

# *Creeds & Confessions*

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As Creeds and Confessions, their uses and their history, form a distinct subject of study by themselves, they will together in this chapter, while references will be found under the several chapters of this work to the particular Creed in which the particular doctrine is most clearly or authoritatively defined.

On this entire subject consult the admirable historical and critical work of Dr. Philip Schaff of Union Theological Seminary, New York—the "CREEDS OF CHRISTENDOM." In the first volume he presents a history of the authorship and occasion of each Creed or Confession and a critical estimate of its contents and value. In volumes second and third he gives the text of all the principal creeds in two languages.

## **1. Why are Creeds and Confessions necessary, and how have they been produced?**

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament having been given by inspiration of God, are for man in his present state the only and the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. This divine word, therefore, is the only standard of doctrine which has any intrinsic authority binding the consciences of men. All other standards are of value or authority only as they teach what the Scriptures teach.

But it is the inalienable duty and necessity of men to arrive at the meaning of the Scriptures in the use of their natural faculties, and by the ordinary instruments of interpretation. Since all truth is self-consistent in all its parts, and since the human reason always instinctively strives to reduce all the elements of knowledge with which it grapples to logical unity and consistency, it follows that men must more or less formally construct a system of faith out of the materials presented in the Scriptures. Every student of the Bible necessarily does this in the very process of understanding and digesting its teaching, and all such students make it manifest that they have found, in one way or another, a system of faith as complete as for him has been possible, by the very language he uses in prayer, praise, and ordinary religious discourse. If men refuse the assistance afforded by the statements of doctrine slowly elaborated and defined by the church, they must severally make out their own creed by their own unaided wisdom. The real question between the church and the impugners of human creeds, is not, as the latter often pretend, between the word of God and the creed of man, but between the tried and proved faith of the collective body of God's people, and the private judgment and the unassisted wisdom of the individual objector. As it would have been anticipated, it is a matter of fact that the church

has advanced very gradually in this work of accurately interpreting Scripture, and defining the great doctrines which compose the system of truths it reveals. The attention of the church has been especially directed to the study of one doctrine in one age, and of another doctrine in a subsequent age. And as she has gradually advanced in the clear discrimination of gospel truth, she has at different periods set down an accurate statement of the results of her new attainments in a creed, or Confession of Faith, for the purpose of preservation and of popular instruction, of discriminating and defending the truth from the perversion of heretics and the attacks of infidels, and of affording a common bond of faith and rule of teaching and discipline.

The ancient creeds of the universal Church were formed by the first four ecumenical or general councils, except the so-called Apostle's Creed, gradually formed from the baptismal confessions in use in the different churches of the West, and the so-called Athanasian Creed, which is of private and unknown authorship. The great authoritative Confession of the Papal Church was produced by the ecumenical council held at Trent, 1545. The mass of the principal Protestant Confessions were the production of single individuals or of small circles of individuals, e. g., the Augsburg Confession and Apology, the 2d Helvetic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Old Scotch Confession, the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England etc. Two, however, of the most valuable and generally received Protestant Confessions were produced by large and venerable Assemblies of learned divines, namely: the Canons of the international Synod of Dort, and the Confession and Catechisms of the national Assembly of Westminster.

## **2. What are their legitimate uses?**

They have been found in all ages of the church useful for the following purposes. (1.) To mark, preserve and disseminate the attainments made in the knowledge of Christian truth by any branch of the church in any grand crisis of its development. (2.) To discriminate the truth from the glosses of false teachers, and accurately to define it in its integrity and due proportions. (3.) To act as the bond of ecclesiastical fellowship among those so nearly agreed as to be able to labor together in harmony. (4.) To be used as instruments in the great work of popular instruction.

## **3. What is the ground and extent of their authority, or power to bind the conscience?**

The matter of all these Creeds and Confessions binds the consciences of men only so far as it is purely scriptural, and because it is so. The form in which that matter is stated, on the other hand, binds only those who have voluntarily subscribed the Confession and because of that subscription.

