

**The Metaphysics of the Westminster Confession of Faith.**

HTH 405IS

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## Introduction

*The Westminster Confession of Faith* is one of the most important documents in the history of the Christian church. It is adhered to by all of those that would call themselves confessional Presbyterian.<sup>1</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith* was the main influence for the Confessions that followed it, such as the well known *1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith*.<sup>2</sup> It might be surprising that because of this wide influence and use, that the purpose that the document was created for was a failure.<sup>3</sup> Drawn up at the order of Parliament in the middle of the English civil war between the parliamentarians and the monarchists, the purpose of the document was in part to create a confessional standard that would unite the churches of the three kingdoms- England, Scotland and Ireland. However, this did not occur. Due to a series of political events and the eventual restoration of the monarchy, it was Anglicanism that would come to once again dominate England. However, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* would become the document of establishment Presbyterianism in Scotland.<sup>4</sup>

The historical biography of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* is going through a renaissance, in terms of study of primary source documentation.<sup>5</sup> Different aspects of the Confession are now being treated in critical edition texts that are now being made widely available for those who would want to examine the text in a critical way that is dealing with the

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly : Reading Its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub, 2009), 7.

<sup>2</sup> James M Renihan, *A Toolkit for Confessions: Symbolics 101 : Helps for the Study of English Puritan Confessions of Faith* (Palmdale, California: Institute Of Reformed Baptist Studies, 2017), 1-117.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly : Reading Its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub, 2009), 27-44.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> John Bower, *The Confession of Faith : A Critical Text and Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020), i-xx.

primary sources.<sup>6</sup> Despite this renewed focus on the document in its various aspects, there has yet to be a survey or study of the metaphysics of the Confession itself. In fact, in preparation for this paper, many sources were consulted; and while elements of a metaphysical commentary were present, there is not, as far as I have been able to find, a treatment of metaphysics of the confession itself located in a single text. What will be attempted in this paper is a demonstration of the metaphysics that underscore *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. In order to do this, we will have to define what metaphysics is, then look at the section of the Confession that deals with metaphysical concerns and language. This will by necessity exclude sections of the Confession that focus on ecclesiology, as well as the sections in the Confession that deal with the relationship between the church and civil state. What this means is that in order to look at the metaphysics of the Confession, we will have to look at a portions of the confession that deal strictly with theological topics, such as the doctrine of God proper as located in WCF 2.<sup>7</sup> The reason for this focus is that by defining God's nature and his activity, the Confession is automatically drawn into metaphysics, even though the document itself takes the metaphysics for granted and actually seeks to make theological statements.<sup>8</sup> The document itself has what could be called a confessional metaphysics.

### **Metaphysics**

We now need to define what metaphysics is. Following the simplest definition, metaphysics is the study of being, according to first principles; or simply, the study of being.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Westminster Assembly Project, accessed October 16, 2021, .

<sup>7</sup> John Valero Fesko, *The Theology of the Westminster Standards : Historical Context and Theological Insights* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2014), 99-101.

<sup>8</sup> James E Dolezal, *All That Is in God : Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 1, 39.

<sup>9</sup> Steven J Duby, *God in Himself : Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois Ivp Academic, An Imprint Of Intervarsity Press, 2019), 83.

Right away, this definition presents a number of issues that the modern reader schooled in post-Enlightenment philosophy would take issue with, such as, can being be studied? Or, what is being? To talk about being is essentially meaningless without seeking to offer an apologetic for pre-critical metaphysics.<sup>10</sup> For the purposes of this paper, metaphysics will be treated as it was in the pre-critical formation in philosophy; that is, the acceptance of metaphysics as the study of being, and the study of being as a legitimate action that can be undertaken by philosophers and theologians.<sup>11</sup> There will be a dramatic shift in the understanding of metaphysics. This shift is outside the scope of this paper; however, we should keep in mind that the writers of *The Westminster Confession of Faith* would not share the metaphysics of moderns, and should not be read as such. Doing so will yield very confusing results or serious misunderstandings that can have grave consequences for textual interpretation.<sup>12</sup> With these preliminary considerations in mind, we will now proceed to look at *The Westminster Confession of Faith* section two as the starting point for our metaphysical investigation.

