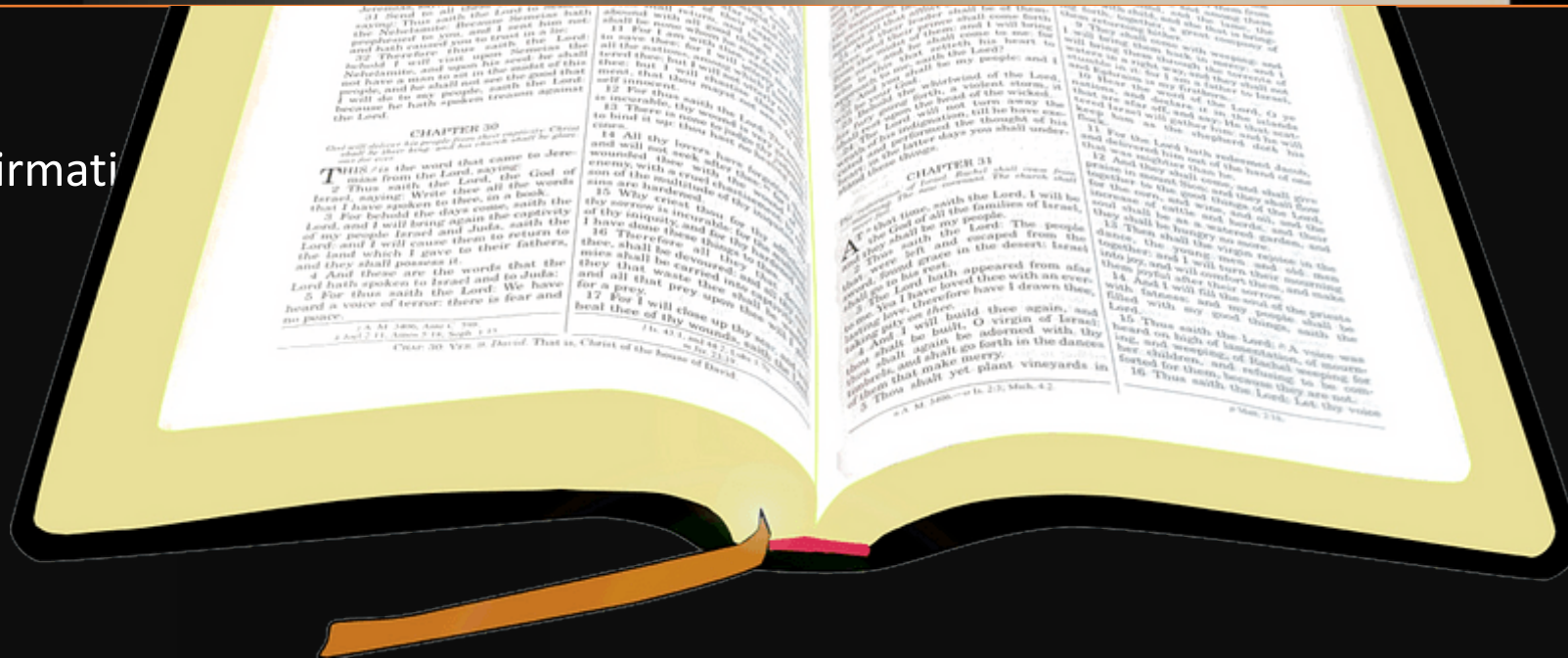


Baptist Creeds, Confessions, Covenants & Constitutions

Exploring the place of common affirmati
faith and practice among Baptists



Baptist Creeds, Confessions, Covenants & Constitutions

Terms

- ❖ Creeds & Confessions used interchangeably

Creedalism Timothy George (SBC)

- ❖ Uniform Christian belief imposed through State coercion

Lordship of Christ

- ❖ Theological standard elevated above the authority of Scripture

Sola Scriptura

Baptists are NOT creedal

Liberty of conscience

Baptist Creeds, Confessions, Covenants & Constitutions

Purpose of Confessions (Origins)

- ❖ Continuity with faith revealed in Scripture
- ❖ Principles for interpreting Scripture
- ❖ Distinctiveness from other Protestants
 - Believers' Baptism rather than infant baptism
 - Local Church membership visible, regenerate, baptised
- ❖ Distinctiveness from other Baptists
 - General Baptists Particular Baptists
 - Orthodox Creed 1679* *Second London Confession 1689*

