

Westminster Confession

1. Why Are We Confessional Christians?

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your friendly neighborhood historian

Slides/Recordings: billpetro.com/highplains



Church History: *Westminster Confession*

Presentations for the *High Plains Fellowship Church*

Fall 2025, by [Bill Petro](#)

Updated 11/08/25

 Signifies audio recording

- Signifies the author's articles for *further reading*

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>Click link below for PDF</u>
Nov 9	1. Westminster: Why Are We a Confessional Church?  Recording: Nov-9_Confessional Westminster Abbey, London	Confessional
Nov 23	2. Continental Reformed: Three Forms of Unity  Recording: Nov-23_Continental-Reformed	Continental Reformed
Nov 30	3. Westminster Confession  Recording: Nov-30_Westminster-Confession	Westminster Confession

Slides

Articles

Have You Ever Heard...

What do You Believe?



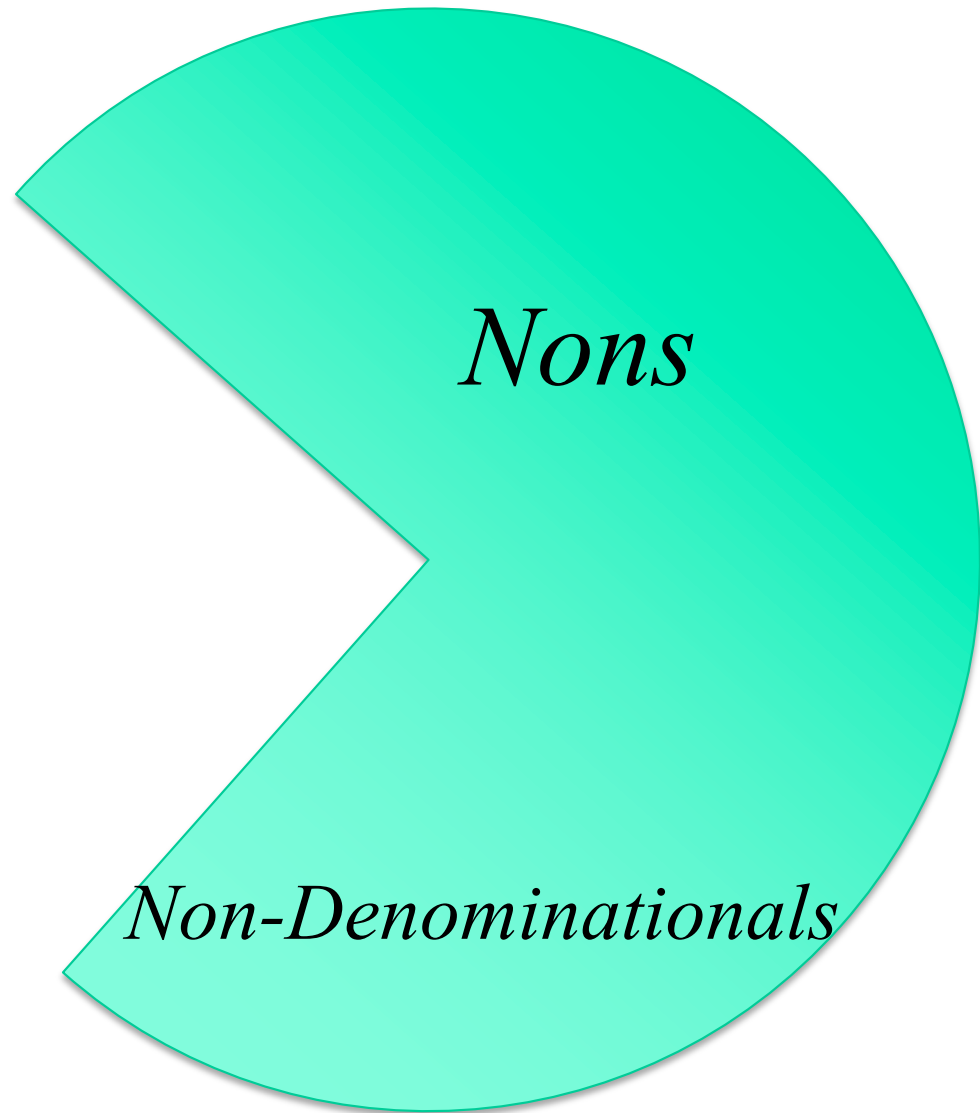
I believe
just the
Bible



I subscribe
to the
Confession

Why the Division?

What is the largest
American
Denomination?



“Just the Bible”

Pros:

- Sounds noble
- Hides what they believe...
in a post-Biblical country

Cons:

- No idea what they believe
- No doctrinal clarity
- Cults “believe” Bible.