### **Metaphysics of the Doctrine of God**

*The Westminster Confession of Faith* section two subsection one, contains what has become, in modern theological investigation, the launching point for the rediscovery of the metaphysics of the Confession itself. The one simple phrase coined in this paragraph, which is describing the doctrine of God proper, says that God is without body, parts, or passions; infinite

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<sup>10</sup> Craig A Carter, *Contemplating God with the Great Tradition : Recovering Trinitarian Classical Theism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, A Division Of Baker Publishing Group, 2021), 1-46.

<sup>11</sup> Steven J Duby, *God in Himself : Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois Ivp Academic, An Imprint Of Intervarsity Press, 2019), 198-231.

<sup>12</sup> James Dolezal, *God without Parts : Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 21-29.

in being; immutable; eternal; etc.<sup>13</sup> Upon a first glance, all of this seems to be intelligible to a modern Christian. God doesn't have passions, a body, or body parts; that seems to be what the Confession is saying; a simple statement. As has been shown repeatedly recently in multiple publications, a simple reading of this text to mean that God does not have body, parts, or emotional passions, is simplistic; and actually shows a lack of a pre-critical metaphysical conception of metaphysics.<sup>14</sup> When the authors of the Confession wrote this section, they were self consciously following the pattern laid down in the Apostles' Creed.<sup>15</sup> The order that that creed follows deals with the doctrine of God proper first, then the doctrine of Christ, and then the application of the doctrine of Christ in our redemption. The reason that this fact is important in a metaphysical interpretation of the Confession is that the authors of the Confession, with this section, were laboring to make sure that the doctrine of God in section two was following the Apostles' Creed; not just as a theological outline, but in its content.<sup>16</sup> This can be seen in the fact that this section of the Confession was presented for review without any doctrinal debate.<sup>17</sup> Another way of saying this is that everyone at the time understood what was being affirmed in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* two was in line with the inherited ecumenical Western Catholic creed, and that for Christian orthodoxy, it was something so common that it did not need to be expounded on and defended, outside of the added scriptural references.<sup>18</sup> What this

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<sup>13</sup> John Bower, *The Confession of Faith : A Critical Text and Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020), 43.

<sup>14</sup> James E Dolezal, *All That Is in God : Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 1-135., Steven J Duby, *Divine Simplicity : A Dogmatic Account*. (London: t&t clark, 2018),80-89.

<sup>15</sup> John Bower, *The Confession of Faith : A Critical Text and Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2020), 46-48.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly : Reading Its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub, 2009), 165.

piece of historical data tells us is that when it comes to how the Confession outlines the doctrine of God in section two, there is nothing new.<sup>19</sup>

With that brief excursus aside, we will now turn to what actually makes this section metaphysical. Before the turn to critical metaphysics, and during the time that the authors of the Confession were writing, the science of being, known as metaphysics, had achieved a consensus among almost all of the factions of debates at the time of the Confession on what the doctrine of God meant as it was expressed in metaphysical terms.<sup>20</sup> To say that God is without body, parts, and passions, is to say a number of things that are actually metaphysical statements. Firstly, to say that God is without a body is to say that, in terms of his being, he is not made up of a physical substance in his essence. To say that God is without a body then is to actually make a metaphysical claim about what God is in himself or in his essence. This way of thinking about God is universal among the Protestant confessions of the day, and is essentially a thousand year dogma that is inherited from the undivided ecumenical church.<sup>21</sup> To say that God is without parts is also a metaphysical claim. To say that God is without parts is to say that nothing that is in God makes God what is God. This is not to affirm that God does not have a right arm. What is being said is that God does not have parts that make up his essence. So we see here that there is another statement being made about what God is in his essence. To say that he is without parts then is making a claim about his essence; that claim, because it is related to God's being, or what he is in his being, is a metaphysical claim. To say that God is without passions is to say that nothing that God encounters in the world actualizes any potential in him. When something good happens,

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<sup>19</sup> Steven J Duby, *Divine Simplicity : A Dogmatic Account*. (London: t&t clark, 2018), 7-25.

<sup>20</sup> Steven J Duby, *Divine Simplicity : A Dogmatic Account*. (London: t&t clark, 2018), 1-54.

