

Discovery Hour
Westminster Confession
August 30, 2009
Dave Timmerman

The English Parliament called for the Westminster Assembly in 1643 for the purpose restricting the church in response to the Puritan movement. Puritanism was initially the distinctly English version of the Protestant Reformation which began in the 16th Century. The name itself, Puritan, refers to the purifying work this movement sought in the Church of England, but also in the individual soul and in society at large. Many in movement became frustrated with the Church of England and some of these emigrated to the United States helping to found the colonies.

Those present at the assembly had divergent views on church government and structure but very similar views on doctrine. They were particularly united in their desire to reject both Roman Catholicism and Arminianism. The resulting confession is extremely Calvinistic in its teaching. As J.M. Frame notes the Westminster Confession of Faith is “the last of the Reformation confessions and by far the most influential in the English speaking world” (Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, p. 1168).

The confession is the longest of those we have examined, covering the same topics as the earlier confessions in terms of the God head (Trinitarian), man, creation, sin, salvation, baptism, and communion. It also adds extensive sections on the Bible, the Sabbath, oaths (sacred and secular), as well as “God’s Eternal Decree,” and “Providence,” which we will be discussing this morning. The section on Predestination is on the backside of this handout. Discussions of the Calvinistic perspective often make use of an acronym, t-u-l-i-p, to help capture the major teachings.

T = Total Depravity

U = Unconditional Election

L = Limited Atonement

I = Irresistible Grace

P = Perseverance of the Saints

Time Line of Major Creeds and Confessions

Christ	_____				Today
150	325	700	1530	1647	
Old Roman Creed	Nicene Creed	Apostle’s Creed	Augsburg Confession &	Westminster Confession	

Luther's Catechism

Selection from the Westminster Confession on Election

Chapter III - Of God's Eternal Decree.

- i. God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass:(1) yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin,(2) nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.(3)
 - (1) Eph 1:11; Ro 11:33; Heb 6:17; Ro 9:15,18
 - (2) Jas 1:13,17; 1Jn 1:5
 - (3) Ac 2:23; Mt 17:12; Ac 4:27,28; Jn 19:11; Pr 16:33
- ii. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions,(1) yet hath He not decreed anything because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.(2)
 - (1) Ac 15:18; 1Sa 23:11,12; Mt 11:21,23
 - (2) Ro 9:11,13,16,18
- iii. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels(1) are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.(2)
 - (1) 1Ti 5:21; Mt 25:41
 - (2) Ro 9:22,23; Eph 1:5,6; Pr 16:4
- iv. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.(1)
 - (1) 2Ti 2:19; Jn 13:18
- v. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory,(1) out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto;(2) and all to the praise of His glorious grace.(3)
 - (1) Eph 1:4,9,11; Ro 8:30; 2Ti 1:9; 1Th 5:9
 - (2) Ro 9:11,13,16; Eph 1:4,9
 - (3) Eph 1:6,12
- vi. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto.(1) Wherefore, they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ;(2) are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified,(3) and kept by His power, through faith, unto salvation.(4) Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.(5)
 - (1) 1Pe 1:2; Eph 1:4,5; Eph 2:10; 2Th 2:13
 - (2) 1Th 5:9,10; Tit 2:14
 - (3) Ro 8:30; Eph 1:5; 2Th 2:13
 - (4) 1Pe 1:5
 - (5) Jn 17:9; Ro 8:28; Jn 6:64,65; Jn 10:26; Jn 8:47; 1Jn 2:19
- vii. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.(1)
 - (1) Mt 11:25,26; Ro 9:17,18,21,22; 2Ti 2:19,20; Jude 4; 1Pe 2:8
- viii. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care,(1) that men, attending the will of God revealed in His Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election.(2) So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God,(3) and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation, to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.(4)
 - (1) Ro 9:20; Ro 11:33; Dt 29:29 The Westminster Confession of Faith, 5

- (2) 2Pe 1:10
- (3) Eph 1:6; Ro 11:33
- (4) Ro 11:5,6,20; 2Pe 1:10; Ro 8:33; Lk 10:20

Source ---

http://www.gracefallbrook.org/westminster_standards/The_Westminster_Confession_of_Faith.pdf