“Subscribe to Confession”

Pros:

- No Christian simply believes the Bible
- Declares important non-negotiables of their faith:
 - Trinity
 - Deity of Christ
 - Baptism mode
 - Church Government

Cons:

- Differentiates
- Instinctive suspicion among some Protestants
- *Sola Scriptura?*

“Evangelical” Christians?

UK

- 47% “Christian”
- 10% attend *regularly*
- 0.7% biblical faith in Jesus

America

- 25-33% “Evangelical”
- 41% attend *monthly*
- 33% attend *regularly*
- 20% attend *weekly*.

“It’s not *if* a church affirms a creed,
but *which* creed they affirm.”

Are Creeds and Confessions *Biblical*?

- OT: Deuteronomy 6:4 “Shema”

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”

- NT: 1Tim. 1:15; 3:16; Phil. 2:5-11.

Paul’s emphasis on faithful adherence to the form of apostolic teaching also reflects this.

Creeds

Credo = “*I believe*”

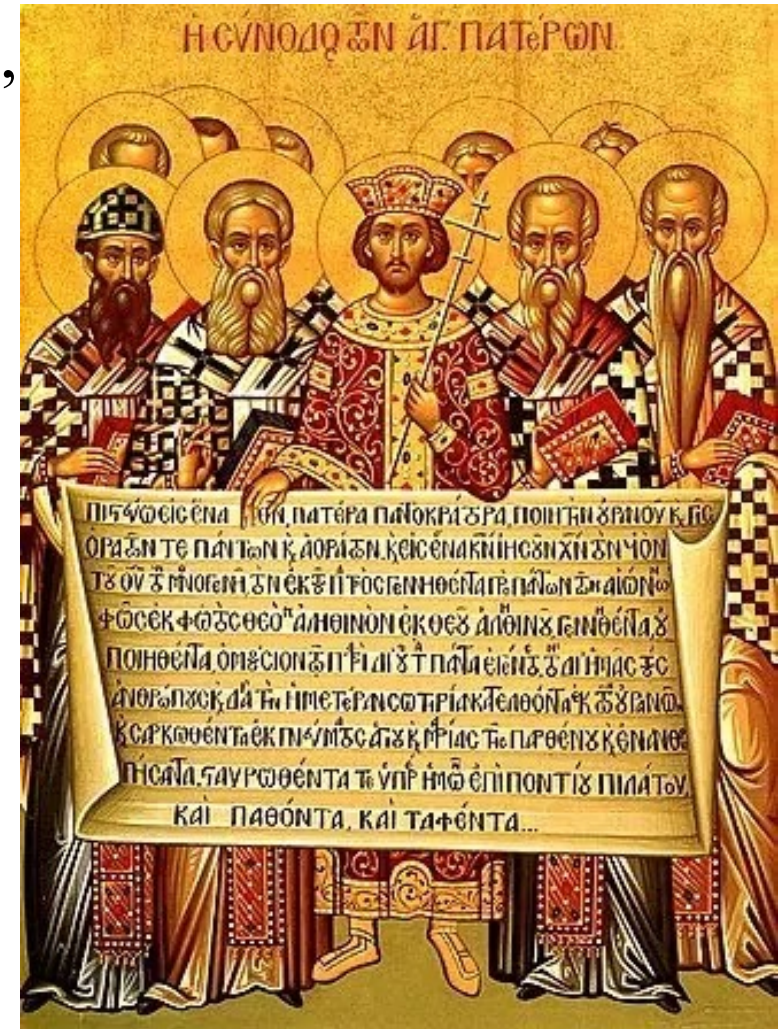
- Memoizable statement of faith
- Combat early heresies in the church.

Early Heresies

- **Nicaea (325):** which rejected *Arianism*

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 his Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made,
of one substance with the Father...
- And I believe in the **Holy Ghost**,
the Lord, the giver of life...
- And I believe in one **holy catholic** [universal] and apostolic
Church...



Early Heresies

- **Nicaea (325):** which rejected *Arianism*
- **Ephesus I (431)** which rejected *Nestorianism*

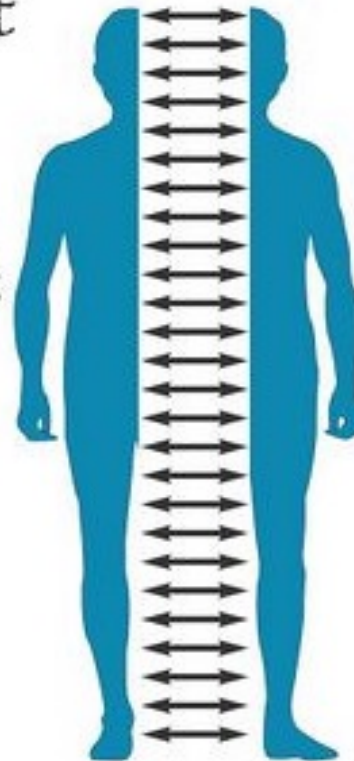
Nestorianism

Nestorianism
(A Divided Christ: Denial of Unity)