In all churches a distinction is made between the terms upon which private members

are admitted to membership and the terms upon which office-bearers are admitted to their sacred trusts of teaching and ruling. A church has no right to make anything a condition of membership which Christ has not made a condition of salvation. The church is Christ's fold. The Sacraments are the seals of his covenant. All have a right to claim admittance who make a credible profession of the true religion, that is, who are presumptively the people of Christ. This credible profession of course involves a competent knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, a declaration of personal faith in Christ and of devotion to his service, and a temper of mind and a habit of life consistent therewith. On the other hand, no man can be inducted into any office in any church who does not profess to believe in the truth and wisdom of the constitution and laws it will be his duty to conserve and administer. Otherwise all harmony of sentiment and all efficient co-operation in action would be impossible.

The Standards of the creeds and confession are binding for officers of presbyterian congregations. The vows taken by elder and deacons are solemnly administered and agreed to before both God and man.

**4. What were the Creeds of the ancient Church which remain the common inheritance of all branches of the modern Church?**

I. THE APOSTLE'S CREED, so called. This Creed gradually grew out of the comparison and assimilation of the Baptismal Creeds of the principal Churches in the West or Latin half of the ancient Church. The most complete and popular forms of these baptismal creeds were those of Rome, Aquileja, Milan, Ravenna, Carthage, and Hippo, "of which the Roman form, enriching itself by additions from others, gradually gained the more general acceptance. While the several articles considered separately are all of Nicene or Anti-nicene origin, the creed as a whole in its present form cannot be traced beyond the sixth century."—Schaff's "Creeds of Christendom," vol. I. p. 20.

It was subjoined by the Westminster divines to their Catechism, together with the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments Not as though it was composed by the apostles' or ought to be esteemed canonical Scripture, but because it is a brief sum of Christian agreeable to the word of God and anciently received in the Churches of Christ. It was retained by the framers of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States as part of our Catechism. It is a part of the Catechism of the Methodist Episcopal Church also. It is used in the baptismal Confession of the Roman, English, Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist Episcopal, and Protestant Episcopal Churches.

It is as follows:

I believe in God the Father almighty maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary;

suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hell (Hades); the third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

II. THE NICENE CREED, in which the true Trinitarian faith of the church is accurately defined in opposition to Arian and Semiarian errors. It exists in three forms, and evidently was molded upon pre-existing forms similar to those from which the Apostles' Creed grew.

1st. The original form in which it was composed and enacted by the (Ecumenical Council of Nice, A. D. 325.

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of All things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only begotten, that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance (omoousion) with by whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate, and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not' and 'He was not before he was made' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance or essence' or 'The Son of God is created or changeable or alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.

2d. The Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed. This consists of the Nicene Creed, above given slightly changed in the first article, and with the clauses defining the Person and work of the Holy Ghost added, and the Anathema omitted. This new form of the Creed has been generally attributed to the Council of Constantinople, convened by the Emperor Theodosius, A. D. 381, to condemn the doctrine of the Macedonians, who denied the divinity of the Holy Ghost. These changes in the Nicene Creed were unquestionably made about that date, and the several " clauses " added existed previously in formularies proposed by individual theologians. But there is no evidence that the changes were made by the Council of Constantinople. They were, however, recognized by the Council of Chalcedon, A. D. 451.

It is in this latter form that the Creed of Nice is now used in the Greek Church.

3d. The third or Latin form of this creed in which it is used in the Roman, Episcopal, and Lutheran Churches' differs from the second form above mentioned only in (a.) restoring the clause ("Deus de Deo ") " God of God," to the first clause; it belonged to the original Creed of Nice, but had been dropped cut of the Greek Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan form. (b.) The famous "Filioque," term was added to the clause affirming the procession of the Spirit from the Father. This was added by the provincial Council of Toledo, Spain, A. D. 589, and gradually accepted by the whole Western Church, and thence by all Protestants, without any ecumenical ratification. That phrase is rejected by the Greek Church. The text of this Creed as received with reverence by all Catholics and Protestants is as follows (Schaff's "Creeds of Christendom" pp. 25-29):

