



ECO

A Covenant Order
of Evangelical
Presbyterians

Understanding the Confessions

The Westminster Standards



The Westminster Standards

The Westminster
Confession of
Faith

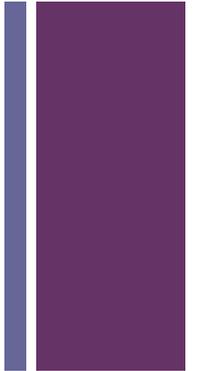
The Westminster
Shorter Catechism

The Westminster
Larger Catechism



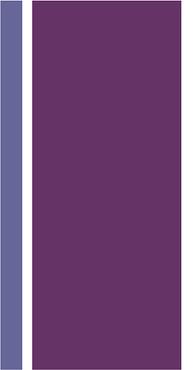
+ History and Significance

- 1643 – 1652: The Westminster Assembly
 - From 1643 to 1648, an average of seventy ministers regularly met at Westminster Abbey in London to draft an ecclesiastical system for the churches of England, Scotland and Ireland. The Westminster Assembly was an advisory body to England's Long Parliament.
 - Their work was an effort to balance theology, politics and the daily realities of godly living: all in the midst of a violent Civil War.
 - It had been originally called to give advice about reforming the worship, doctrine and church government of the Church of England and to revise the Thirty-Nine Articles which set out what the Church of England believed.
 - The main work of the Assembly was done in producing a number of very important documents
 - A form of church government
 - 1645: A Directory for the Worship of God replaced the Book of Common Prayer
 - 1646: A Confession of Faith
 - 1647: The Larger and Smaller Catechism for teaching Biblical truths



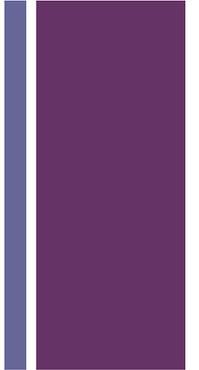
+ History and Significance

- The Westminster Standards are considered the most influential theological documents in the history of the Presbyterian Church
- The Confession and Catechisms have played a foundational role in defining the English-speaking stream of the Reformed theological tradition.
- In 1729 the Confession and Catechisms became the formal confession of faith of American Presbyterians when they were adopted by the Synod of Philadelphia.
- Despite the complex history of Presbyterian splits and reunions, they remained the doctrinal standard of the major Presbyterian denominations in America until the UPCUSA (or “northern Presbyterian Church”) embraced a new understanding of the role of confessions with the adoption of a Book of Confessions in 1967.
- The PCUS (or “southern Presbyterian Church”) continued to hold the Westminster Confession and Catechisms as its confessional standard until it merged with the UPCUSA to form the PC(USA) in 1983.



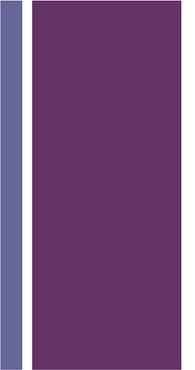
+ History and Significance

- The text of the Confession and Catechisms as found in the Book of Confessions reflects various amendments made in the course of American Presbyterian history.
 - The three most significant amendments to the Confession are:
 - the revisions of 1788 concerning the civil government's relationship to the church;
 - the amendments of 1903, which included the addition of new chapters on the Holy Spirit and Missions;
 - and the 1958 replacement of chapter 24 with a new statement on marriage and divorce.
- The Westminster Confession and Catechisms provide the organizing theme of the Essential Tenets of ECO, as reflected in the opening statement of the Essential Tenets, which quotes the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "The great purpose toward which each human life is drawn is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."



+ Distinctives

- The theology of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms reflects the characteristic emphases of the Reformed Tradition:
 - the authority of Scripture as the Word of God,
 - and the glory and sovereignty of God in creation and redemption.
- The primary distinctive teaching of the Westminster Standards, relative to other Reformed confessions, can be found in its covenant theology, which features a two-covenant schema for understanding God's relationship to humanity:
 - a “covenant of works” (prior to humanity's fall into sin)
 - and a “covenant of grace” through Christ, which spans the history of salvation in both the Old and New Testaments.

