

CONFESSING THE FAITH



Chapter 3 Of God's Decree

April 10 - 11, 2026

Hosted by: Free Grace Baptist Church
Venue: Free Reformed Church



This workbook belongs to:

Mobile phone number:

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CONFERENCE VISION & PURPOSE



We aim to improve our understanding of the historical context and theological content of the Second London, Westminster, Savoy, and Belgic Confessions of Faith, which we believe to be an accurate summary statement of the chief doctrines of the Christian religion.

The purpose is to:

- Support reformed pastors and elders in orthodox understanding of our confession;
- Give an opportunity for church leaders and congregants to access in-person advanced learning and take a deep dive into confessional theologies;
- Promote unity among our local reformed congregations by fostering collegial relations.



NETWORK: CHILLIWACKFRC

PASSWORD: 6047952855

Day 1: April 10	Session Time (PST)	Title	Presenter
	12 - 1 PM	Registration	
	1:00 PM Welcome and Key Information for the Conference by Pastor Jim Butler		
	1:15 PM	Introduction - God's Decree in the Puritan Confessions	Dr. James Renihan
	2:15 PM Washroom Break		
	2:30 PM	Introducing "Of God's Decree"	Dr. Richard Barcellos
	3:30 PM Coffee Break		
	4:00 PM	Is God the Author of Sin?	Dr. Richard Barcellos
	5:00 PM DINNER		
	7:00 PM	Pastoral Sermon	Pastor David Charles

Day 2: April 11	Session Time (PST)	Title	Presenter
	8:00 AM	The End or Goal of God's Decree	Dr. Richard Barcellos
	9:00 AM Coffee Break		
	9:30 AM	From Eternity to Here: How God's Decree Brings Life	Dr. James Renihan
	10:30 AM Washroom Break		
	10:45 AM	Handle with Care: The Benefits of Understanding God's Decree	Dr. James Renihan
	11:45 AM	Panel Q&A Session	Pastor Jim Butler
	12:30 PM	Closing	

Reformed Book Services Hours:

Friday - 12-8:30pm
Saturday - 8:30-10:45am

Speakers

James Renihan

Dr. James M. Renihan serves as the President of the International Reformed Baptist Seminary (IRBS) in Mansfield, Texas. He began his ministry with church planting in central Massachusetts before moving to Escondido, California, in 1998 to serve as Dean of the newly formed Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies.

In 2018, when the institute became IRBS Theological Seminary, he was appointed its first president. Dr. Renihan has also served as a pastor in churches across Massachusetts, New York, and California.



Richard Barcellos

Dr. Richard C. Barcellos is the pastor of Grace Reformed Baptist Church in Palmdale, California, and serves as Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology at the International Reformed Baptist Seminary (IRBS). He holds a B.S. from California State University, Fresno; an M.Div. from The Master's Seminary; and both a Th.M. and Ph.D. from Whitefield Theological Seminary.

Dr. Barcellos is the author of several works, including *Trinity & Creation*, *The Covenant of Works*, and *Getting the Garden Right*.



David Charles

David Charles has served as the pastor of Providence Reformed Baptist Church for 27 years. He studied at the Reformed Baptist School of Theology under Dr. Sam Waldron, deepening his commitment to sound doctrine and Christ-centered ministry.

David has been married to his beloved wife for 47 years. Together, they have raised five children and rejoice in the blessing of twelve grandchildren. His life and ministry reflect a steadfast devotion to the Word of God, the local church, and the covenantal faithfulness of God across generations.



HYMN 524 - GUIDE ME, O THOU GREAT JEHOVAH

1. Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy pow'rful hand;
Bread of heaven,
Bread of heaven,
feed me 'til I want no more,
feed me 'til I want no more.

2. Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the healing stream doth flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through;
strong Deliv'rer,
strong Deliv'rer,
be thou still my strength and shield,
be thou still my strength and shield.

3. When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death, and hell's Destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side;
songs of praises,
songs of praises
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

AMEN.

FULL CONFESSIONS



SECOND LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION (1689)



WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH (WCF)



BELGIC CONFESSION OF FAITH (BCF)



WCF/1689/BELGIC SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON



Scan here to access all the confessions
and resources on the website.

