

History and Survey of the Westminster Confession of Faith

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Part 1: History, Context, and Rationale Class 6: What about “No Creed but Christ”? October 18, 2020

Argument from Ron Graham, simplybible.com

Creed (Noun) from Latin *credo* (I believe) – A form of words which members of a denomination consent to and *confess* (hence a creed may be called *a confession of faith*)

Those who are “simply Christians” are satisfied with the words of Jesus

Lk. 12:8 – “whoever acknowledges me before men, ... “

Surely, that is enough for a good confession.

What need do we have of any more complicated confession than this?

1 Tim. 6:12 – “your good confession”

Timothy had faith, access to eternal life. What more could he want?

If we do not write out our own creeds or confessions of faith,

then we will not be guilty of dividing Christians from Christians.

Binding ourselves to a denominational creed inhibits us

from examining the Bible for ourselves

and making them our only rule of faith.

The Scriptures state about themselves:

2 Tim. 3:15-17 – Scr.s are able to make one wise for salvation

and that all Scripture (alone) is God-breathed,

and by them, the man of God can be thoroughly equipped

for every good work.

Lk. 8:12 – The seed (of the parable of the Sower) is the Word of God.

1 Peter 1:23 – The seed is imperishable – the living and enduring Word of God.

Heb. 4:12 – The Word of God is living and active.

Eph. 6:17 – The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God

Is any denominational creed the “seed of the kingdom” or “the sword of the Spirit”?

Let us use that Word as our rule of faith

and let us be satisfied with the confession of faith in Jesus Christ our Lord

and in that way be simply Christians.

Why creeds are not only useful but also necessary to the church,
from The Creedal Imperative, by Carl Trueman

1. All Christians have a creed or confession.
 - 2 Tim. 3:16-17 cannot be employed to those who are “simply Christian”.
Not only doctrine but hermeneutics is involved in belief.
Ex.: Rev. 20:6-7 – Do we divide on our interpretation of this?
Who says we interpret the difficult passages
according to the more readily understood passages?
 - a) The use of a confession is consistent with the Bible’s own teaching.
When we see summaries of belief being readily made in Scripture
in order to bind the church together & to define/exclude others
are we not compelled to do the same?
Even the intent of Scriptural creeds is the same – unity of faith/practice.
 - b) Once the creed or confession is in the public domain,
the teaching of Scripture can be protected.
 - 1) The creed or confession can be clearly placed below Scripture.
 - 2) The creed or confession can curb wild interpretations of Scripture.
 - 3) The creed or confession can assure the integrity
of the minister’s preaching and teaching.
2. Creeds and Confessions offer succinct summaries of the faith.
 - a) They focus the church’s mind on the ‘main thing’.
 - b) They remind us that ‘main things’ are timeless.
 - c) They need an amount of necessary complexity
in order to be theologically stable.
3. Creeds and Confessions are a means of preventing churches
from descending into cults.
“Every heretic has his text.” (Richard Gaffin)
4. Creeds and Confessions allow for a distinction of maturity
between members and office-bearers.
5. Creeds and Confessions represent a higher doctrinal aspiration.
6. Creeds and Confessions relativize the present.
 - a) They have survived the test of time.
 - b) They prove to be profoundly counter-cultural.

Creeds and Confessions serve the four basic tasks of the church:

Ian Hamilton

Worshipping

Witnessing

Teaching

Guarding the Truth

J.I. Packer

Doxological

Declarative

Didactic

Disciplinary