed. The "communion of saints, the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting" can be seen in the chapters titled:

Ch. 26 - Of the Communion of the Saints

Ch. 32 – Of the State of Man After Death, and of the Resurrection of the Dead

Ch. 33 – Of the Last Judgment.

Finally, let us take a quick look at some doctrines that we hold to and realize they are addressed in the Westminster Confession.

the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures

the doctrine of the Trinity

the doctrine of decrees and predestination

the doctrine of creation

the doctrine of providence

the doctrines of the covenants;

the doctrine concerning Christ our Mediator

the doctrine of free will

the doctrine of effectual calling, or regeneration

the doctrine of justification

the doctrine of adoption

the doctrine of sanctification
the doctrine of saving faith
the doctrine of repentance
the doctrine of good works
the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints
the doctrine of assurance
the doctrine of the law
the doctrine of Christian liberty

The above list comes from an article by Charles Hodge, originally published in the Princeton Review of 1867.

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