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, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; He was crucified, also for us, under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son (this phrase "filioque" was added to the creed of Constantinople by the council of the western church held at Toledo, A. D. 589), who, with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church, I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

III. THE ATHANASIAN CREED, so called, also styled, from its opening words:the symbol Quicumque vult is vulgarly ascribed to the great Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria from about A. D. 328 to A. D. 373, and the leader of the orthodox party in the church in opposition to the arch heretic, Arius. But modern scholars unanimously assign to it a later origin, and trace it to Northern Africa and the school of Augustine. Bigham refers it to Virgilius Tapsensis at the end of the fifth century. Schaff says its complete form does not appear before the eighth century.

This Creed is received in the Greek, Roman, and English Churches, but it has been left out of the Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church of America. It presents a most admirably stated exposition of the faith of all Christians, and it is objected to only because of the "damnatory clauses", which ought never to be attached to any human composition, especially one making such nice distinctions upon so profound a subject.

It is as follows:

1. Whosoever wishes to be saved, it is above all necessary for him to hold the Catholic faith. 2. Which, unless each one shall preserve perfect and inviolate, he shall certainly perish forever. 3. But the Catholic faith is this that we worship one God in trinity and in unity. 4. Neither confounding the persons, nor separating the substance. 5. For the person of the Father is one, of the Son another, and of the Holy Ghost another. 6. But of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost there is one divinity, equal glory and co-eternal majesty. 7. What the Father is, the same is the Son, and the Holy Ghost. 8. The Father is uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Ghost uncreated. 9. The Father is immense, the Son immense, the Holy Ghost immense. 10. The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Ghost eternal. 11. And yet there are not three eternal, but one eternal. 12. So there are not three (beings) uncreated, nor three immense, but one uncreated, and one immense. 13. In like manner the Father is omnipotent, the Son is omnipotent, the Holy Ghost is omnipotent. 14. And yet there are not three omnipotents, but one omnipotent. 15. Thus the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God. 16. And yet there are Not three Gods, but one God. 17. Thus the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost is Lord. 18. And yet there are not three Lords, but one Lord. 19. Because as we are thus compelled by Christian verity to confess each person severally to be God and Lord; so we are prohibited by the Catholic religion from saying that there are three Gods or Lords. 20. The Father was made from none, nor created, nor begotten. 21. The Son is from the Father alone, neither made, nor created, but begotten. 22. The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten but proceeding. 23. Therefore there is one Father, not three fathers, one Son, not three sons, one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. 24. And in this trinity no one is first or last, no one is greater or less. 25. But all the three co-eternal persons are co-equal among themselves, so that through all, as is above said, both unity in trinity, and trinity in unity is to be worshipped. 26. Therefore, he who wishes to be saved must think thus concerning the trinity. 27. But it is necessary to eternal salvation that he should also faithfully believe the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. 28. It is, therefore, true faith that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is both God and man. 29. He is God, generated from eternity from the substance of the Father, man born in time from the substance of his mother. 30. Perfect God, perfect man, subsisting of a rational soul and human flesh. 31. Equal to the Father in respect to his divinity, less than the Father in respect to his humanity. 32. Who, although he is God and man, is not two but one Christ. 33. But one, not from the conversion of his divinity into flesh, but from the assumption of his humanity into God. 34. One not at all from confusion of substance, but from unity of person. 35. For as a rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ. 36. Who suffered

for our salvation, descended into hell, the third day rose from the dead. 37. Ascended to heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father omnipotent, whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. 88. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall render an account for their own works. 39. and they who have done well shall go into life eternal; they who have done evil into eternal fire. 40. This is the Catholic faith, which, unless a man shall faithfully and firmly believe, he cannot be saved.

IV. THE CREED OF Chalcedon, The Emperor Marcianus called the fourth ecumenical council to meet at Chalcedon in Bithynia, on the Bosphorus, opposite Constantinople, to put down the Eutychian and Nestorian heresies. The Council consisted of 630 bishops and sat from Oct. 8 to Oct. 31, A. D. 451.