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Purpose of Covenants (Local Church)

- ❖ Provides a summary of the Confession of faith
2022 - Statement of faith
- ❖ Describes the purpose of the local church
2022 - Objects
- ❖ Describes how members of the local Baptist church should live
2022 - Values

Baptist Creeds, Confessions, Covenants & Constitutions

Baptist Unity and Uniformity

Theological priority: Scripture the [a] source of God's revelation to humanity

- ❖ Contending for the Truth – oppose error. “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” Jude 1:3
“The Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from his Word” (John Robinson 1620)
- ❖ Maintaining unity. “endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’ Eph 4:3
- ❖ Practising love. Jesus command – “love one another as I have loved you.
“In essentials [for salvation] unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity”

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Baptist Unity and Uniformity

Defending the truth often led to splits

Within both General and Particulars

- baptism & membership, open/ closed Lord's Supper
- Laying on of hands at baptism; Hymn singing

Particular Baptist Splits

- Double Predestination, superlapsarian / sublapsarian
- Mission – Baptist Mission Society 1792 UK, Triennial Convention 1814 USA;
- slavery (formation of Southern Baptist Convention 1845)
- Liberal Theology (SBC *Baptist Faith and Message* 1925, 1963, 1994) split from BWA 2004, . Cooperative Baptist Fellowship 2003 split from SBC join BWA.

Advocating love and unity sometimes led to mergers

- Formation of Baptist Union of Great Britain (1891) – required no Confession of Faith; 2018 Constitution has only 3 general statements as Basis of Union.
- Formation of Baptist World Alliance (1905) – unity with diversity *Principles and Guidelines for intra-Baptist Relationships* 2005

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NSW Baptists Unity and Uniformity

1834 Saunders – Bathurst Street Church. Particular Baptist with open membership and open communion

1868 Webb- Baptist Association. Particular Baptist – Scripture the only rule of faith and practice. membership for all Baptist Churches and Baptised persons, no interference with individual churches

1870 Webb / Greenwood – Baptist Union – removes reference to Baptist Churches and Baptised persons. Scripture the only rule of faith and practice. **Strict and Particular Baptists**

1872 Greenwood – ‘statement of faith’ in ‘Model Trust Deed’, only 8 headings.

1919 Baptist Union Incorporation Act incorporates unchanged 1872 ‘statement of faith’

1979 Revision of Statement of Faith. 13 headings, each heading explained.

2000 Statement of Principle – applies only to ministers.

7 Principles Focus on autonomy of the local church, congregational government, open membership (except for Property Trust matters), counsel from Baptist Churches of NSW/ACT, pastor as servant leader cooperating with giftedness of others

2012 First Constitution approved incorporating 1979 Statement of Beliefs.

2017 Revised Constitution.

Baptist Creeds, Confessions, Covenants & Constitutions

NSW Baptists Unity and Uniformity

Some Controversies among us

Connexionalism v Autonomy of the local church

Liberal theology, higher criticism, interpreting the Old Testament

Social gospel, justice

Merging with Congregationalists; Merging with Churches of Christ

World Council of Churches (Ecumenism)

Biblical Inspiration / Inerrancy

Pentecostals / Charismatics

Cooperation with Roman Catholics (Sydney College of Divinity debate)

Women in ministry

Reformed Baptists

Outcomes

Individuals leave for other denominations, occasionally a church leaves with its pastor

Sub-groups form and stay within Association of Baptists Churches of NSW & ACT

Baptist Creeds, Confessions, Covenants & Constitutions

NSW Baptists Unity and Uniformity

Since 1870 majority of NSW / ACT Baptists have followed the following principles:

a minimal evangelical theological statement;

autonomy of the local church;

maintaining unity by focusing on cooperative evangelism and mission;

encompassing diversity of theological opinions.

Tends towards: Unity, Love, Diversity, Inclusion

There has always been alternative views pushing for a minority view; e.g. more detailed theological statements, or greater authority of the Association over the local church

Tends towards: Truth, Uniformity, Exclusion

The gathered delegates of the Association meeting in
Assembly discern the mind of Christ.