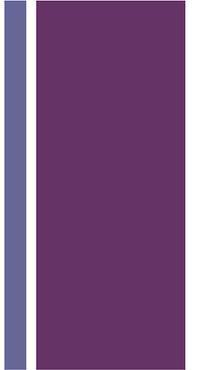


+ References for the Essential Tenets in the Book of Confessions

- **Glorifying and enjoying God are the end of human life** 7.001
Westminster Shorter Catechism (WSC) /7.111 Westminster Longer Catechism (WLC)
- **Jesus is the Word, that is, God's authoritative self-revelation.** 6.004
Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF)
- **The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the infallible and inspired Word of God, teaching all that is necessary for faith and life.**
6.005–006 WCF/ 7.002–003 WSC 7.113–115 WLC
- **God is Triune, that is, one being, three persons.** 6.013 WCF/ 7.006 WSC / 7.119 WLC
- **The Son is eternally begotten of the Father.** 6.013 WCF / 7.12 WLC
- **The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.** 6.013 WCF 7.12 WLC

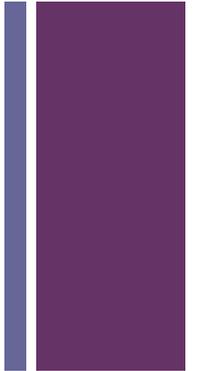


- **The three persons are consubstantial, coeternal, and coequal.** 6.013 WCF
- **God is infinite, eternal, immutable, impassible, ineffable, undivided, the source of goodness, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.** 6.011 WCF/ 7.117 WLC
- **The act of creation was for the sake of God's glory.** 6.022 WCF
- **Creation continues to be maintained by God's sovereignty and providence.** 6.024 WCF / 7.128 WLC
- **Human beings are made in God's image.** 6.023 WCF/ 7.01WSC/ 7.127 WLC
- **Jesus Christ is truly God and truly human.** 6.044–045 WCF /7.146 WLC
- **Jesus' two natures are distinct and distinguishable.** 6.044 WCF/ 7.148–150 WLC



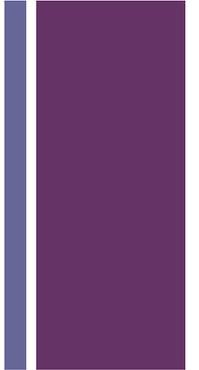


- **His divine nature is not limited, impaired, or changed by assuming our human nature.** 6.044 WCF
- **Jesus is ascended in his resurrected body and remains truly human.** 6.046 WCF/ 7.163 WLC
- **Jesus will return visibly in the body to judge the living and the dead.** 6.046 WCF/ 7.166 WLC
- **The Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to confess Jesus as Lord and God.** 6.053 WCF/ 7.089 WSC/ 7.169 WLC
- **God made the world good.** 6.022 WCF/ 7.009 WSC/ 7.125 WLC
- **Sin poisons all of human life.** 6.032 WCF /7.018 WSC/ 7.137–138 WLC
- **We are born dead in our sin; therefore, salvation must be at God's initiative.** 6.033 WCF/ 7.135 WLC
- **We are each deserving of eternal condemnation.** 6.036WCF/ 7.019 WSC/ 7.139 WLC
- **Jesus offered Himself for us on the cross, saving us from sin and death by bearing our punishment and by offering God the perfect obedience due to Him.** 6.043–050, 162 WCF/ 7.025 WSC/ 7.154 WLC



