

## Week 2, September 15, 2021, Further Thoughts on the Westminster Confession: It's Purpose

1. “Forward”; Standards a protection against rationalistic unbelief in the Scriptures, and to help believers “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Also, this “uniformity of religion” should serve to *unify* branches of Visible Church.
2. “To The Christian Reader, Especially Heads of Families”:
  - a) Concern with blasphemies and profaneness over nation, of which “we cannot but esteem the disuse of family instruction one of the greatest” impieties that caused the problem. The WCF and Catechisms are particularly for family use.
  - b) Don’t be “men in years babes in knowledge” [Prov. 16:31; 1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:11-14]. “The understanding is the guide and pilot of the whole man, that faculty which sits at the stern of the soul.” [Hos. 4:6; Eph. 4:23; Rom. 12:2]
  - c) “Diseases in the body have many times their rise from distempers in the head, and exorbitancies in practice from errors in judgment” [Garbage in, garbage out; Titus 1:1, 2:1, 3:8.]
  - d) “A most sovereign antidote against all kind of errors, is to be grounded and settled in the faith: persons unfixed in the true religion, are very receptive of a false; and they who are nothing in spiritual knowledge, are easily made anything.” As John Mellancamp once sang, “You’ve gotta stand for something, or you’re gonna fall for anything.” See also Pastor’s recent article published by Thomas Watson on stating doctrinally settled (which was discussed and handed out in draft form last class): <https://www.reformation21.org/blog/staying-doctrinally-settled>
  - e) They can help you stay holy by keeping up your appetite: “... an inward taste and relish of the things of God, is an excellent preservative to keep us settled in the most unsettled times.” [Psalm 119:103]. If you don’t, your neglect will assist “bringing forth weeds.” But what an opportunity for us! “Never did any age of the Church enjoy such choice helps as this of ours”, and then touches on the incredible ability and character of the Divines (or clerics, theologians, clergymen, churchmen, ministers, preachers, reverends).
3. “Mr. Thomas Manton’s Epistle to the Reader”:
  - a) What makes bad children? “... bad parents and bad masters”. “We cannot blame so much their untowardness, as our own negligence in their education.” The greatest way Satan crushes the church is by “the perversion of youth, and supplanting family-duties.” And this leads to “ill in Church and Commonwealth”. Here two comments are fitting:
    - **Thomas Chalmers, *Sabbath Scripture Readings, on Matthew Chapter 4***: “I have no right to look for miracles of grace in behalf of my children—if myself I will not put into busy operation the means of grace ... Is it not a presumptuous expectation that He, at my request too, will make up for my neglect of the solemn duties which belong to me both as a master and a parent?—My God, I pray not for exemption from these duties, but for boldness and faithfulness and energy to acquit myself thereof.”
    - **A.W. Pink on the Fifth Commandment (Commentary on Exodus) and 2 Tim. 3:1, 3 and present “bad times”**: “Unquestionably, the blame for most of this lies upon the parents, who have so neglected the moral and spiritual training of their children that (in themselves) they are worthy of neither respect nor honor.”
  - b) Positive: “A family is the seminary of Church and State”. “By family discipline, officers are trained up for the Church.”
  - c) These at least bridle youth’s passions and cool their lusts. But at best establish and fortify and build up a strong healthy church.
  - d) Quality of the work of the Westminster Divines: “I know not what work should be fitter for their use, than that compiled by the Assembly at Westminster; a Synod of as godly,

- judicious divines ... I verily think, as ever England saw ... I dare say, if in the days of old, when councils were in power and account, they had had but such a council of bishops, as this of presbyters was, the fame of it for learning and holiness, and all ministerial abilities, would, with very great honor, have been transmitted to posterity.”
- e) Masters: study this and teach it to your families.
  - f) Another benefit of studying Standards: “... if they once understand these grounds of religion, they will be able to read other books more understandingly, and hear sermons more profitably, and confer more judiciously, and hold fast the doctrine of Christ more firmly, than ever you are like to do by any other course.”
4. “An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament.” 1643 [England]. A bill of the government to pastors and elders! “... none is nor can be more dear unto us than the purity of our religion”. “more perfect reformation than as yet hath been attained.” Must be at least 40 people always in session. “most agreeable to the word of God.”
  5. “Assembly at Edinburgh, Aug 19, 1643” [Scotland]: to send “godly and learned [cream of the crop] of this Kirk [church] to the kingdom of England”. To “further the union of this Island in [1] one Form of Kirk-government, [2] one Confession of Faith, [3] one Catechism, [4] one Directory for the worship of God ... do all things which may further the so much desired union”: if we all endeavored, we could and should desire unity in the truth of God’s Word in one doctrine and practice. [Eph. 4:2-6]. Notice all took a vow: “I will maintain nothing in point of doctrine, but what I believe to be most agreeable to the word of GOD: nor in point of discipline but what may make most for GOD’S glory, and the peace and good of this church.
  6. “Assembly at Edinburgh, August 27, 1647: An act approving the Confession of Faith” [Scotland]. Was read, examined, and considered twice publicly, also distributed in print for scrutiny. Approved to be agreeable and orthodox to the Word of God in doctrine and practice.
  7. Act approving the Catechisms, Confession of Faith, and Ratification thereof At Edinburgh, February 7, 1649: [Scotland] Approves/ordains.
  8. Ratifying the Confession of Faith, and settling Presbyterian Church Government ACT 7th June 1690. [Scotland, both Confession and Presbyterian Church Government and Discipline document to read later] as “most conducive to the advancement of true piety and godliness, and the establishing of peace and tranquillity within this realm” and “the only Government of Christ’s Church within this kingdom”.

Summary of the above with last week: **WOW!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

**Assigned Readings for Wednesday, September 22, 2021:**

- Read *WCF* Chapter 1, “Of the Holy Scriptures” and corresponding Bible texts.
- Read Larger Catechism Q&A 1-6 and corresponding Bible texts
- Read Shorter Catechism Q&A 1-3 and corresponding Bible texts

**Suggested Reading:** “Collected Thoughts on Parenting and Its Righteous Product”, PECA website