The principal part of the "Definition of Faith" agreed upon by this Council is as follows:

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess, one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ; the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in Manhood; truly God, and truly Man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us without sin, begotten before all ages of the Father to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of Mary the Virgin Mother of God according to the Manhood. He is one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, existing in two natures without mixture ( asugcutw" ), without change ( atreptw" ), without division ( adiairetw" ), without separation ( acwristw" ); the diversity of the two natures not being at all destroyed by their union, but the peculiar properties of each nature being preserved, and concurring to one person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and Only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself hath taught us, and as the Creed, of the holy fathers has delivered to us.

This completed the development of the orthodox Church doctrine of the Trinity of Persons in the one God and of the duality of natures in the one Christ. It remains a universally respected statement of the common faith of the Church.

##### **5. What are the doctrinal Standards of the Church of Rome?**

Besides the above mentioned Creeds, all of which are of recognized authority in the Romish Church, their great Standards of Faith are—1st. The "Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent," which they regard as the twentieth ecumenical council, and was called by Pope Pius IV. to oppose the progress of the Reformation (A. D. 1545-1563). The decrees contain the positive statements of Papal doctrine. The canons explain the decrees, distribute the matter under brief

heads, and condemn the opposing doctrine on each point. Although studiously ambiguous, the system of doctrine taught is evidently though not consistently Semipelagian.

2d. The "Roman Catechism," which explains and enforces the canons of the Council of Trent, was prepared by order of Pius IV., and promulgated by the authority of Pope Pius V., A. D. 1566.

3d. The "Creed of Pope Pius IV.," also called "Professio Fidei Tridentinae," or "Forma Professionis Fidei Catholicae," contains a summary of the doctrines taught in the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, and was promulgated in a bull by Pope Pius IV., A. D. 1564. It is subscribed to by all grades of Papal teachers and ecclesiastics, and by all converts from Protestantism.

It is as follows:

I, A. B., believe and profess with a firm faith all and every one of the things which are contained in the symbol of faith which is used in the holy Roman Church; namely, 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 the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead of whose kingdom there will be no end; and in the Holy Ghost The Lord and Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who, together with the Father and the Son, is adored and glorified, who spake by the holy prophets; and one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the remission of sins, and I expect the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

I most firmly admit and embrace the apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions, and all other constitutions and observances of the same Church. I also admit the sacred Scriptures according to the sense which the holy mother Church has held and does hold to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Scriptures, nor will I ever take or interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the fathers. I profess, also, that there are truly and properly seven sacraments of the new law instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord, and necessary for the salvation of mankind, though all are not necessary for every one-namely baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme

unction, orders, and matrimony, and that they confer grace; and of these baptism, confirmation, and order cannot be reiterated without sacrilege. I do also receive and admit the ceremonies of the Catholic Church, received and approved in the solemn administration of all the above-said sacraments. I receive and embrace all and every one of the things which have been defined and declared in the holy Council of Trent concerning sin and justification. I profess likewise that in the mass is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead; and that in the most holy sacrament of the eucharist there is truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood, which conversion the Catholic Church calls transubstantiation. I confess, also, that under either kind alone, Christ whole and entire, and a true sacrament is received. I constantly hold that there is a purgatory, and that the souls detained therein are helped by the suffrage of the faithful. Likewise that the saints reigning together with Christ are to be honored and invoked, that they offer prayers to God for us, and that their relics are to be venerated. I most firmly assert that the images of Christ, and of the mother of God ever Virgin and also of the other saints, are to be had and retained and that due honor and veneration are to be given to them. I also affirm that the power of indulgences and left by Christ in the Church and that the use of them is most wholesome to Christian people. I acknowledge the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, the mother and mistress of all churches, and I promise and swear true obedience to the Roman bishop, the successor of St. Peter, prince of the apostles, and near of Jesus Christ. I also profess, and undoubtedly receive all other things delivered, defined, and declared by the sacred canons and general councils, and particularly by the holy Council of Trent [and by the Ecumenical Vatican Council delivered, defined, and declared, particularly concerning the primacy and infallible rule of the Roman Pontiff.\*]

