

*THE*  
CONFESSIONS  
*and the*  
CHURCH ORDER  
*of the*  
Protestant Reformed  
Churches



Protestant Reformed Churches  
in America

© 2005 by Protestant Reformed Churches in America

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

No part of this book may be used or reprinted in any  
form without written permission from the publisher,  
except in the case of brief quotations used in a critical  
article or review.

Scripture cited is taken from the King James  
(Authorized) Version

Book cover & format design by Jeff Steenholdt

Protestant Reformed Churches in America

4949 Ivanrest Ave., S. W.

Grandville, MI 49418-9709 USA

Phone: (616) 531-1490

Fax: (616) 531-3033

Website: [www.prca.org](http://www.prca.org)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface .....	3
Ecumenical Creeds	
Introduction to the Ecumenical Creeds.....	7
Introduction to the Apostles' Creed.....	8
Apostles' Creed.....	9
Introduction to the Nicene Creed.....	10
Nicene Creed.....	11
Introduction to the Athanasian Creed.....	12
Athanasian Creed.....	13
Introduction to the Creed of Chalcedon.....	16
Creed of Chalcedon.....	17
Reformed Creeds	
Introduction to the Reformed Creeds.....	20
Introduction to the Belgic Confession of Faith.....	22
Belgic Confession of Faith.....	23
Introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism.....	82
Heidelberg Catechism.....	83
Introduction to the Compendium of the Christian Religion.....	142
A Compendium of the Christian Religion.....	143
Introduction to the Canons of Dordrecht.....	154
Canons of Dordrecht.....	155
Indexes to the Creeds	
Harmony of the Creeds.....	184
Doctrine Index .....	190
Word Index .....	198
Scripture Index .....	244
Liturgical Forms	
Introduction to Liturgical Forms.....	256
Form for the Administration of Baptism.....	258
Form for Public Confession of Faith.....	266
Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper.....	268
Form for Excommunication.....	276
Form for Readmitting Excommunicated Persons.....	280
Form for Ordination (or installation) of Ministers of God's Word.....	284
Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons.....	290
Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology.....	296
Form for the Ordination (or Installation) of Missionaries.....	300
Form for the Confirmation of Marriage before the Church.....	306
Consolation of the Sick.....	312
Introduction to the Formula of Subscription.....	324
Formula of Subscription.....	326

Indexes to the Liturgical Forms	
Doctrine Index.....	330
Word Index.....	336
Scripture Index.....	372
Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches	
Introduction to the Church Order.....	376
Church Order.....	378
Index of the Church Order.....	406
Declaration of Principles of the Protestant Reformed Churches	
Introduction to the Declaration of Principles.....	410
Declaration of Principles.....	412



# PREFACE

This study edition of the confessions had its origin at the 1995 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches. A committee that was formed to investigate the reprinting of our Psalter recommended that in addition to the reprint of the Psalter an additional book be produced as a study edition of our creeds and minor confessions to suit the instructional needs of our churches. Synod 1995 went on record favoring that concept and mandated the Catechism Book Committee to pursue the matter. Subsequent synods approved various matters regarding the contents, the ordering of the material, and the formatting. The Synod of 2005 gave final approval and authorized the publishing and distributing of the book.

We are indebted to Mr. Fred Hanko for the tremendous time and the professional touch that he has given to this project. The copy-editing, the layout, and especially the indexing of the creeds involved hundreds of hours of labor. It is only because of Mr. Hanko's selfless devotion to this project over the past two years that we are able to present the book to the churches at this time.

Introductions are provided before each document. These introductions are not intended to be exhaustive. Their purpose is to identify and to indicate something of the significance of each document in the history of Christ's church. The truth which we embrace is no new truth, but has been the confession of the church through the ages. The Holy Spirit of truth has been at work in His church using various influences to lead the church to formulate statements concerning the teaching of God's Word. The confessions are officially adopted statements of the church concerning what she believes to be the teaching of Scripture. As is indicated in the introductions, some of the confessions deal only with one point of doctrine, others with several points, and yet others treat most or all the truths of Scripture.

The Reformed Christian values the confessions. Numerous names are given to the confessions: symbols, confessions, or creeds. A *symbol* is a sign by which one is distinguished from another. The confessions are signs that represent our faith over against the world and other Christians and churches. The word *confession* literally means *to speak with*. The idea is that the church expresses her faith in unison with one another and with Jesus Christ, her Head. The word *creed* is a word derived from the Latin *credere* which means *to believe*. This statement speaks of the content of the confession as an object of faith.

We can speak of at least four uses of the confessions. First, the confessions are the means by which the church expresses her faith over against the world, and by which specifically, we as Protestant Reformed Churches, express our faith over against other churches. Secondly, the confessions are means to preserve the truth as it is delivered from one generation to the next throughout the ages. Thirdly, the confessions serve as the bond that unites us as believers and churches. Fourth, the confessions serve as a wonderful teaching tool.

With especially this last purpose in mind, this book has been published. God has given us His Word as the chief source of all teaching and instruction. No confession can exhaust the knowledge of God as it is set forth in the Bible. But, with the church of all ages, we treasure the confessions because they contain a systematized statement of the Bible's teachings. Since the confessions are the teaching of God's word, they are authoritative for the life and walk of the child of God. The Reformed Christian must know and live according to his confessions. He must stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before and pray that the Spirit of Christ will continue to lead the church to a greater understanding of the truth.

Our prayer is that God will use this book as a means to encourage the reading and study of the confessions. May the Spirit of truth continue His labors in our midst.

Protestant Reformed Synod

June, 2005

