

*Arbor Foundations*  
28 – Why We Hold a Confession  
May 12, 2019 – Chase Kitzmiller

### **Biblical Basis**

1. Hebrews 10:23, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”

2. 1 Timothy 3:16, “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 into glory.”

3. Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: ‘The LORD our God, the LORD is one.’”

4. 2 Timothy 3:14-17, “You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

### **What is a Confession?**

A confession is a statement of beliefs about the Christian faith.

-Arbor holds to the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.

-Confessing sin to God and to one another is not what we are addressing here; nevertheless, the fact that men are sinful is stated in confessions.

-Scripture at times speaks of “the confession,” which is specifically the confession of Jesus as Christ and Lord. Indeed, the confession of Jesus as Lord ought to be at the center of any confession.

### **Purposes for Confessions**

#### 1. Defense against heresies

-Confessions protect against heresies, and often are formed as defenses against those. When false teachers or suspect doctrine appears, we can go to the confession as a place where our doctrine is generally laid out. Particularly, false teaching and doctrines are often false interpretations of Scripture, such that it is not that we are not going to Scripture for our answers; rather, the confession presents an alternative and well-founded interpretation of the Scriptures that can help us to remember and defend what they say.

#### 2. Covenants of Belief

-In many churches, membership is predicated upon a strict agreement to the contents of the confession. Such a policy helps to ensure unity of belief, but can prevent fellowship over very small matters. For example, refusing membership to those who do not believe that Christ is the Son of God is most necessary for unity, but having a slightly different view on the exact nature of the end times typically has little bearing on Christian fellowship and love.

3. Public proclamation of beliefs

-Confessions are sometimes used as for a congregational confessing of faith during a worship service. We similarly confess the truth during worship services using the New City Catechism.

4. Unity within the Body

-Having a confession helps to foster unity among the brethren at Arbor. While Arbor does not require members to completely agree with the confession, we do require substantial agreement. Having members that hold the same beliefs on both primary doctrines (such as the Trinity) and secondary doctrines (such as baptism) promotes order in the church and helps to prevent divisions.

-Confessions give us a large amount of common ground, which we should use as a starting place for encouraging one another.

-Confessions make it easy to see a church's stance on various doctrines. It would be much more difficult for Arbor and for those seeking a church to find like-minded churches without confessions.

5. Instruction

-Confessions are a form of systematic theology, presenting essential doctrines along with their Scriptural bases. For any form of topical teaching or study on a doctrine, confessions are useful as concise summaries of biblical truth and are good places to go to find Scriptural references on a topic. For example, our confession has a two-paragraph chapter on the communion of the saints, with 18 scriptural references given.

6. Steadfastness

-A confession gives us an interpretation of the Bible that has been agreed upon for many years, which can keep us from adopting strange teachings based upon the whims and ideals of our current culture. 1 Timothy 4:6-7, "In pointing out this things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women."

**Misuse of the Confession as a Replacement for the Bible**

-Confessions are only valuable to the extent that they accurately summarize and interpret Scripture. The first statement of the first paragraph of our confession reads, "The Holy Scriptures are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience."

-1 Peter 2:1-3, "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."

-2 Timothy 3:14-17

## Questions

### A. Why do we need a confession if we have the Bible?

-There is a trend of having “no creed but Christ” or “no creed but the Bible.” An issue that can occur with not having a creed or confession is a lack of knowing what a person or church believes. Two churches or people who say that they believe the Bible to be completely true sadly often believe significantly different things. A person who does not hold to a confession in a church that does not hold to a confession still has his own systematic summary and interpretation of Scripture. Confessions can help the Church to address areas in one's own set of beliefs that are not consistent with the Bible, and can help the members of a church to notice and investigate those inconsistencies.

-The above being said, holding to a confession of the sort we are discussing is not commanded in Scripture. It is in our view wise and beneficial, but not necessary.

### B. Why do we use a confession from 300 years ago instead of writing our own?

1. We believe that the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith is an excellent summary of the truths of Scripture.

2. Scriptural truth does not change over time.

3. The age of the confession has meant that it has passed the scrutiny of many churches and wise pastors. There is no need to reinvent a well-crafted wheel.

### C. What are the differences between a confessions, creeds, and catechisms?

-Creeds, confessions, and catechisms are all summaries of Biblical doctrine, each with a different purpose:

**Creeds** are typically the shortest of the three, focusing on upholding the first-level or primary doctrines of the faith, such as the Sonship of Christ, the Lordship of Christ, or salvation by faith.

**Confessions** are more broad, including the primary doctrines and also covering secondary doctrines and some tertiary doctrines. Confessions modernly have the most implications for interactions among churches and fellowship among believers.

**Catechisms** address primary, secondary, and tertiary doctrines in a manner that is easily grasped and taught, with an emphasis on practicing the faith.

### **So What?**

Confessions are a tool that can be used to promote truth, unity, fellowship, and learning in the Church through the Word of God, especially when false teachers abound in the world, when there are divisions in the church, or when hardships and doubts threaten to shake one's own beliefs.

Charles Spurgeon on the London Baptist Confession:

“This ancient document is the most excellent epitome of the things most surely believed among us. It is not issued as an authoritative rule or code of faith, whereby you may be fettered, but as a means of edification in righteousness. It is an excellent, though not inspired, expression of the teaching of those Holy Scriptures by which all confessions are to be measured. We hold to the humbling truths of God’s sovereign grace in the salvation of lost sinners. Salvation is through Christ alone and by faith alone.”

### **For Further Study**

*The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith*

<https://reformedbaptistnetwork.com/1689lbcf/>

[http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/COF\\_1689\\_Confession\\_of\\_Faith\\_with\\_NASV\\_quotes.pdf](http://www.prayermeetings.org/files/COF_1689_Confession_of_Faith_with_NASV_quotes.pdf) -In modern English

*Foundations Class Session 9, “Church History”*

*David Hall, “Why Creeds and Confessions?”*

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/why-creeds-and-confessions/>

*Monergism, “Why Do We Need Creeds and Confessions?”*

<https://www.monergism.com/why-do-we-need-creeds-and-confessions>