And likewise I also condemn, reject and anathematize all things contrary thereto, and all heresies whatsoever condemned rejected and anathematized by the Church. This true Catholic faith, out of which none can be saved, which I now freely profess and truly hold, I, A. B., promise, vow and swear most constantly to hold, and profess the same whole and entire with God's assistance, to the end of my life, and to procure as far as lies in my power, that the same shall be held, taught and preached by all who are under me, or who are entrusted to my care in virtue of my office so help me God, and these holy gospels of God—Amen.

\* Added by Decree of the a Sacred  
Congregation of the Council, Jan. 2,  
1877.

4th. The Holy ecumenical Vatican Council assembled at the call of Pius IX., in the Basilica of The Vatican, Dec. 8, 1869, and continued its sessions until October 20, 1870, after which it was

indefinitely postponed.

The Decrees of this Council embrace two sections.

I. "The Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith." This embraces four chapters. Chap. 1 treats of God as Creator; chap. 2, of revelation; chap. 3, of faith; chap. 4, of faith and reason. These are followed by eighteen canons, in which the errors of modern rationalism and infidelity are condemned.

II. "First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ." This also embraces four chapters. Chap. 1 is entitled "Of the Institution of the Apostolic Primacy in Blessed Peter;" chap. 2, "Of the Perpetuity of the Primacy of Blessed Peter in the Roman Pontiffs;" chap. 3, "On the Power and Nature of the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff;" chap. 4, "Concerning the Infallible Teaching of the Roman Pontiff." The new features are contained in the last two chapters, which teach "Papal Absolutism and Papal Infallibility." These definitions are presented to a sufficient extent under Chapter 5. of these "Outlines."

In consequence of this principle of Papal Infallibility it necessarily follows, that the whole succession of Papal Bulls, and especially those directed against the Jansenists and the Decree of Pius IX. "On the Immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary," Dec. 8, 1854; and his Syllabus of Errors, Dec. 8, 1864, are all infallible and irreformable and parts of the amazing Standards of Faith professed by the Roman Church.

#### **6. What Are the Doctrinal Standards of the Greek Church?**

The ancient church divided, from causes primarily political and ecclesiastical, secondarily doctrinal and ritual, into two great sections - the Eastern or Greek Church, and the Western or Latin church. This division began to culminate in the seventh, and was consummated in the eleventh century. The Greek Church embraces about eighty millions of people, the majority of the Christians inhabitants of the Turkish Empire, and the national churches of Greece and Russia. All the Protestant Churches have originated from the Western or Latin division of the church.

She arrogates to herself, pre-eminently, the title of "Orthodox" because the original ecumenical Creeds defining the doctrines of the Trinity and the Person of Christ were produced in the Eastern division of the ancient church and in the Greek language, and hence are in a special sense her inheritance, and because from the fact that her theology is absolutely unprogressive, she contents herself with the literal repetition of the old formulas.

She adheres to the ancient Creeds and doctrinal decisions of the first seven ecumenical councils, and possesses a few modern Confessions and Catechisms. The most important of these are- The Orthodox Confession of the Catholic and Apostolic Greek church composed by Peter

Mogilas, Metropolitan of Kieff in Russia, A. D. 1643, and approved by all the Eastern Patriarchs.

2d. The "Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem," or the Confession of Dositheus, 1672.

3d. The Russian Catechisms which have the sanction of the Holy Synod, especially the Longer Catechism of Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, 1820-1867, unanimously approved by all the Eastern Patriarchs. and since 1839 generally used in the schools and Churches of Russia.

The Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem teach substantially though less definitely the same doctrine as those of the Council of Trent as to the Scriptures and Tradition, good works and faith, justification, the sacraments, the sacrifice of the mass, the worship of saints, and purgatory.