<sup>21</sup> Steven J Duby, *God in Himself : Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois Ivp Academic, An Imprint Of Intervarsity Press, 2019), 210-219.

there is not a potential in God that is being actualized by that good event. When something bad happens, there is nothing in God to be actualized to make him sad. These are all metaphysical claims about what God is in his essence.<sup>22</sup>

### **Historical Metaphysical Context**

While the Confession, in this section, does not give a lengthy explanation of the metaphysics that underpin these statements, that is simply because they are assumed. When the authors of the Confession wanted to make the first statement about God in the Confession, what they wrote was a metaphysical statement about God's essence in and of himself. The reason they did this was not arbitrary, but that they are self-consciously following the pattern laid down and inherited from the ancient ecumenical church in Western Christianity.<sup>23</sup> In doing that in this section, the authors are de facto accepting a metaphysical framework that was inherited in Western church history to the present day.<sup>24</sup> While all of the claims in various versions of the Confession have scriptural references attached to them to buttress what is being said from the Bible about God's being, there is an assumption that those reading *The Westminster Confession of Faith* would also understand the metaphysical claims being made in this section because they were, and are, common and basic for understanding the doctrine of God proper.<sup>25</sup>

If the statement in Confession two section one on God is to be understood as a metaphysical claim that was so common that no one in Western Christianity that claimed to be orthodox would have challenged it, and also that it was shared by all of those who claimed the

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<sup>22</sup> James Dolezal, *God without Parts : Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 31-66.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly : Reading Its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub, 2009), 159-168.

<sup>24</sup> Steven J Duby, *Divine Simplicity : A Dogmatic Account.* (London: t&t clark, 2018), 1-54.

<sup>25</sup> Steven J Duby, *God in Himself : Scripture, Metaphysics, and the Task of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois Ivp Academic, An Imprint Of Intervarsity Press, 2019), 18-21.

ecumenical heritage of the ancient church, there is a question that has arisen about the nature of that historical relationship. Did the authors of the Confession simply use sources to make their arguments about the being of God to their own ends? Or by their formulations, were they not only restating the doctrinal or theological declaration of the church universal, but also either explicitly or implicitly accepting not only its historical formations, but also its philosophical ones?

In terms of the Reformed confessions, this question has been one of the most contentious ones that has been raised in recent memory. Some have gone so far to say that any talk of appeals to the philosophical consensus for those who follow the Reformed confessions to be actually not Reformed themselves.<sup>26</sup>

Thankfully, in four recent surveys of the doctrine of God proper among the confessional Reformed tradition, there are now published histories of antiquity of not only the theology of the doctrines, but its metaphysical content. What Dr. Duby shows in his survey, *Divine Simplicity: A Dogmatic Account*, is that the Reformed self consciously took the metaphysics of the Western church. This metaphysics has a pedigree that goes all the way back to the early councils.<sup>27</sup> Dr. Dolezal has mentions in his work, *All That Is in God: Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism*, that there are some questions of interpretation among certain church fathers on this issue as it relates to the doctrine of God proper, the mainstream consensus of the early council period is that the use of the philosophical terminology is standard and assumed in the dogmatic formulations of the church universal itself.<sup>28</sup> What this means for the

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<sup>26</sup> J V Fesko, *Reforming Apologetics : Retrieving the Classic Reformed Approach to Defending the Faith* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, A Division Of Baker Publishing Group, 2019), 50-53.

<sup>27</sup> Steven J Duby, *Divine Simplicity : A Dogmatic Account*. (London: t&t clark, 2018), 7-25.

<sup>28</sup> James E Dolezal, *All That Is in God : Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 50-58.

purposes of this study, is that not only in the Apostles' Creed were the authors of the Confession accepting the theology of simplicity, or divine simplicity, which has been masterfully rearticulated and defended recently against current directors, but that the Reformers and the Reformed themselves are standing in an inherited philosophical tradition that cannot be separated from the theological formulation without doing serious damage to the interpretation of the Confession itself. The authors of the Confession and the surrounding philosophical culture that they found themselves in were self consciously working with inherited metaphysical categories, not trying to cast them aside as some have said.

It is with the preceding that we now turn to *The Westminster Confession of Faith* two section two. If what was stated previously is understood correctly, that the authors of the confession are working in an inherited metaphysical framework, then the language becomes much easier to understand. When the Confession in this section says that God is the foundation of all being, it is not only a scriptural claim that is being made. It is that, and recent surveys of this doctrine make it clear that what is being taught is scriptural. It is a direct metaphysical claim actually appealing to the language of being; that is of metaphysics itself to describe a biblical attribute of God.<sup>29</sup>

What follows in this section using the language of being, we find the language of contingency. The language of contingency, just like the language of being, is explicitly metaphysical. Contingency means that God holds all things, is being, and through his power and the use of secondary causes, holds all of reality in existence through his power. Notice that the statement of God's being as the foundation of all created reality and being a creator is followed