2LCF CHAPTER 2: OF GOD AND THE HOLY TRINITY

Paragraph 1

1. The Lord our God is but (a) one only living, and true God; whose (b) subsistence is in and of himself, (c) infinite in being, and perfection, whose Essence cannot be comprehended by any but himself; (d) a most pure spirit, (e) invisible, without body, parts, or passions, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light, which no man can approach unto, who is (f) immutable, (g) immense, (h) eternal, incomprehensible, (i) Almighty, every way infinite, (k) most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute, (l) working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable, and most righteous will, (m) for his own glory, most loving, gracious, merciful, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, (n) the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and withal most just, (o) and terrible in his judgements, (p) hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the (q) guilty.

a 1 Cor. 8.4 6. Deut. 6.4; b Jer 10.10. Isaiah 48.12; c Exod 3.14; d Joh. 4.24; e 1 Tim. 1.17. Deut. 4.15,16; f Mal. 3.6; g 1 King. 8.27. Jer. 23.23; h Ps. 90.2; i Gen. 17.1; k Isa. 6.3; l Ps. 115.3. Isa. 46.10; m Pro. 16.4. Rom. 11.36; n Exod. 34.6,7. Hebr. 11.6; o Neh. 9.32,33; p Ps. 5.5,6; q Exod. 34.7. Nahum. 1,2,3.

Paragraph 2

God having all (r) life, (s) glory, (t) goodness, blessedness, in and of himself: is alone in, and unto himself all-sufficient, not (u) standing in need of any creature which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them, he is the alone fountain of all Being, (x) of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things, and he hath most sovereign (y) dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth; in his sight (z) all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is (a) infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent, or uncertain; he is most holy in all his counsels, in (b) all his Works, and in all his commands; to him is due (c) from angels and men, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience as creatures they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them.

r Joh. 5.26; s Ps. 148.13; t Ps. 119.68; u Job, 22.2,3; x Rom. 11.34.35,36; y Dan. 4.25. and v.34,35; z Heb. 4.13; a Ezek. 11.5 Act. 15.18; b Ps. 145.17.

Confession Comparison

1689 London Baptist Confession (LBCF)

1646 Westminster Confession (W/CF)

1561 Belgic Confession (BCF)



Side by side comparison provided by James N. Anderson

Full PDF available:

www.proginosko.com/docs/lbcf_wcf_belgic.pdf

1646 Westminster Confession

1. Chapter I Of the Holy Scripture
2. Chapter II Of God, and of the Holy Trinity
3. Chapter III Of God's Eternal Decree
4. Chapter IV Of Creation
5. Chapter V Of Providence
6. Chapter VI Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and the Punishment thereof
7. Chapter VII Of God's Covenant with Man
8. Chapter VIII Of Christ the Mediator
9. Chapter IX Of Free Will
10. Chapter X Of Effectual Calling
11. Chapter XI Of Justification
12. Chapter XII Of Adoption
13. Chapter XIII Of Sanctification
14. Chapter XIV Of Saving Faith
15. Chapter XV Of Repentance unto Life
16. Chapter XVI Of Good Works
17. Chapter XVII Of the Perseverance Of the Saints
18. Chapter XVIII Of Assurance Of Grace and Salvation
19. Chapter XIX Of the Law Of God
20. Chapter XX Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty Of Conscience
21. Chapter XXI Of Religious Worship, and the Sabbath Day
22. Chapter XXII Of Lawful Oaths and Vows
23. Chapter XXIII Of the Civil Magistrate
24. Chapter XXIV Of Marriage and Divorce
25. Chapter XXV Of the Church

1561 Belgic Confession

- Article 1: The Only God
- Article 2: The Means by Which We Know God
- Article 3: The Written Word of God
- Article 4: The Canonical Books
- Article 5: The **Authority** of Scripture
- Article 6: The Difference Between Canonical and Apocryphal Books
- Article 7: The Sufficiency of Scripture
- Article 8: The Trinity
- Article 9: The Scriptural Witness on the Trinity
- Article 10: The Deity of Christ
- Article 11: The Deity of the Holy Spirit
- Article 12: The Creation of All Things
- Article 13: The Doctrine of God's Providence
- Article 14: The Creation and Fall of Man
- Article 15: The Doctrine of Original Sin
- Article 16: The Doctrine of Election
- Article 17: The Recovery of Fallen Man
- Article 18: The Incarnation
- Article 19: The Two Natures of Christ
- Article 20: The Justice and Mercy of God in Christ
- Article 21: The Atonement
- Article 22: The Righteousness of Faith
- Article 23: The Justification of Sinners
- Article 24: The Sanctification of Sinners
- Article 25: The Fulfillment of the Law
- Article 26: The Intercession of Christ
- Article 27: The Holy Catholic Church
- Article 28: The Obligations of Church Members