The Catechism of Philaret " approaches more nearly to the evangelical principle of the supremacy of the Bible in matters of Christian faith and life than any other deliverance of the Eastern Church."—Schaff's "Creeds of Christendom," Vol. 1., pp. 45 and 71.

#### **7. What are the Doctrinal Standards of The Lutheran Church?**

Besides the great General Creeds, which they receive in common with all Christians, their Symbolical Books are: The Augsburg Confession, the joint authors of which were Luther and Melancthon. Having been signed by the Protestant princes and leaders, it was presented to the emperor and imperial diet in Augsburg, A. D, 1530. It is the oldest Protestant Confession, the ultimate basis of Lutheran theology, and the only universally accepted standard of the Lutheran Churches. It consists of two grand divisions. The first embracing twenty-one articles, presents a positive statement of Christian doctrines as the Lutherans understand them; and the second, embracing seven articles, condemns the principal characteristic errors of the Papacy. It is evangelical in the Augustinian sense, although not as precise in statement as the more perfect Calvinistic Confessions, and it, of course, contains the germs of the peculiar Lutheran views as to the necessity of the Sacraments, and the relation of the sacramental signs to the grace they signify. Yet these peculiarities are so far from being explicitly stated, that Calvin found it consistent with his views of divine truth to subscribe this great Confession, during his residence in Strasburg.

In 1540, ten years after it had been adopted as the public symbol of Protestant Germany, Melancthon produced an editorial in Latin which he altered in several particulars, and which was hence distinguished as the Variata, the original and only authentic form of the Confession being distinguished as the Invariata . The principal changes introduced in this edition incline towards Synergistic or Armenian views of divine grace on the one hand, and on the other to simple views as to the sacraments more nearly corresponding with those prevailing among the Reformed Churches. - See Shedd's " Hist. of Christ. Doctrine" Book 7., chap. 2. See also the accurate and learnedly illustrated edition of the Augsburg Confession by Rev. Charles Krauth, D.D.

2d. The Apology [Defense] of the Augsburg Confession, prepared by Melancthon, A. D. 1530, and subscribed by the Protestant theologians, A. D. 1537, at Smalcald.

3d. The Larger and Smaller Catechisms prepared by Luther, A. D. 1529, "the first for the use of preachers and teachers, the last as a guide for youth."

4th. The Articles of Smalcald, drawn up by Luther, A.D. 1536, and inscribed by the evangelical theologians in February, A. D. 1537, at the place whose name they bear.

5th. The Formula Concordice (Form of Concord), prepared in A. D. 1577 by Jacob Andreae and Martin Chemnitz and others for the purpose of settling certain controversies which had sprung up in the Lutheran Church, especially (a) concerning the relative action of divine grace and the human will in regeneration, (b) concerning the nature of the Lord's presence in the Eucharist. This Confession contains a more scientific and thoroughly developed statement of the Lutheran doctrine than can be found in any other of their public symbols. Its authority is, however acknowledged only by the high Lutheran party, that is, by that party in the church which consistently carries the peculiarities of Lutheran theology out to the most complete logical development. All these Lutheran Symbols may be found in Latin accurately edited in "Libri Symbolici," by Dr. C. A. Hase, Leipsic, 1836, and in Schaff's "Creeds of Christendom."

#### **8. What are the principal Confessions of the Reformed or Calvinistic Churches?**

The Confessions of the Reformed Churches are very considerable in number, and weary somewhat in character, although they substantially agree in the system of doctrines they teach.

1st. "The oldest Confession of that branch of Protestantism which was not satisfied with the Lutheran tendency and symbol is the Confessio Tetrapolitana, - so-called, because the theologians of four cities of upper Germany, Strasburg, Constance, Memmingen, and Lindau, drew it up, and presented it to the emperor at the same diet of Augsburg, in 1530, at which the first Lutheran symbol was presented. The principal theologian concerned in its construction was Martin Bucer, of Strasburg. It consists of twenty-two articles, and agrees generally with the Augsburg Confession. The points of difference pertain to the doctrine of the sacraments. Upon this subject it is inglian. These four cities, however, in 1532 adopted the Augsburg Confession, so that the Confessio Tetrapolitana ceased to be the formally adopted symbol of any branch of the church." Shedd's "Hist. of Christ. Doctrine," Book 7., chap. 2.

