

Creeds & Confessions

Their Value and Use In the Church

What are Creeds & Confessions?

Creed:



A brief doctrinal statement that focuses on the essentials of the faith.

This is what Christians should believe.

Creeds have been used and developed by the church throughout its history, but are also found in the Bible itself. One of the first creeds found in the Bible is Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which proclaims who God is and our duty before him. One New Testament example is I Timothy 3:16.

Confess means to acknowledge and express agreement with. We speak of confessing our sins, or agreeing that we have committed sins against a holy God. We also speak of confessing our faith, or agreeing with a series of statements that we think faithfully expresses our faith.

Confession:



A thorough doctrinal statement that addresses many subjects in order to distinguish one group of Christians from another.

This is what a particular group of Christians believes.

Everyone . . .



Has a creed

By nature humans are creedal. We have specific, foundational beliefs, though we do not always express them. Answer the question, “What is a Christian?” and you have expressed a creed.

And has a confession

We also have a wide range of beliefs. We recognize that not all Christians believe the same things, and yet we believe they are still Christians even with a diverse set of beliefs. These further beliefs are our confessions.

Even "no creed but the Bible" and "no creed but Christ" are creedal statements. These statements express someone's core beliefs, yet such statements leave too many essential beliefs unexplained.

Objection #1

Creeds and confessions cause division.

By design creeds and confessions cause both unity and division. Creeds generally separate Christians from non-Christians while uniting all Christians together. Confessions help Christians with similar beliefs align more closely together for the work of the ministry and the health of the local church.

Creeds & Confessions

ARE STANDARDS

Creedal Standards

01

Since creeds are intended to express the most essential beliefs of the Christian faith, they act as a basic standard of belief for all Christians.

Confessions generally act as standards of belief and practice for an individual church or a group of churches, showcasing unity around their distinct beliefs.

02

Confessional Standards

Agreement

03

We *subscribe*, or express agreement with, specific creeds and confessions. Churches and denominations vary in how much agreement they expect from their leaders and members.

Correct! Since it is God's own Word, the Bible is the standard by which all other standards are judged. A creed or confession is only a faithful standard if it accurately expresses the teaching of the Bible.

Objection #2

**The Bible is
our standard.**

Benefits of Creeds & Confessions



Clarify Doctrine

Acts as a compass for church leaders;
Offers a consistent teaching tool for leaders;
Promotes depth in understanding God's Word.
See Titus 2:1; Heb 5:11-6:2; Jude 3



Safeguard Doctrine

Distinguishes truth from heresy;
Directs theological accountability;
Restrains the "solo Christian" mentality.
See Hosea 4:6; I Tim 4:16; Titus 1:9



Guide Local Church Life

Provides guidelines for polity and practice;
Promotes stability amidst theological drift;
Encourages doctrinal development.
See II Tim 4:1-4; Col 3:16; Matt 28:19-20



Develop Unity

Unifies teaching across generations;
Offers a teaching tool to pass on the faith;
Promotes growth in knowledge and faith.
See Eph 4:11-14; I Pet 3:8

Historic Creeds

Some creeds have been widely accepted since the first five centuries of the post-New Testament church. Developed by faithful servants of God for doctrinal clarity and use within the local church, nearly all Christians recognize these statements as faithful summaries of the most basic teachings of God's Word. These creeds are still used both in teaching and worship.

Apostles Creed

Developed between the 2nd and 4th centuries, this creed was used to teach candidates for baptism the basics of Christianity, and then as their initial profession of faith.

Nicene Creed

Constructed at the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople, the Nicene Creed builds upon the Apostles Creed to give further detail about the nature of God, and in particular of the Son.

Athanasian Creed

The Athanasian Creed likely formed in the late 5th or early 6th centuries, and was likely not written by Athanasius. It faithfully explains the doctrine of the Trinity as a defense against such heresies as Arianism.

Definition of Chalcedon

Formed at the Council of Chalcedon in AD451, this creed sets up guardrails around how we understand the incarnation of God the Son.

Example

Confessions

Confessions of Faith have been written in every period of church history. Those most well-known today were written during the Reformation and immediate years following.



The Three Forms of Unity

Consisting of the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dort, these statements unite many Dutch and other continental European churches.



Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion

Completed in 1571, these thirty-nine statements are the historic statement of faith and practice of the Anglican Church.



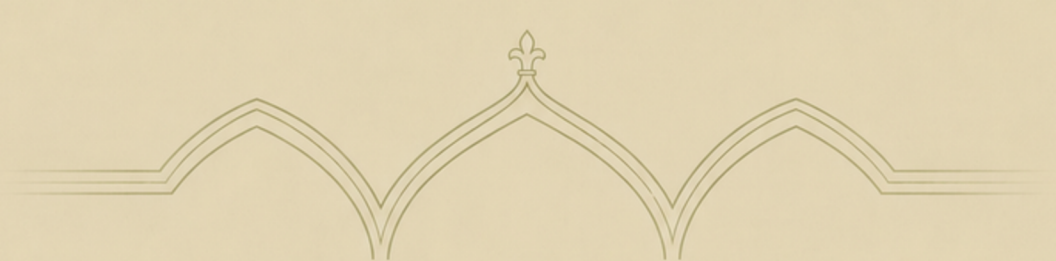
English Reformed Confessions

The Westminster Confession of Faith (Presbyterian), Savoy Declaration of Faith (Congregationalist), and 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith are all closely related together.



A Modern Confession

The Whitefield Declaration of Faith, built upon the 17th Century English Reformed Confessions, is the official confession of the Whitefield League.



A Resource From



whitefieldcc.com

The 
& Whitefield
League

whitefieldleague.com