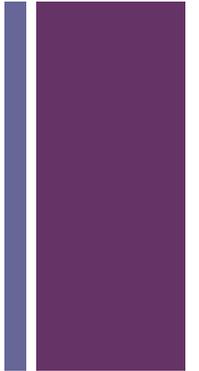


- **We are declared justified because of God's grace.** 6.07 WCF/ 7.033 WSC/ 7.181 WLC
- **Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father.** 6.058 WCF/ 7.021 WSC/ 7.146 WLC
- **God's love restores His image within us.** 7.035 WSC/ 7.185 WLC
- **We lost true freedom of the will in the Fall and cannot turn to God on our own. In Christ, our freedom is restored.** 6.061–062 WCF / 7.137, 195 WLC
- **God chooses us for Himself in grace before the foundation of the world, not because of any merit on our part, but only because of His love and mercy.** 6.018, 065 WCF / 7.02 WSC / 7.123, 177 WLC
- **Christ sends us into the world to make disciples, to care for the natural world, to claim all areas of culture in the name of Jesus, to serve the poor, feed the hungry, visit the prisoner, and defend the helpless.** ~6.187– 190 WCF
- **We are called to live out our faith within the covenant community of the church.** 6.147 WCF / 7.173 WLC
- **We must pray and work for the unity of the church throughout the world.** 7.293 WLC
- **God's grace is extended through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the faithful practice of mutual discipline.** 6.149–172 WCF/ 7.088 (-discipline) WSC/ 7.145 (-discipline) WLC



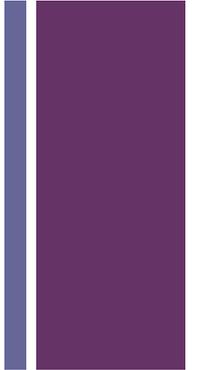


- **Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the word preached may become God's direct speech** 7.089 WSC/ 7.265 WLC
- **Church discipline is how we help one another to grow in grace.** 6.171 WCF
- **No part of human life is off limits to the sanctifying claims of God.** 6.076 WCF / 7.035 WSC / 7.185 WLC
- **Progress in holiness is an expected response of gratitude to the grace of God, made possible by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.** 6.077 WCF / 7.036 WSC / 7.185 WLC
- **We are especially guided by the Ten Commandments in living grateful lives of holiness.** 6.106WCF/ 7.041WSC/ 7.207–208 WLC
- **First: We must worship God alone, renouncing idolatry and inordinate loves.** 7.045–048 WCF / 7.213–216 WLC
- **Second: We must worship God humbly, aware of the dangers of images and ideas of God that can become idolatrous, keeping preaching and sacraments central.** 7.049–052 WSC / 7.217–220 WLC



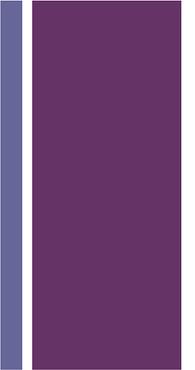


- **We must eliminate from both speech and thought any blasphemy, irreverence or impurity.**
7.053–056 WSC / 7.221–224 WLC
- **We must observe the Sabbath as a day of worship and rest, gathering with the people of God.**
7.057–062 WSC / 7.225–231 WLC
- **We must give honor to those in authority over us and practice mutual submission within the church.** 7.063–066 WSC / 7.233–243 WLC
- **We must eradicate anger, violence, bitterness, and instead cultivate gentleness; we must recognize the image of God in every human being from conception to natural death.** 7.067–069 7.244–246
- **We must maintain chastity in thought and deed, being faithful within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman as established by God at the creation or embracing a celibate life as established by Jesus in the new covenant.**
7.070–072 WSC / 7.247–249 WLC
- **We must practice right stewardship of the goods we have been given, showing charity to others and giving generously to the ministry of the church.**
7.073–075 WSC / 7.250–252 WLC
- **We must pursue and defend the truth, even when this is costly, since truth is in order to goodness.** 7.076–078 WSC / 7.253–255 WLC
- **We must resist envy, greed, and acquisitiveness, instead being content with what God has given us.** 7.079–81 WSC / 7.256–258 WLC