2d. The Reformed Confessions of the highest authority among the Churches are the following:

(1.) The Second Helvetic confession prepared by Bullinger, A. D. 1564, and published 1566, superseded the First Helvetic Confession of A. D. 1536. It was adopted by all the Reformed

Churches in Switzerland with the exception of Basle (which was content with the old Confession) and by the Reformed Churches in Poland, Hungary, Scotland and France, and it has always been esteemed as of the highest authority by all the Reformed Churches.

(2.) The Heidelberg Catechism, prepared by Ursinus and Olevianus, A. D. 1562. It was established by civil authority as the doctrinal standard as well as the instrument of religious instruction for the churches of the Palatinate, a German state at that time including both banks of the Rhine. It was endorsed by the Synod of Dort, and is a doctrinal standard of the Reformed Churches of Germany and Holland, and of the (German and Dutch) Reformed Churches in America. It was used for the instruction of children in Scotland, before the adoption of the Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly, and its use was sanctioned by an unanimous vote of the first General Assembly of the reunited Presbyterian Church in the United States A. D. 1870.—See Minutes.

(3.) The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. In 1552, Cranmer, with the advice of other bishops, drew up the Forty-two Articles of Religion, and which were published by royal authority in 1553. These were revised and reduced to the number of thirty-nine by Archbishop Parker and other bishops, and ratified by both houses of Convocation, and published by royal authority in 1563. They constitute the doctrinal standard of the Protestant Episcopal Churches of England, Ireland, Scotland, the Colonies, and the United States of America. The question whether these Articles are Calvinistic or not has been very unwarrantably made a matter of debate. See Lawrence's "Bampton Lecture, for 1804 on the Armenian side" and Toplady's "Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England," Dr. Goode's "Doctrine of Church of England as to Effects of Infant Baptisms," and Dr. William Cunningham's, "Reformers and their Theology" on the Calvinistic side. The seventeenth Article on Predestination is perfectly decisive of the question, and is as follows:

Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor. Wherefore they which he endued with so excellent a benefit of God, he called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through grace, obey the calling; they he justified freely; they he made sons of God by adoption; they he made like the image of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ; they walk religiously in good works, and at length by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

As the godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly

members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love toward God. So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture; and, in our doings, that will of God is to be followed which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God.

These Articles purged of their Calvinism and reduced in number to twenty-five including a new political Article (the twenty-third) adopting as an article of faith the political system of the United States Government, constitute the doctrinal Standard of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

(4.) The canons of the Synod of Dort. This famous Synod was convened in Dort, Holland, by the authority of the States General, for the purpose of settling the questions brought into controversy by the disciples of Arminius. Its sessions continued from Nov. 13, A. D. 1618, to May 9, (b.) D. 1619. It consisted of pastors, elders, and theological professors from the churches of Holland, and deputies from the churches of England Scotland, Hesse, Bremen, the Palatinate, and Switzerland. The Canons of this Synod were received by all the Reformed Churches as a true, accurate, and eminently authoritative exhibition of the Calvinistic system of theology. They constitute in connection with the Heidelberg Catechism the doctrinal Confession of the Reformed Church of Holland and of its daughter the [Dutch] Reformed Church in America.