26. Chapter XXVI Of the Communion Of Saints
27. Chapter XXVII Of the Sacraments
28. Chapter XXVIII Of Baptism
29. Chapter XXIX Of the Lord's Supper
30. Chapter XXX Of Church Censures
31. Chapter XXXI Of Synods and Councils
32. Chapter XXXII Of the State Of Men after Death,
and Of the Resurrection Of the Dead
33. Chapter XXXIII Of the Last Judgment

Article 29: The Marks of the True Church
Article 30: The Government of the Church
Article 31: The Officers of the Church
Article 32: The Order and Discipline of the Church
Article 33: The Sacraments
Article 34: The Sacrament of Baptism
Article 35: The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper
Article 36: The Civil Government
Article 37: The Last Judgment

LBCF - Chapter 3: Of God's Decree

1. God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established, in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree.

2. Although God knoweth whatsoever may or can come to pass, upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything, because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

WCF - Chapter 3: Of God's Eternal Decree

1. God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

2. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass, upon all supposed conditions; yet hath he not decreed any thing because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass, upon such conditions.

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated, **or foreordained to eternal life through Jesus Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice.**

4. 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.

5. Those of mankind that are predestinated to 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, out of his **mere** free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a **condition** or **cause** moving him thereunto.

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated **unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.**

4. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

5. 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, out of his free grace and love **alone, 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; **and all to the praise of his glorious grace.**

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so he hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto; wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ,

6. 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. Wherefore they who are elected being fallen in Adam are redeemed by Christ,

Article 16: The Doctrine of Election

We believe that-- all Adam's descendants having thus fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of the first man-- God showed himself to be as he is: merciful and just. He is merciful in withdrawing and saving from this perdition those whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel, has elected and chosen in Jesus Christ our Lord by his pure goodness, without any consideration of their works. He is just in leaving the others in their ruin and fall into which they plunged themselves.

by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

7. 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.

7. The doctrine of the high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, 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; so shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending to 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. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

SESSION 1

Introduction – God’s Decree in the Puritan Confessions

Speaker: Dr. James Renihan

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SESSION 1 CONTINUED

PSALM 104A: 8-11

BLESS THE LORD, MY SOUL!

8. LORD, how many are your wonders!
Wisely you have made them all.
Earth is full of all your creatures,
living things both great and small.
Here's the sea, so vast and spacious,
filled with life that multiplies.
There leviathan is playing;
there the sailing ships pass by.

9. All your creatures look to you, LORD,
waiting for the food they need.
When you give, your creatures gather;
from your open hand they feed.
When you hide your face, they're troubled;
lifeless, they to dust go down.
When you send your Spirit, you create
them and renew the ground.

10. May the glory of the LORD our
God endure eternally;
may the LORD rejoice in all his
mighty works and glorious deeds,
he looks on his whole creation,
causing earth to shake in fear,
he makes all the mountains tremble;
smoke and flames of fire appear.

11. I will praise the LORD my God with
all my life and all my voice.
May my meditation please him,
for I, in the LORD, rejoice.
Let all sinners be demolished;
let the wicked be no more!
Bless the LORD, my soul, O praise him!
Come, my soul, and praise the LORD!

AMEN.

SESSION 2

Introducing “Of God’s Decree”

Speaker: Dr. Richard Barcellos

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SESSION 2 CONTINUED

HYMN 543

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

1. Fight the good fight with all thy might;
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right:
lay hold on life, and it shall be
thy joy and crown eternally.

2. Run the straight race through God's good grace,
lift up thine eyes, and seek his face;
life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

3. Cast care aside; upon thy Guide
lean, and his mercy will provide;
lean, and the trusting soul shall prove,
Christ is its life and Christ its love.

4. Faint not, nor fear, his arms are near;
he changeth not, and thou art dear;
only believe, and thou shalt see
that Christ is all in all to thee.

AMEN.

SESSION 3

Is God the Author of Sin?

Speaker: Dr. Richard Barcellos

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SESSION 3 CONTINUED

HYMN 242 - FATHER, LONG BEFORE CREATION

1. Father, long before creation
you had chosen us in love,
and that love so deep, so moving,
draws us close to Christ above.
Still it keeps us
firmly fixed in Christ alone.

2. Though the world may change its fashion,
you will still remain the same;
your compassion and your cov'nant
through all ages will remain.
Your own children
shall forever praise your name.

3. Your compassion is our story,
is our boasting all the day;
mercy free and never failing
moves our will, directs our way.
God so loved us
that he gave his only Son.

4. Loving Father, now before you
we shall ever sing your grace,
and our song will sound forever
when we see you face to face,
giving glory
to the Lamb upon the throne.