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<sup>29</sup> James E Dolezal, *All That Is in God : Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 40-44., Steven J Duby, *Divine Simplicity : A Dogmatic Account*. (London: t&t clark, 2018), 80-90., Steven J Duby, *Divine Simplicity : A Dogmatic Account*. (London: t&t clark, 2018), 198-210.

immediately with the effects of this being, and how he interacts with the created world that he has made. All of this, following the first article, is a further metaphysical claim about the nature and being of God; using article 2.2, explicit, and apparently common, metaphysical language further demonstrates the framework that the authors of the Confession are operating in. If it was just these two articles however, we would actually be non-Christian, or not apostolic; we would have a definition of God that would be philosophically in line with any religion that would affirm the same philosophical dogmas about the one creator God.<sup>30</sup> However, since there is a self-conscious move to follow the Apostles' Creed; and since the metaphysical and theological consensus that was the conclusion of the creed, and shaped the theology of the ecumenical church that the authors of the Confession are seeking to demonstrate their clear fidelity to, we get the third article of this section which makes it an explicitly Christian article.<sup>31</sup>

In Westminster 2.3, we are given a statement that seems simple on the surface; however, if we look at the language of this section two things become clear right away. First, we have again the language of metaphysics. We are told that God is three persons in one substance. Once again, the language is of substance, and now we have the language of person. As a recent confessional systematic survey has demonstrated, this language was formed over a multi-hundred year period, and represents the fruits of complicated theological debates.<sup>32</sup> With the inclusion of the section of the Spirit proceeding from the Son, the Confession is further situated in a Western theological context and theological development.<sup>33</sup> Reflection on the

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly : Reading Its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub, 2009), 164.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Letham, *Systematic Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 97-126.

<sup>33</sup> John Valero Fesko, *The Theology of the Westminster Standards : Historical Context and Theological Insights* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2014), 172-184.

history of these statements, and that they would appear here at the end of the section on God after the first two sections, deal in a compact systematic matter with the doctrine of God as it is found in the Western inherited theological and philosophical tradition shows that this document is in a positive manner not only restating the views that came before that, but that it affirms them.<sup>34</sup>

There has been some criticism on this point from those concerned that the Confession itself might be antipersonal in some sense, because it does not start with the doctrine of the trinity proper, but with the medieval order. Instead of being a criticism, this seems to further underscore the point that the Westminster Confession's metaphysics is following in the Western ecumenical church's metaphysics, and that at least here in these articles, nothing is actually being rejected; but in fact, the fruit of metaphysical and theological debates are being affirmed in what seems to be a simple paragraph statement about the nature of God as trinity.<sup>35</sup> The language of substance is a traditional way to express what God is in his essence, or in his trinitarian unity, as the three persons share in the substance. This statement requires not only exegetical defense, which the authors of Westminster did, but just like the other two sections of this article, there was unilateral acceptance of this language because it was understood what it meant, and that it was ecumenical in terms of its formulation.

With this exposition of Westminster two, we have tried to show that the authors of the *The Westminster Confession of Faith* were operating in nearly universally accepted metaphysical categories that have a ancient pedigree, and that some have been in use for nearly a thousand years; or in case of the trinitarian formulation, at the end of the section, for more than a thousand

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<sup>34</sup> Robert Letham, *The Westminster Assembly : Reading Its Theology in Historical Context* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub, 2009), 164-173.

<sup>35</sup> *bid.*

years. What this should tell us is that for the authors of the Confession, and for those Christians after, at least the formulation of the Apostles' Creed and especially Nicea, metaphysical language was nothing strange or out of place in theological formation. Not just that, but these metaphysical categories have been used and accepted, although with revisions, as being how Christians- at least Christians that claim to follow the Westminster Confession- and because of that, the conclusion of the early ecumenical councils of the church catholic. This confessional metaphysics is really an ecumenical Christian metaphysics that made it possible for various different factions to interact with each other in the heat of the debates of the time and following. If there was not a metaphysical consensus, dialogue and debate would not have been possible without having to establish the epistemology up front. This means that the Confessions de facto are operating in what some have called an early modern, or what I prefer to call a late medieval metaphysics. The supernova of the enlightenment had not yet begun the process of reorganization of metaphysics, nor the hundred year long project of having to justify metaphysics through epistemology first. This rearrangement of categories has had dramatic impact on Christian theology, and sometimes even has dramatic impacts on how the Confessions are read. It is to some of these deviations we now turn.<sup>36</sup>

In recent surveys of the theology and metaphysics of the Reformed confessions, there are sections, or a section, that deals with the metaphysical shift away from the inherited metaphysics that seem to be on display in *The Westminster Confession of Faith* or other similar sister documents like the *1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith* and the theological revelation of how those documents are interpreted.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Christopher Ben Simpson, *Modern Christian Theology*. (London: t&t clark, 2020), 42-79.

