



WHAT IS BIBLICISM?

“Believers must not fall into an unwarranted biblicism which, in the name of biblical authority, narrows the scope of its application to only that which the Bible explicitly states and not to that which it implies as well. This is a danger when the nature of Scripture is not understood. There is not a verse for every occasion. The Bible is not a book of detailed casistry providing answers for every imaginable ethical question. No doubt some have wished that the Bible were such a book.... Yet it still applies to every occasion. How so? It reveals general principles which, to be grasped, must be illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and, to be applied concretely in life, must be joined with reason and wisdom. The need of wisdom can be illustrated by this fact – almost all of life is lived between the lines of explicit biblical commands.”

The above quotes are found in chapter two of The Case for Traditional Protestantism by Terry Johnson.

Example: Wine at communion?

- Mentions only “fruit of the vine”

Number 15:1-2 required wine for Passover offerings

Revelation 14:18-19

WHAT ABOUT SOLA SCRIPTURA?

LBCF Chapter 1 - The Holy Scriptures

1. The Holy Scriptures are the only sufficient, certain, and infallible standard of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.¹ The light of nature and the works of creation and providence so clearly demonstrate the goodness, wisdom, and power of God that people are left without excuse; however, these demonstrations are not sufficient to give the knowledge of God and his will that is necessary for salvation.² Therefore, the Lord was pleased at different times and in various ways to reveal himself and to declare his will to his church.³ To preserve and propagate the truth better and to establish and comfort the church with greater certainty against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and the world, the Lord put this revelation completely in writing. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are absolutely necessary, because God’s former ways of revealing his will to his people have now ceased.⁴

“Tradition, properly understood, is subject to the authority and test of Scripture and as such has no intrinsic authority. Its authority is derived from Scripture.”

Clark, R. Scott. Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety, and Practice . P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.



BIBLICISM'S HISTORY OF REJECTING CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS

“No creed but Christ, no confession but the Bible”

Revivalist Charles Finney (1792–1875) advocated:

“Every uninspired attempt to frame for the church an authoritative standard of opinion which shall be regarded as the unquestionable exposition of the word of God, is not only impious in itself, but also a tacit assumption of the fundamental dogma of the Papacy. The Assembly of Divines did more than to assume the necessity of a Pope to give law to the opinions of men; they assumed to create an immortal one, or rather to embalm their own creed, and preserve it as the Pope of all generations. 93 For Finney, the very act of creating an ecclesiastical statement of faith was a worse presumption than a papal bull, since popes die, but the Westminster Confession will not, at least not soon enough for Finney. He continued, however, by raising an even more profound question about the relevance of the Confession in the modern period: “That an instrument framed by that assembly should in the nineteenth century be recognized as the standard of the church, or of an intelligent branch of it, is not only amazing, but I must say that it is most ridiculous.”94 Finney assumed that all reasonable modern people would share his assumption, that we are mature, enlightened, and have progressed beyond the backward views of seventeenth-century Reformed orthodoxy.

Clark, R. Scott. Recovering the Reformed Confession: Our Theology, Piety, and Practice . P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Let's Test Your Confession!

“I do want to make the point here that Christians are not divided between those who have creeds and confessions and those who do not; rather, they are divided between those who have public creeds and confessions that are written down and exist as public documents, subject to public scrutiny, evaluation, and critique, and those who have private creeds and confessions that are often improvised, unwritten, and thus not open to public scrutiny, not susceptible to evaluation and, crucially and ironically, not, therefore, subject to testing by Scripture to see whether they are true.”

Trueman, Carl R.. The Creedal Imperative (p. 15). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO PROPERLY INTERPRET THE BIBLE?

The Bible assumes one has awareness of General Revelation to interpret Special Revelation.

“We can summarize our point in this way: The Scriptures are sufficient to reveal to us the truth and will of God when read in conjunction with biblical wisdom. Biblical wisdom can be defined as understanding the nature of things. To do so I must know the ‘sacred



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writings,' 'which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. 3:15).

The above quotes are found in chapter two of *The Case for Traditional Protestantism* by Terry Johnson.

