



Covenant

DNA of Christ's Disciple



Times

4 Oct 2020

Exploring the Reformed Tradition

The Reformed tradition is commonly known by a single touchpoint - the emphasis of God's sovereignty over human free will, contra Arminianism. Often, this concern is summarised and simplified into a bare framework, such as the 5 points of Calvinism (which was not mentioned by Calvin or any of the other early Reformers).

This is unfortunate, as the thought of the Reformers (and there are many of them besides John Calvin) covered a broad range of topics, and held notable distinctions from one another. A good way to explore the Reformed tradition is through their articles of faith - their catechisms and confessions. These are readily available online to anyone.

Catechisms serve as a denomination's summary of the key principles of the Christian religion, in question & answer format. These are often written simply and clearly, meant as a tool for teaching new believers. Confessions articulate the theological foundations of the denomination, and tend to be more technical in its language. By stating the fundamental shared beliefs, confessions enabled churches to gather around what is deemed essential, and not split or contend over secondary matters.

The key articles of faith for Presbyterian Churches across the world are the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF), and the Larger and Shorter Catechism. The WCF was produced in 1646 by the Westminster Assembly in London, to be a confession for the Church of England. The Larger/Shorter Catechisms were written by the same group of theologians, pastors and laymen, and completed in 1647.

The Larger/Shorter Catechism is best known for the opening segment:

Q. 1. What is the chief end of man?

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

During this unusual time when we cannot come together for worship, we can still be part of a worshipping community. We invite you to join us at our pre-recorded worship service at this website <https://www.cplink.org.sg/>. We hope you can also connect with our Life Groups. Please contact one of our Pastoral Staff if you like to join a Life Group. We are still meeting and connecting through various digital platforms.

Welcome!

We want to grow in Christlikeness through devotion and delight in God, nurturing devotion and delight in God, nurturing relationships and intentionally multiplying disciplinarians.

The three Westminster documents not only cover important theological concepts such as justification, sanctification, providence, the Trinity, and so on, but also practical issues such as church polity (how should a Reformed church be structured), Christian living (through an exposition on the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer), and the sacraments (what does Baptism and the Lord's Supper mean).

Another set of confessions/catechisms worth checking out is the 'Three Forms of Unity', which reflect the core values of continental Calvinism - such as the Swiss and Dutch Reformed church – these are the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism.

The Heidelberg Catechism in particular is great for devotional reading by lay Christians, being both simple yet profound, and a comforting and wise guide into understanding the whole sweep of Scriptures. Here is one gem from this document, its first point.

1 Q. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

A. That I am not my own, but belong — body and soul, in life and in death — to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven; in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

~ ~ Pr Lionel Neo ~ ~

Book of 1 Samuel

Creeds and Confessions: Biblical and Beneficial

Despite claims that the creeds and confessions are unbiblical, that they are merely Roman Catholic traditions, or that they stifle the Spirit of God in the life of God's people, they are, in fact, biblical and beneficial. Let's look briefly at these two traits.

Biblical

First, creeds and confessions are biblical. This is illustrated by the fact that the Old Testament people of God confessed their faith every morning and evening with the words of Deuteronomy 6:4, the basic confession of the Old Testament: *"Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God: the LORD is one."* We also learn that the Israelites confessed their faith in this one God when they publicly worshiped Him at the tabernacle and temple in response to His blessings of salvation (Deut. 26:1-11).

We also encounter many creeds and confessions throughout the New Testament, as the coming of the Son of God in human flesh prompted the people of God to give fuller expression to their beliefs. Peter confessed Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). This was the basic creed of the New Testament. Paul went on to elaborate on this in places such as 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, where he summarized the faith of the church in this creed: *"Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures ... he was buried ... he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."* In the previously referenced Ephesians 4:4-6, Paul gave what many scholars believe to be a creed that was recited when a new convert was baptized: *"There is one body and one Spirit ... one hope ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father."* One last example of a New Testament creed is 1 Timothy 3:16, where Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy, saying, *"Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."*

While these texts from the Old and the New Testament are not as extensive as the creeds that were written by the ancient church fathers or the confessions of the Reformation, they show that there was a basic body of belief that the people of God confessed as the truth. Based on this fact, the church fathers and Reformers expressed the truth of the Word in their contexts in order to make clear what they believed.

Thus, creeds and confessions are not statements of stuffy "dead orthodox" churches or Roman Catholic churches. Instead, Christians throughout the millennia have written and recited creeds to express the faith that lived in their hearts. The Bible teaches us that, as the people of God, we have something to confess to the world. The slogan **"No creed but Christ"** actually hinders the church because, as one writer has said, *"A creedless church cannot long exist."* Without something to confess, our faith is empty and meaningless to a world in need of Christ and the answers He gives to our lives.

Beneficial

Not only are creeds and confessions biblical, following the scriptural pattern of expressing core beliefs, they are beneficial in many ways.

According to the New Testament, the church is to be unified. Paul speaks of glorifying God *“with one voice,” “standing firm in one spirit,”* and *“with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel”* (Rom. 15:5-6; Phil. 1:27).