Christ

DIVINE
NATURE

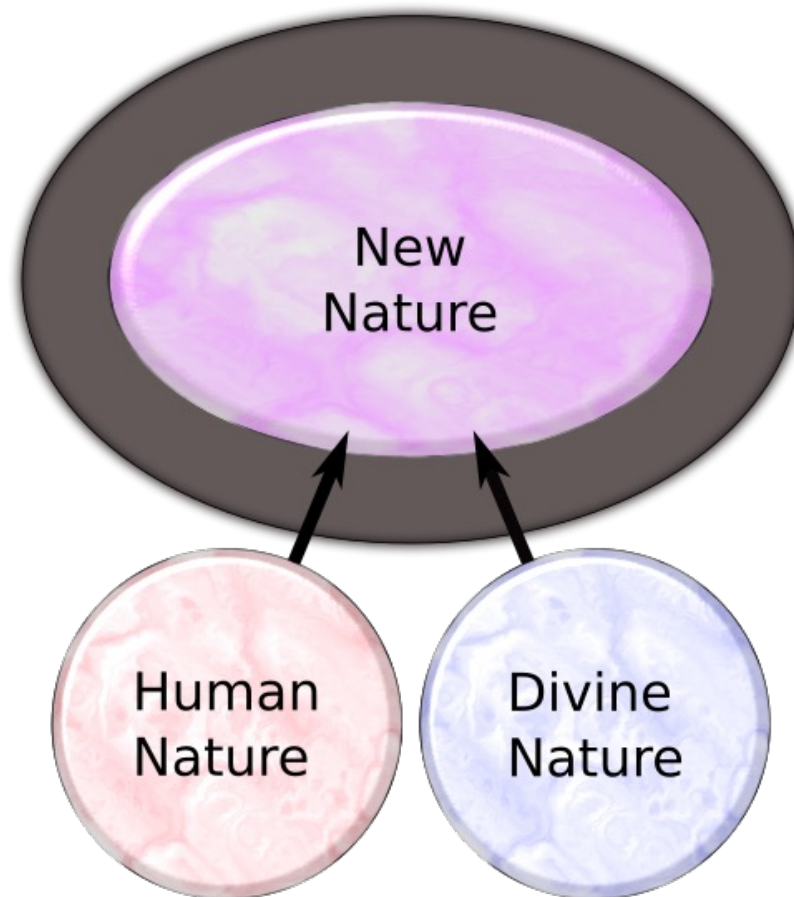
HUMAN
NATURE



Early Heresies

- **Nicaea (325):** which rejected *Arianism*
- **Ephesus I (431)** which rejected *Nestorianism*
- **Chalcedon (451)** which rejected *Eutychianism*, established one person/two natures language as normative for Christology

Eusebianism



Early Heresies

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- **Chalcedon (451)** which rejected *Eutychianism*, established one person/two natures language as normative for Christology
- **Constantinople II (553)** which broadened the condemnation of *Nestorianism*, adopted the Theopaschite formula.

The Reformation produced more elaborate and comprehensive Confessions and Catechisms.

What are Confessions?

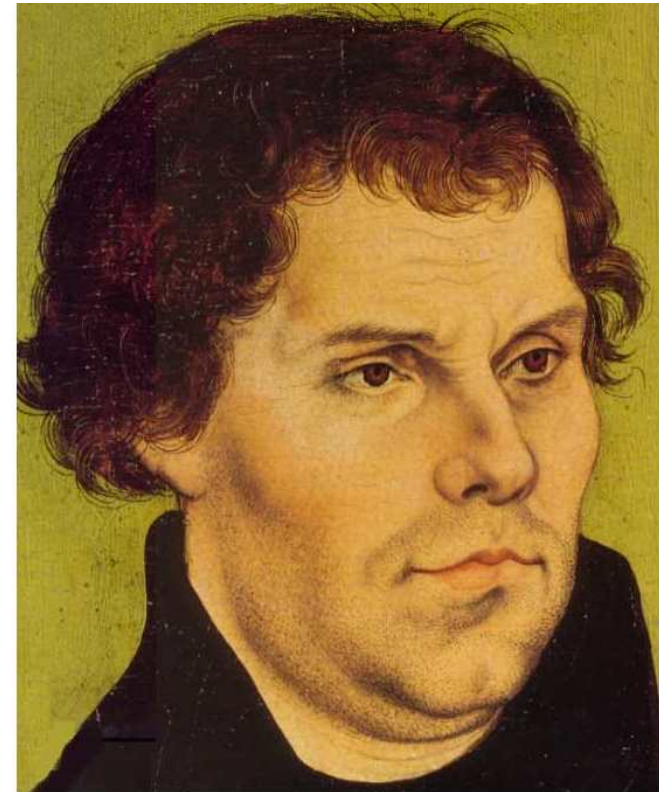
- Concise summaries of what churches believe.