General Revelation

"What exactly, then, is general revelation, and why is it significant? Some suggest that the natural sciences are the study of general revelation and so go beyond special revelation. But since the Enlightenment, the natural sciences have typically studied creation not to know God but to know creation, and therefore are not focused on general revelation through creation. General revelation, properly speaking, is God's clear display of His glory and power in the works of creation and providence. As the Scriptures explain: "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge" (Ps. 19:1–2). "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made" (Rom. 1:19–20)." W. Robert Godfrey

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/general-revelation>

"Johnson later notes how a person may know what the Bible says but not really understand the nature of things and therefore misapply the Bible's teaching. The farmer doesn't plant in the spring because the Bible commands it. "He does so because he correctly perceives the nature of things and acts in harmony with it." The wise Christian understands general revelation and special revelation, and conforms his life "to the reality that both books (nature and the Bible) reveal."

Yes, the Bible is the Christian's highest authority in all of life, and yes, Scripture is sufficient for doctrine and life. But that doesn't mean we should ignore general revelation. It doesn't mean that there's a Bible verse for everything. It doesn't mean we can ignore context and flatten out the Bible. It doesn't mean we don't have to use wisdom in all areas of life. Biblicism sometimes sounds good because it uses Scripture so much, but we have to remember there is a wrong way to use it! And typically, as Augustine said, the person who has himself as a teacher has a fool for a student (cf. Prov. 1:7, 12:15, and 28:24). So we need to humbly listen to wise counsel and fervently pray for wisdom ourselves, which – thankfully! – God gives to those who ask in faith (James 1:5-6).

The above quotes are found in chapter two of *The Case for Traditional Protestantism* by Terry Johnson.



Special Revelation

“This distinction between general and special revelation focuses more on the extent and purpose of revelation. General revelation is referred to as “general” revelation because it has a general content and is revealed to a general audience. Through general revelation to all men, God communicates His existence, His power, and His glory, such that men are left without excuse.

A further distinction that must be made is the distinction between immediate and mediate general revelation. Immediate general revelation occurs without an intermediating agency. Mediate general revelation occurs through an intermediating agency...

General revelation, whether immediate or mediate, is directed to all men. It is, however, “not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation” (Westminster Confession of Faith, I.1). General revelation does not reveal Jesus Christ or His work of redemption for sinners. Thus there is a need for what is called “special revelation.” Special revelation is the revelation of the way of salvation.

One of the most important biblical texts describing God’s special revelation is found in Hebrews 1:1–2, which reads:

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.”

In times past, before the completion of Scripture, God revealed His redemptive work through the prophets by means of dreams, visions, and theophanies. But now, special revelation has received its permanent form in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (WCF I.1).” Keith Mathison <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/general-and-special-revelation-reformed-approach-science-and-scripture>

Ancient Creeds

Four formal creeds have become known as the ecumenical creeds of Christendom. These creeds, which were formulated at various points in church history, include the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and the Creed of Chalcedon. Identifies the unique roles of the Persons of the Trinity in redemption, concentrating in particular on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

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 Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven; and sitteth at 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 Spirit; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.



THE NICENE CREED

adopted A.D. 325; revised at Constantinople, A.D. 381

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, 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 was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and 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 in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets. And one holy 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. Amen.

THE CHALCEDONIAN CREED

adopted A.D. 451

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 according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, in confusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in 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 the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers handed down to us.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith: Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Spirit.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal.

Such as the Father is: such is the Son: and such is the Holy Spirit.



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The Father uncreated: the Son uncreated: and the Holy Spirit uncreated.

The Father incomprehensible: the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.

The Father eternal: the Son eternal: and the Holy Spirit eternal.

And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal.

And also there are not three uncreated: nor three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated: and one incomprehensible.

So likewise the Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Spirit Almighty.

And yet they are not three Almighty: but one Almighty.

So the Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Spirit is God.

And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.

So likewise the Father is Lord: the Son Lord: and the Holy Spirit Lord.

And yet not three Lords: but one Lord:

For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity: to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord:

So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion: to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten.

The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created: but begotten.

The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding.

So there is one Father, not three Fathers: one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.

And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another: none is greater, or less than another.

But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal.

So that in all things, as aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped.

He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.

God, of the Substance of the Father; begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance of His Mother, born into the world.

Perfect God: and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.

Equal to the Father, as touching His Godhead: and inferior to the Father as touching His Manhood.

Who although He be God and Man; yet He is not two, but one Christ.

One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God.

One altogether; not by confusion of Substance: but by unity of Person.

For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ;

Who suffered for our salvation: descended into hell: rose again the third day from the dead.

He ascended into heaven, He sitteth on the right hand of the Father God Almighty.

From whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;

And shall give account for their own works.



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And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire.

This is the Catholic Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he can not be saved.