(5.) The Confession and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly. This Assembly of Divines was convened by an act of the Long Parliament passed June 12, 1643. The original call embraced ten lords and twenty commoners as lay members, and one hundred and twenty-one divines—twenty ministers being afterward added—all shades of opinion as to Church Government being represented. The body continued its sessions from 1st of July, 1643, to 22d of February, 1649. The Confession and Catechisms they produced were immediately adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The Congregational Convention, also, called by Cromwell to meet at Savoy, in London, A.D. 1658, declared their approval of the doctrinal part of the Confession and Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly, and conformed their own deliverance, the Savoy Declaration, very nearly to it. Indeed "the difference between these two Confessions is so very small, that the modern Independents have in a manner laid aside the use of it (Savoy Declaration) in their families, and agreed with the Presbyterians in the use of the Assembly's Catechisms."—Neal, "Puritans," 2., 178. This Confession together with the Larger and Smaller

Catechisms is the doctrinal standard of all the Presbyterian bodies in the world of English and Scotch derivation. It is also of all Creeds the one most highly approved by all bodies of Congregationalists in England and America.

All of the Assemblies convened in new England for the purpose of settling the doctrinal basis of their churches have either endorsed or explicitly adopted this Confession and these Catechisms as accurate expositions of their own faith. This was done by the Synod which met at Cambridge, Massachusetts, June, 1647, and again August, 1648, and prepared the Cambridge Platform. And it was done again by the Synod which sat in Boston, September, 1679, and May, 1680, and produced the Boston Confessions. And again by the Synod which met at Saybrook, Connecticut, 1708, and produced the Saybrook Platform.

3d. There remain several other Reformed Confessions, which, although they are not the doctrinal standards of large denominations of Christians, are nevertheless of high classical interest and authority because of their authors, and the circumstances under which they originated.

(1.) The "Consensus Tigurinus," or the "Consensus of Zurich," or "The mutual consent with respect to the doctrine of the sacrament of the ministers of the Church of Zurich and John Calvin, minister of the church of Geneva." It consisted of twenty-six Articles, and deals exclusively with the questions relating to the Lord's Supper, and it was drawn by Calvin, A. D. 1549, for the purpose of bringing about a mutual consent among all parties in the Reformed Church on the subject of which it treats. It was subscribed by the Churches of Zurich, Geneva, St. Gall, Schaffhausen, the Grisons, Neuchatel, and Basle and was received in favor by all parts of the Reformed church, and remains an eminent monument of the true mind of the Reformed Church upon this so much debated question; and especially it is of value as setting forth with eminent clearness and unquestionable authority the real opinion of Calvin on the subject, deliberately stated after he had ceased from the vain attempt to secure the unity of Protestantism by a compromise with the Lutheran views as to the Lord's presence in the Eucharist. An accurate translation of this important document will be found in the Appendix.

(2.) The "Consensus Genevensis" was drawn up by Calvin, A. D. 1552, in the name of the Pastors of Geneva, and is a complete statement of Calvin's views on the subject of Predestination. It was designed to unite all the Swiss churches in their views of this great doctrine. It remains a pre-eminent monument of the fundamental principles of true Calvinism.

(3.) The "Formula Consensus Helvetica," composed at Zurich, A. D. 1675, by John Henry Heidegger of Zurich, assisted by Francis Turretin of Geneva and Luke Gernler of Basle. Its title is "Form of agreement of the Helvetic Reformed Churches respecting the doctrine of universal grace, the doctrines connected therewith, and some other points." It was designed to unite the Swiss Churches in condemning and excluding that modified form of Calvinism, which in that

century emanated from the Theological School of Saumur, represented by Amyraldus, Placaeus, etc. This is the most scientific and thorough of all the Reformed Confessions. Its eminent authorship\* and the fact that it distinctively represents the most thoroughly consistent school of old Calvinists gives it high classical interest. It was subscribed by nearly all the Swiss Churches, but ceased to have public authority as a Confession since A.D. 1722.\*\* All the Confessions of the Reformed Churches may be found collected in one convenient volume in the "Collectio Confessionum in Eddlesiss Reformatis publicatarum," by Dr. H. A. Niemeyer, Leipsic, 1840, and in Dr. Schaff's "Creeds of Christendom."

\* See Herzog's Real-Encyclopedia. Bomberger's translation. Article "Helvetic Confessions."

\*\* An accurate translation will be found in the Appendix.

Originally published in his *Outlines of Theology* in 1860.



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