

Westminster Confession of Faith 2023 Declaration

We gather as members of the Body of Christ in the United Kingdom to make a Confession of Faith for the Church in these nations of the British Isles. We do this in humble recognition that we stand on the unadulterated word of God, yet express our appreciation and thanks to previous generations of believers for their faithful and steadfast witness. There were many who loved not their lives even unto death, and we owe them much.

We honour the diligent scholars and learned theologians who were involved in producing the original Westminster Confession of Faith in 1646, and we affirm that their motives in doing this were good and godly. At the same time, we acknowledge that all theology can only ever be an imperfect attempt to explain and describe what can never fully be known or understood by man. Though God Himself is unchanging, the degree of revelation sinful man can receive may develop over time. We see this, for example, in how Christians came to understand in the 18th and 19th centuries that both the slave trade and slavery itself are wrong, and so campaigned for these evils to end, it is thus right to reflect on what our forefathers bequeathed to us.

We believe these are days when God desires to bring to His Church not reformation, but restoration – to bring the Church back to its original beauty, purity, holiness, and power. Consequently, **we affirm that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have not ceased, that they are available to believers now as in the past, and that God longs to bestow these good gifts on His children now and in the days ahead (Matthew 7:9-11).**

The Scriptures contain paradoxes – things our finite nature and limited understanding find hard to hold together, but which the Bible asserts to be equally true. We are called to stand in faith on the Word of God, holding such paradoxes in tension where need be. As the Bible teaches both Predestination and Free Will, and since foreknowledge is not the same as foreordaining, we must beware of putting words into God's mouth. We therefore assert the enduring truth that God "[takes] no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but [would] rather that they turn from their ways and live." (Ezekiel 33:11). Christ died that all might be set free and be able to choose salvation.

Standing outside time, God knows the choices human beings will make, but He does not play tricks on us, meaning our ability to choose is real, as are the consequences of our choices. We believe salvation is available to any repentant sinner who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. No limitation was expressed when Paul wrote, "if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'" (Romans 10:9-11).

Our exercise of Free Will can often bring bad results, which can allow access to evil spiritual forces, but neither of these things are the will of God. His desire at all times and in all places is for our good, for "the LORD is good and his love endures for ever" (Psalm 100:5), "the LORD is good to all" (Psalm 145:9), "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and

sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45), “everything God created is good” (1 Timothy 4:4), and “every good and perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17). God’s “eyes are too pure to look on evil” (Habakkuk 1:13).

Those who wrote the original Westminster Confession of Faith did not have the blessing of seeing how God has miraculously fulfilled his Word through creation of the modern state of Israel in 1948, when “a country ... [was] born in a day ... [and] a nation ... brought forth in a moment” (Isaiah 66:8). These events confirm the Church has not replaced Israel and the Jewish people in God’s plans and purposes. **We affirm that God’s promises to them remain in full force and effect.**

We affirm also that the Holy Spirit knows no boundaries save those that flow from God’s nature, Word, and such restrictions as He has chosen to place upon Himself. We call on the Body of Christ to arise in Holy Spirit power in these days, and proclaim in faith that by the grace of God, it shall be so.

We declared this at Westminster London, 31st October 2023