The church also needs a clear standard of truth. Because the church has ever existed amid false doctrines and philosophies, under the threat of being *“tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine”* (Eph. 4:14), it needs to be taught the essential truths of the Word of God; in that way, it can better *“contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3). For this reason, Paul preached *“the whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27) and spoke of Gentile Romans who were slaves to sin coming to be *“obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed”* (Rom. 6:17).

Paul also wrote to Timothy that he should *“follow the pattern of the sound words”* (2 Tim. 1:13). The creeds and confessions of the church can help in carrying out all of these mandates by establishing a common confession of the faith.

The creeds and confessions are also beneficial because they provide a public standard for church discipline. They provide an objective standard to evaluate teaching and protect members from being excommunicated and shunned without any biblical steps of reconciliation simply because of personal differences or disagreements with the pastor. They are also useful in witnessing to the truth of the Word of God to those outside the church.

The creeds and confessions are the official public faith of the Reformed churches. To fully answer the question, “What is a Reformed church?” you must read our historical creeds and confessions. A simple summary, such as provided in *Welcome to a Reformed Church*, cannot do full justice to the breadth of the Reformed faith, but can only introduce you to major emphases.

This excerpt is taken from *Welcome to a Reformed Church* by Daniel Hyde.

<https://ethosinstitute.sg/creeds-and-confessions/>



MISSION COLLECTION FOR OCTOBER

Kindly note this Sunday's mission collection, we are collecting for Sri Lanka TNET. Below are the prayer requests from Ps Sudarman:

- 1) Pray for all the Pastors in TNET centres, for those attending the class and also the coaches that they will persevere through.
- 2) Next year they are planning to start other new centres (S-curve in South) and pray that God will prepare the hearts of the Pastors in that region and there will be good responses for this training.
- 3) In 2021, there is a plan to start 20 of the 3G centres. To pray for the successful opening of these centres.
- 4) Pray for the smooth collection of the course fees from students and that the students will be committed.
- 5) Pray for all the Pastors in TNET that they will complete their assignments of training two church planters and plant new churches in places where there is no church and to disciple their churches to finish the Great Commission.
- 6) Pray that the financial needs in area of travelling and accommodation expenses of the trainers going to South and East to start new centres will be met.

The QR code and UEN no. for mission collection shown here below.

MISSION COLLECTION

Account Name: **COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH-MC**

UEN No.: **T12SS0164DMIC**

Bank Account: **025-905374-0**



October 2020

Please indicate ***ONLY*** the Mission Collection Code here:

TNET



GIVING

Kindly take note of the separate bank accounts for Tithing and Offering.

TITHING



Please key in your tithing number at the reference section. If you are unsure of or do not a tithing number, you may drop us an email at the church website. under “Request” tab and we will get back to you.

INTERNET TRANSFER

DBS Current Account: 025-905375-8

Account name: Covenant Presbyterian Church - Tith

UEN no. **T12SS0164DTTH**

OFFERING



Please key in only the alphabet at the reference section as follows :

*“E” for English Service
“C” for Chinese Service
“SL” for Sri Lankan Service*

INTERNET TRANSFER

DBS Current Account: 033-016873-0

Account name: Covenant Presbyterian Church

UEN no. **T12SS0164D**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ✝ **Adult & Child Baptism, Confirmation and Transfer-in** on **25 Dec**. Schedule of membership class will be announced closer to date. You may register at the church office or send an email to Hope@cplink.org.sg or Hazel@cplink.org.sg
- ✝ **CPC Prayer Meeting** (Fresh Fire) next Fri, 9 Oct @ 8pm.
Meeting ID : 298 108 8560
Password: 2768768



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Pastoral Staff

Rev Keith Lai
Rev Abel Lee
Rev Dr Henry Wong
Rev Christina Ong
Ps Lai Mui Fong
Pr Chin Yoke Fen
Pr Lionel Neo
Ps Susantha

Sri Lankan Service

Rev Christina Ong / Ps Susantha

Chinese Service

Rev Abel Lee / Pr Chin Yoke Fen

CareWorks Community Services

Rev Dr Henry Wong

Gladiolus Place

Michelle Tan

Ministry Team Leaders

Creche
Kong Soh Lian

Children
Pr Lionel Neo

Youth and Young Adult (YaYA)
Rev Abel Lee (ad interim)
Aruneeporn Ng
Audrey Wong

Young Working Adult & Young Married
Rev Dr Henry Wong

Adults & Seniors
Rev Keith Lai/ Ps Lai Mui Fong

Hospitality
Jenny Ho

Worship
Arthur Lim

Missions
Ho Chung Tat

Prayer
Rev Dr Henry Wong

Freedom & Wholeness
Alfred & Jenny Koay

GB / BB
Pr Lionel Neo

Chinese Seniors Alpha Course
Pr Chin Yoke Fen

Day Alone with the Lord
Ps Lai Mui Fong