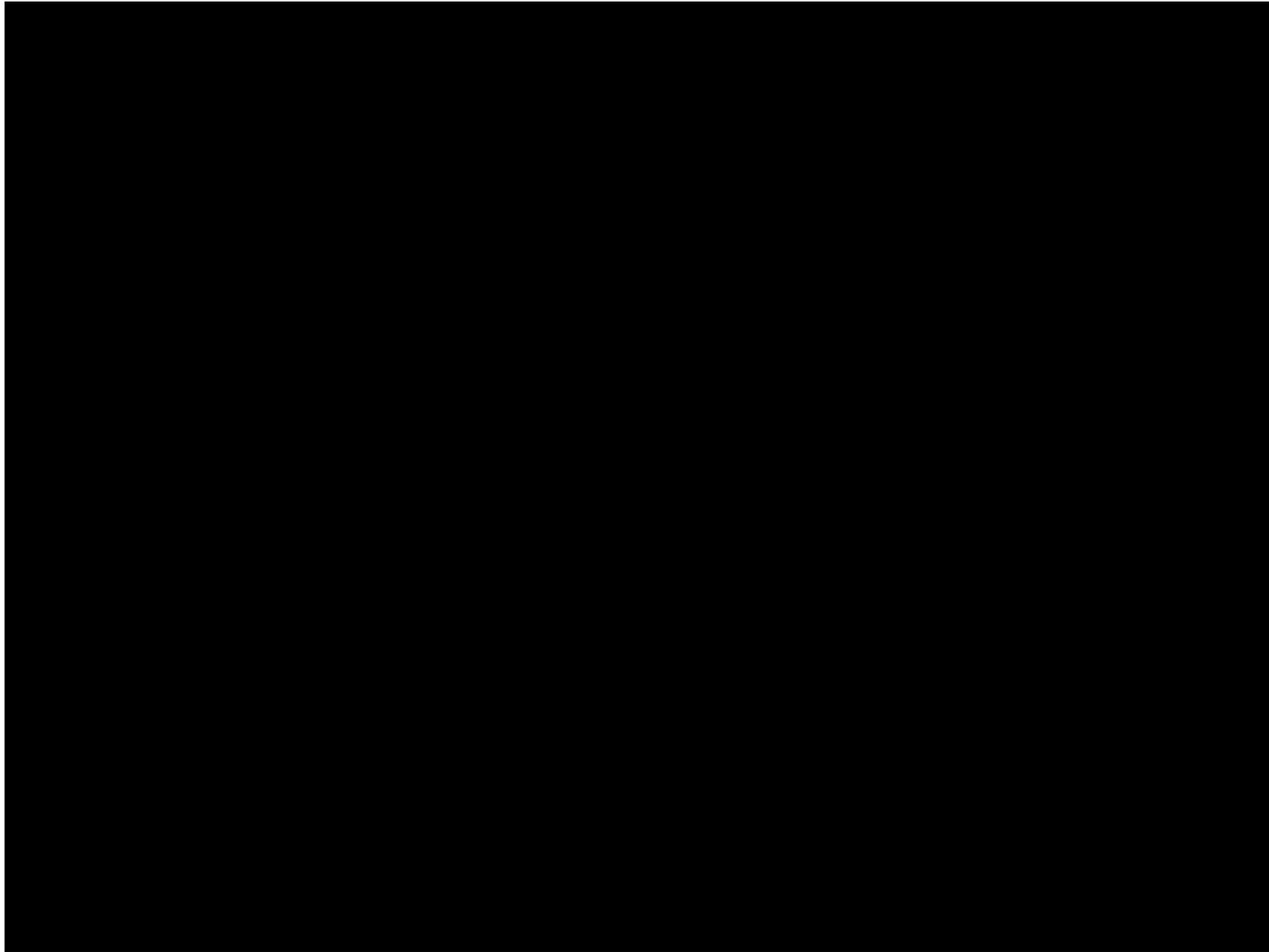


+ Discussion questions – How Do:

- **the Westminster Standards' system of doctrine accurately and faithfully reflect the theological teaching of the Scriptures?**
- **the Westminster Standards reflect the grace, love, and joy of the gospel?**
- **each of them enable the church to confess what it believes and hold the church to believe what it confesses?**
- **the Standards speak in a concise, accessible, and warm manner to the whole church?**
- **they call for both affirmation and rejection?**
- **they represent merely the interests of one group in the church, or does it take responsibility to speak from and to the one universal Church?**
- **they speak only to its own temporal context or does it speak of the eternal truths of Scripture?**
- **they allow the eternal truths of Scripture to speak into our context?**



+ Added Resource Video



- Curtis “The Voice” Allen and D.A. Carson and the Westminster Catechism
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5vNtD6tdxA>