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REFORMED
STANDARDS
OF UNITY



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The Historic Statements of Faith
Confessed by
the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches

Edited by Peter A. Lillback
and Bernard Aubert

WSP WESTMINSTER
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*Reformed Standards of Unity: The Historic Statements of Faith
Confessed by the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches*

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Presented by the faculty and trustees
of Westminster Theological Seminary
to its students

Dedicated to the memory
of our founding professors

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PREFACE

This volume contains selected doctrinal documents of the Christian faith as confessed throughout the history of Presbyterian and Reformed churches of Jesus Christ to the present day. Although not equal in authority to inspired revelation, we believe these documents to be faithful summaries of Christian doctrine as taught by Holy Scripture. It is with this in mind that we have prepared this edition expressly for the use of students at Westminster Theological Seminary. However, it is our hope that the quality and portability of the book, along with its pertinent selections of creeds and confessions, will make it immediately useful for broader application—supplementing and serving the worship and study of Christ’s church.

Many other documents of the church might fit under the title of “Reformed Standards of Unity” (perhaps foremost among these are the *Thirty-Nine Articles* and the *Baptist Confession of 1869*). However, the purpose of this book is to be a selection of the essential documents of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches that are most closely associated with Westminster’s theological heritage. These are the creeds, confessions, and catechisms that the seminary professes and instructs, encouraging the leaders who pass through our halls to embrace and to conform their teaching and preaching to. Moreover, we hope that these selections will motivate students and readers to explore the full doctrinal history of the church. There are many other excellent, and more thorough, collections available in print and online. To assist readers in this important theological and ecclesiological task, we direct you to a reformational confessional database created to encourage confessional studies by the whole church. You may find this database at www.standards.wts.edu.

A Note on the Texts

In preparing this edition some new scripture citations have been added to the footnotes. A dagger (†) indicates a biblical reference original to the text; an asterisk (*) indicates a new reference sourced for this edition. In lieu of a traditional index, readers are encouraged to visit the website listed above. Also available at that address are additional resources to provide historical context and other information related to creeds, confessions, and catechisms. The source of each text is as follows:

–“The Apostles’ Creed” is taken, with slight modification, from Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 2:45.

–“The Nicene Creed” is taken, with slight modification, from Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 1:28–29 and 2:57–61.

–“The Chalcedonian Definition” is taken, with slight modification, from Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 2:62–63.

–“The Athanasian Creed” is taken, with slight modification, from Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 2:66–70.

–*The Westminster Standards* are taken, with slight modification, from *The Westminster Confession of Faith Together with the Larger Catechism and the Shorter Catechism with Scripture Proofs* (3rd ed.; Atlanta, GA: Committee for Christian Education & Publications, PCA Bookstore, 1990), 3–99. Copyright 1990, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America. Used with permission.

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A special debt of thanks is owed to Bernard Aubert for his excellent labors on these documents, providing additional scripture references and more. I am also grateful for the keen leadership and careful assistance of Josh Currie of Westminster Seminary Press, and for his commitment to seeing this project to completion. In addition, I express my gratitude to Randall Pederson, Pierce T. Hibbs, and Ben Dahlvang, each of whom spent a great deal of time preparing this edition for press.

Lastly, an expression of praise to the Lord is added for the life and memory of the long-serving Westminster trustee, Mr. George Sinclair, whose thoughtful generosity has in part enabled this book to come to be. His love for the Lord continues to bless our seminary. Similarly, I express my gratitude to the ladies whose generosity established the Bartow-Spurgeon bequest that has graciously blessed the seminary's library and publication efforts in the arena of church history.

—Peter A. Lillback,
President, Westminster Theological Seminary

I.
ECUMENICAL
CREEDS

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty;
Maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary;
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
he descended into hell;
the third day he rose from the dead;
he ascended into heaven;
and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost;
the holy catholic church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting. Amen.

THE NICENE CREED

I believe in one God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds [God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the prophets. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE CHALCEDONIAN DEFINITION

We, then, following the holy fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only Begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and Only Begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the creed of the holy fathers has handed down to us.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

1. Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith.
2. Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.
3. And the catholic faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in unity,
4. neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.
5. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost;
6. but the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.
7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.
8. The Father uncreate: the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate.
9. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.
10. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal.
11. And yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal.
12. As also there are not three uncreated, nor three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.
13. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty.

14. And yet they are not three Almighty's, but one Almighty.
15. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.
16. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.
17. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord.
18. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord.
19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord,
20. so are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.
21. The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten.
22. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created but begotten.
23. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding.
24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.
25. And in this Trinity none is afore or after another; none is greater or less than another,
26. but the whole three persons are coeternal and coequal.
27. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped.
28. He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.
29. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
30. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man.

31. God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man, of the substance of his mother, born in the world.

32. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting,

33. equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood.

34. Who although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ.

35. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.

36. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.

38. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.

39. He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

40. From whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

41. At whose coming all men shall rise again in their bodies,

42. and shall give account for their own works.

43. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

44. This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

II.
THE WESTMINSTER
STANDARDS

THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH (1647, 1936)

Chapter I: *Of the Holy Scripture*

1. Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable (Rom. 2:14–15; 1:19–20; Ps. 19:1–3; Rom. 1:32–2:1); yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation (1 Cor. 1:21; 2:13–14).¹ Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church (Heb. 1:1); and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing (Prov. 22:19–21; Luke 1:3–4; Rom. 15:4; Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Isa. 8:19–20): which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary (2 Tim. 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:19); those former ways of God’s revealing his will unto his people being now ceased (Heb. 1:1–2).²

2. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testaments [or Testament], which are these:

1 John 17:3†.

2 John 20:31†; 1 Cor. 14:37†; 1 John 5:13†; 1 Cor. 10:11†; Heb. 2:2–4†.

Of the Old Testament:

Genesis	II Chronicles	Daniel
Exodus	Ezra	Hosea
Leviticus	Nehemiah	Joel
Numbers	Esther	Amos
Deuteronomy	Job	Obadiah
Joshua	Psalms	Jonah
Judges	Proverbs	Micah
Ruth	Ecclesiastes	Nahum
I Samuel	The Song of Songs	Habakkuk
II Samuel	Isaiah	Zephaniah
I Kings	Jeremiah	Haggai
II Kings	Lamentations	Zechariah
I Chronicles	Ezekiel	Malachi

Of the New Testament:

The Gospels according to Matthew	Galatians	The Epistle of James
Mark	Ephesians	The first and second Epistles
Luke	Philippians	of Peter
John	Colossians	The first, second, and third Epistles
The Acts of the Apostles	Thessalonians I	of John
Paul's Epistles to the Romans	Thessalonians II	The Epistle of Jude
Corinthians I	to Timothy I	The Revelation
Corinthians II	to Timothy II	of John
	to Titus	
	to Philemon	
	The Epistle to the Hebrews	

All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life (Luke 16:29, 31; Eph. 2:20; Rev. 22:18–19; 2 Tim. 3:16).³

3 Luke 24:27, 44†; John 5:46–47†.

3. The books commonly called Apocrypha, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the Scripture, and therefore are of no authority in the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved, or made use of, than other human writings (Luke 24:27, 44; Rom. 3:2; 2 Pet. 1:21).⁴

4. The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed, and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God (2 Pet. 1:19, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 John 5:9; 1 Thess. 2:13).⁵

5. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture (1 Tim. 3:15). And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts (1 John 2:20, 27; John 16:13–14; 1 Cor. 2:10–12; Isa. 59:21).⁶

6. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions

4 Rev. 22:18–19†.

5 Rev. 1:1–2†.

6 Heb. 4:12†; John 10:35†; Isa. 55:11†; Rom. 11:36†; Ps. 19:7–11†; 1 Tim. 3:15†; 1 Cor. 2:4–5†; 1 Thess. 1:5†.

of men (2 Tim. 3:15–17; Gal. 1:8–9; 2 Thess. 2:2). Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word (John 6:45; 1 Cor. 2:9–10, 12):⁷ and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed (1 Cor. 11:13–14; 14:26, 40).

7. All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all (2 Pet. 3:16): yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of Scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them (Ps. 119:105, 130).⁸

8. The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, by his singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical (Matt. 5:18);⁹ so as, in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal to them (Isa. 8:20; Acts 15:15; John 5:39, 46).¹⁰ But, because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto, and interest in the Scriptures, and are commanded, in the fear of God, to read and search them (John 5:39),¹¹ therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto

7 Eph. 1:18†; 2 Cor. 4:6†.

8 Deut. 29:29†; 30:10–14†; Acts 17:11†.

9 Ps. 119:89†.

10 Matt. 15:3, 6†; Luke 16:31†.

11 Acts 17:11†; Rev. 1:3†; 2 Tim. 3:14–15†.

which they come (1 Cor. 14:6, 9, 11–12, 24, 27–28),¹² that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner (Col. 3:16);¹³ and, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, may have hope (Rom. 15:4).

9. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly (2 Pet. 1:20–21; Acts 15:15–16).¹⁴

10. The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture (Matt. 22:29, 31; Eph. 2:20; Acts 28:25).¹⁵

Chapter II: *Of God, and of the Holy Trinity*

1. There is but one only (Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6),¹⁶ living, and true God (1 Thess. 1:9; Jer. 10:10), who is infinite in being and perfection (Job 11:7–9; 26:14),¹⁷ a most pure spirit (John 4:24), invisible (1 Tim. 1:17),¹⁸ without body, parts (Deut. 4:15–16; John 4:24; Luke 24:39), or passions (Acts 14:11, 15); immutable (Jas. 1:17; Mal. 3:6), immense (1 Kgs. 8:27; Jer. 23:23–24), eternal (Ps. 90:2; 1 Tim. 1:17), incomprehensible (Ps. 145:3),¹⁹ almighty (Gen. 17:1; Rev. 4:8), most wise (Rom. 16:27), most holy (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8), most free (Ps. 115:3),²⁰ most absolute

12 Matt. 28:19–20†; Mark 15:34†.

13 Exod. 20:4–6†; Matt. 15:7–9†.

14 John 5:46†.

15 1 John 4:1–6†.

16 Gal. 3:20†.

17 Ps. 139:6†.

18 John 1:18†.

19 Rom. 11:34†.

20 Isa. 14:24†.

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