

# The Creeds and Confessions

In the Book of Praise, on the pages 493 to 588, you can find the creeds and confessions.

## **Creeds** (see Book of Praise, p. 493-496)

Read the introduction to all the Creeds (p.493).

Which Creeds do we have?

How are they called? (See p. 493)

Why?

The creeds were written for two reasons.

First, to give a short summary of the Biblical doctrine, so that those who wanted to join the church and the youth who wanted to profess their faith, could be taught using these creeds.

Especially the Apostle's Creed is written for this purpose.

Second, to defend the Christian doctrine against heresies, which came up in the first centuries after the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Especially the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed are written for this purpose.

## **Confessions** (Book of Praise, p. 499-588, the Three Forms of Unity)

What are confessions?

Which Confessions do we have?

How are they called? (p. 499)

Why?

These confessions are adopted by the Great Synod of Dort (1618-1619) as the confessions of the church. That was just after the Great Reformation. Most of the Reformed Churches all over the earth nowadays have these three confessions, together with the creeds, as their doctrinal standards. Many of the Reformed Churches are from Dutch origin.

Other churches, which call themselves 'presbyterian' and have their origins in Great Britain, have another Reformed Confession which they use as their doctrinal standard. This is the Westminster Confession (composed by the Westminster Assembly in 1647).

In the Reformed Churches, the office bearers were required to subscribe to the three confessions. In the Canadian Reformed Churches, we still use a form of subscription, which every newly ordained office-bearer has to sign, indicating with that his subscription to these three confessions as the three forms of unity.

One of these three confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism, is used since 1563 as a book for catechism instruction in the Reformed Churches, and we still use it for that purpose.

# The Heidelberg Catechism

The Heidelberg catechism is one of the three Forms of Unity.

The three forms of unity were adopted by the great Synod of Dort (The Netherlands) in 1618-1619. From that time, they were, together with the three creeds, the official documents of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. They are called the 'doctrinal standards'.

After the Second World War, many members of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands came to Canada and Australia and they instituted reformed churches in those countries (the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Free Reformed Churches of Australia). These churches also accepted the three creeds and the three forms of unity as their official doctrinal standards.

The Heidelberg Catechism is used as a summary of what the Bible teaches us about our salvation. Everything in the Heidelberg Catechism comes from the Bible. It's nothing more than what the Bible teaches us.

Read page 517 of your book of praise.

This is the introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism.



*Picture left: the castle of Heidelberg, from where Elector Frederick III ruled over the Palatinate.  
Picture right: the Holy Ghost church, where Caspar Olevianus and Zacharias Ursinus preached.*

When and where was the Heidelberg Catechism written?

Who wrote the Heidelberg Catechism?

For what purpose was it made?

Go to page 518 of your Book of Praise and read question and answer 2.  
There three things are mentioned which are important. Which three?

In Lord's Day 2 to 52 the Catechism tells us more about these three important parts of our faith.