

## **26. Postscript: What is the purpose of a confession of faith?**

### **1. Introduction: “no creed but the Bible...?”**

HT: Carl Trueman, *The credal imperative*

### **2. A problem: our generation regards creeds and confessions with suspicion...**

#### **The past is devalued**

- Science’s built-in narrative of progress
- Technology favours the young over the old
- Consumerism is addicted to novelty, and opposed to the past
- “Human nature” has disappeared

**Words are rejected – in favour of subjectivism and pragmatism**

**Anti-authoritarianism & the fear of exclusion**

### **3. The Biblical basis for creeds and confessions**

**Words communicate truth!**

**Human nature is universal**

See Romans 5:12-21, 1 Corinthians 15

**The church is an institution whose leaders and members are bound by sound doctrine**

2 Timothy 2:2, Romans 10:9-10, Romans 16:17, 1 Corinthians 3:1

**The Bible assumes the necessity of creeds and confessions: the form of sound words**

2 Timothy 1:13, “Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”

Scripture remains supreme authority = WCF 1:10 “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.”

## 4. Creeds and confessions in church history

### The early church

The Rule of Faith  
The Apostles' Creed  
The Nicene Creed, Chalcedonian Definition, and Athanasian Creed

### Classical Protestant confessions

The Anglican Articles (→ The 39 Articles of 1571/1662)  
The Lutheran Book of Concord (adopted in 1580)  
The Three Forms of Unity:  
    = Belgic Confession (1561), Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Canons of Dordt (1619)  
The Westminster Standards (1647)  
The Baptist Confession (1689 / 1677)

- Not doing something new...
- Consensus on Trinity, basics of salvation
- Some differences... unavoidably...
  - A church *needs* to take a position on certain things
  - Church elders need to subscribe to a *particular* confession

## 5. The usefulness of creeds and confessions

**They help us in corporate praise**

**They are unavoidable! All churches and Christians have a creed!**

**They delimit the power of the church**

**They offer short and thorough summaries of the faith**

**They tell church members what is expected of church elders**

**They relativise the present**

**They transparently define one church in relation to another**

**They are tools for unity in the body**

## 6. How to learn more...

*The Westminster Confession of Faith* there's a nice "leather" Pocket Puritan edition on Amazon!

Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Confessing the faith: a reader's guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith*

Carl Trueman, *The Credal Imperative* see also my summary notes

Carl Trueman – three highly recommended video lectures:

- 1 = the challenges facing the church today = <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REO5yzJffK8>
- 2 = on biblical preaching = <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Ua-urF2SWA>
- 3 = on creeds and confessions = <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrjuSI7fwLM>