What are Catechisms?

- **katécheó**, which means "to instruct" or "to teach orally."
- *Catechesis* = question and answer
- Summary or exposition of doctrine, for religious instruction. An introduction to fundamental Christian truths, formulated in a way that facilitates understanding.

What are the *Other* Confessions?

- Martin Luther – *Lutheran*
- **1529 Large and Small Catechisms**
 - Large: for Adults and Clergy
 - Small: for Children
- “*Though the church rests on Scripture alone, the need for corporate confession is essential.*” – Martin Luther.



Lutheran: Augsburg Confession

- **1530 Augsburg Confession**
- **Phillip Melancthon**
to clarify
Lutheranism to
Charles V, Holy
Roman Emperor.



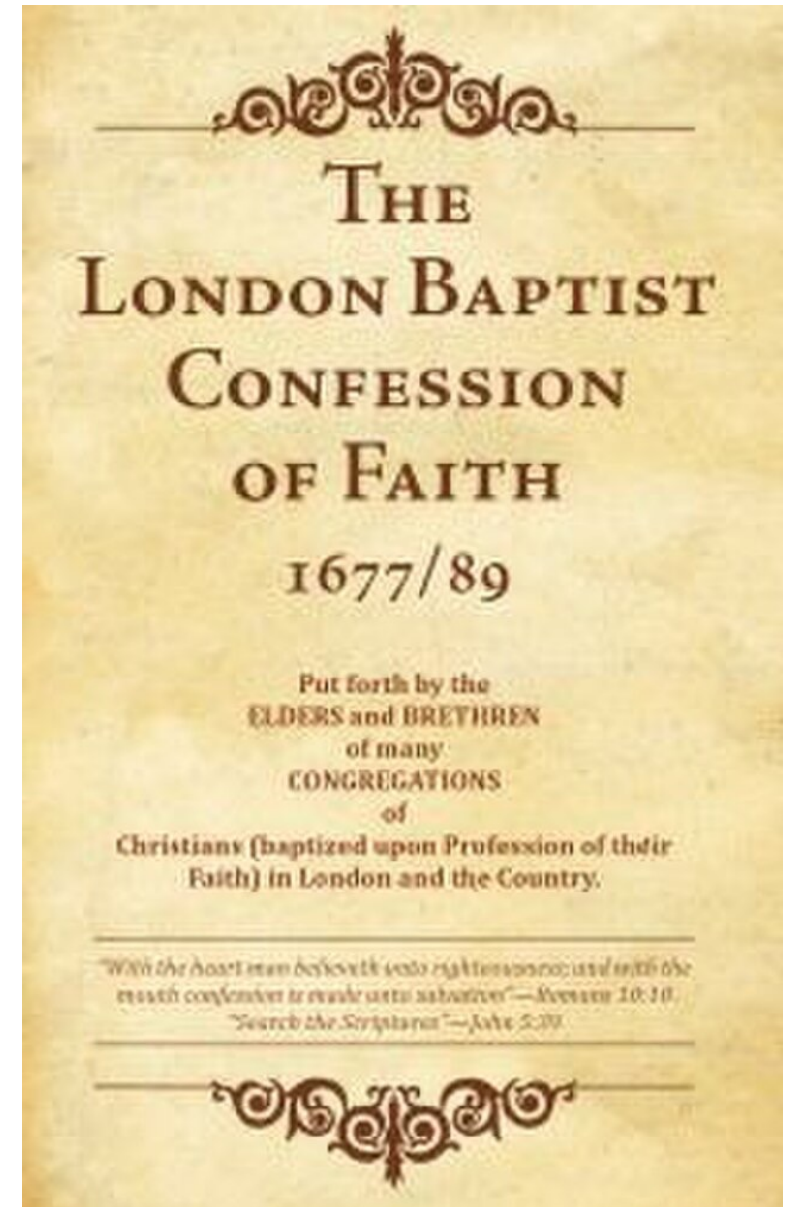
Ulrick Zwingli – *Reformed*

- 1523 **67 Articles Zurich**
- 1528 **Ten Theses of Berne**
- 1534 **First Confession of Basel**
- 1559 **French Confession of Faith**
- 1560 **Scots Confession**



Baptists

- **1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith**
 - Committed to Reformed doctrine but *differed* with Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Dutch Calvinists in terms of their **church government** and rejection of **paedobaptism**.



Next Time: Three Forms of Unity

Continental Reformed:

1. Heidelberg Catechism

2. Belgic Confession

3. Canons of Dort (TULIP)

- Not a unity of authorship but of witness to Reformed principles.

Summary

- Creed “I believe”
- Catechism Q&A Learning
- Confession Summary