AMEN.

SESSION 4

Pastoral Sermon

Speaker: Pastor David Charles

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SESSION 4 CONTINUED

PSALTER 150C

SING HALLELUJAH!

PRAISE THE LORD!

1. Sing hallelujah! Praise the LORD!
Praise God within his sacred courts!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Praise, praise him in his heav'nly height!
Praise, praise him for his deeds of might!
O praise him! O praise him!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

2. Praise God whose majesty abounds!
O praise him with the trumpet sound!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Praise God with lute and harp and strings,
with dance and pipe and tambourine!
O praise him! O praise him!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

3. With sounding cymbals praise the LORD!
With clashing cymbals praise aloud!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Let all that breathes now praise the LORD!
O praise the LORD forevermore!
O praise him! O praise him!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

AMEN.

SESSION 5

The End or Goal of God's Decree

Speaker: Dr. Richard Barcellos

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SESSION 5 CONTINUED

PSALTER 146

PRAISE THE LORD!

MY SOUL, O PRAISE HIM!

1. Praise the LORD! My soul, O praise him!
I will praise him all my days.
I will sing while I have being;
I will sing to God my praise!
Put no confidence in princes,
mortal men who cannot save.
All their plans will come to nothing
when they perish in the grave.

2. O how blest the man who trusts in
Jacob's God to be his aid.
O how blest the one whose hope upon
the LORD his God is stayed,
he who made the earth and heaven
and the seas, with all their store;
he who keeps his word forever,
he is faithful evermore.

3. He will always render justice
for the sake of those oppressed.
He gives food to those who hunger,
satisfies their emptiness.
God releases all the pris'ners,
to the blind the LORD gives sight.
He lifts up those bowed in anguish
and relieves them from their plight.

4. How the LORD loves all the righteous,
and the alien defends,
helps the orphan and the widow,
judgment on the wicked sends.
God the LORD will reign forever;
Zion's God forevermore
reigns through ev'ry generation.
Hallelujah! Praise the LORD!

AMEN.

SESSION 6

From Eternity to Here: How God's Decree Brings Life

Speaker: Dr. James Renihan

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SESSION 6 CONTINUED

HYMN 476

IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

1. When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
"It is well, it is well with my soul."
It is well with my soul;
it is well, it is well with my soul.

2. Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
let this blest assurance control,
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
and has shed his own blood for my soul.
It is well with my soul;
it is well, it is well with my soul.

3. My sin--O the bliss of this glorious thought!--
my sin, not in part, but the whole,
is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more;
praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!
It is well with my soul;
it is well, it is well with my soul.

4. O Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
the clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
the trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend;
"Even so"--it is well with my soul.
It is well with my soul;
it is well, it is well with my soul.

AMEN.

SESSION 7

Handle with Care: The Benefits of Understanding God's Decree

Speaker: Dr. James Renihan

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SESSION 7 CONTINUED

HYMN 421

CHRIST SHALL HAVE DOMINION

1. Christ shall have dominion over land and sea,
earth's remotest regions shall his empire be;
they that wilds inhabit shall their worship bring,
kings shall render tribute, nations serve our King.
Christ shall have dominion over land and sea,
earth's remotest regions shall his empire be.

2. When the needy seek him, he will mercy show;
yea, the weak and helpless shall his pity know;
he will surely save them from oppression's might,
for their lives are precious in his holy sight.
Christ shall have dominion over land and sea,
earth's remotest regions shall his empire be.

3. Ever and forever shall his name endure;
long as suns continue it shall stand secure;
and in him forever all men shall be blest,
and all nations hail him King of kings confessed.
Christ shall have dominion over land and sea,
earth's remotest regions shall his empire be.

4. Unto God Almighty joyful Zion sings;
he alone is glorious, doing wondrous things.
Evermore, ye people, bless his glorious name,
his eternal glory through the earth proclaim.
Christ shall have dominion over land and sea,
earth's remotest regions shall his empire be.

AMEN.

PANEL Q&A SESSION

Speakers:

Dr. James Renihan, Dr. Richard Barcellos, Pastor David Charles

Facilitator: Jim Butler

Instructions

Ask your questions in one of the following ways:

1. Scan the QR code for submitting questions
2. Join at slido.com with CTF2026



A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing questions.

Q&A SESSION CONTINUED

FEEDBACK SURVEY

Thank you for attending the Confessing the Faith Conference!

Please take a moment to scan the QR link and complete the survey, so that we can use the feedback to improve future conferences.



www.ConfessingTheFaith.ca