<sup>37</sup> James E Dolezal, *All That Is in God : Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2017), 60-78.

### Metaphysical Modifications

One author has pointed out that part of the challenge in interpretation of the Confession after the Enlightenment is that talk of being and casualty is essentially reduced to cause and effect that is something like physical motion.<sup>38</sup> While this may seem like a minor thing, it actually shows something deeper, which is that starting with the Enlightenment, there is a loss of the category of being as it is related to God. If the thinkers of the Enlightenment who started to question casualty and epistemology were the start of the nova, Hegel will usher in for Christian theologians an entirely new metaphysics.<sup>39</sup> The main theological inheritance of this metaphysics, and the most important figure for this reception as it is related to the Reformed confessions, is undoubtedly Karl Barth.<sup>40</sup> There have been recent attempts to rehabilitate Barth, and to situate him inside the mainstream of Christian orthodoxy.<sup>41</sup> Without commenting on the success or failure of these recent projects, I would like to look at Karl Barth, and how he is normally understood in his metaphysics in relation to the confessional tradition. Karl Barth's metaphysics has been called dialectical realism. What Karl Barth seems to think is that the scholastics and period of Reformed orthodoxy that followed the Middle Ages in the west was too beholden to Aristotle and to realist metaphysics.<sup>42</sup> It is the criticism that Barth has inherited from Hegel, and Hegel from the Enlightenment thinkers, especially Kant.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher Ben Simpson, *Modern Christian Theology*. (London: t&t clark, 2020), 127-137.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 232.

<sup>41</sup> George Hunsinger, *Reading Barth with Charity : A Hermeneutical Proposal* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015).

<sup>42</sup> Hans Urs and Edward T Oakes, *The Theology of Karl Barth : Exposition and Interpretation* (San Francisco: Communio Books, Ignatius Press, 1992), 64-89,194-220.

When Barth most famously said that natural theology was a product of the anti-Christ, he was not only rejecting natural theology, but as he is very clear and self-conscious, he is also rejecting the metaphysics that undergirds this theology.<sup>43</sup> When there are significant and dramatic changes made in Karl Barth's doctrine of God proper, it is because it rests, at least in the early Barth, on a dialectical metaphysical underpinning. So it is not just that Karl Barth's theological formation is "liberal", it is that at its heart, before theology is even attempted, he has rejected the framework of classical Christian theism that was universally accepted by every confessional Christian denomination and church. The example of Karl Barth gives us a warning about trying to formulate theology apart from the inherited metaphysics of the confessing church itself.<sup>44</sup>

The example of Karl Barth shows us what theological formation looks like apart from a metaphysical underpinning, it also shows that theological formation will rest on some sort of not only exegetical foundation, but a philosophical prolegomena. This understanding has recently been made popular in the work of some of the theologians mentioned previously. Dr. Duby has made it clear that metaphysics actually serve as prolegomena to all points of dogmatic formulations that are metaphysics proper; the science and study of being must be before the dogmatic formations of a confessing church. Craig A. Carter has recently dedicated an entire volume and a series of articles to the same theme- that recovery of the ancient metaphysical consensus is necessary for the Christian faith, and especially for those who are part of confessional traditions.<sup>45</sup> Duby, subscribing to second *London Baptist Confession of Faith*, stands in a sister tradition to *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, and many of his observations related

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 160-167.

<sup>44</sup> Hans Urs and Edward T Oakes, *The Theology of Karl Barth : Exposition and Interpretation* (San Francisco: Communio Books, Ignatius Press, 1992), 64-89, 194-220., Christopher Ben Simpson, *Modern Christian Theology*. (London: t&t clark, 2020), 245-247., Eberhard Jüngel, *God's Being Is in Becoming : The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth : A Paraphrase* (London Etc.: T&T Clark, 2014), 75-125.

<sup>45</sup> Craig A Carter, *Contemplating God with the Great Tradition : Recovering Trinitarian Classical Theism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, A Division Of Baker Publishing Group, 2021)

to this issue can also be transported into the confessional presbyterian or paedobaptist context. These formulations should be welcomed to help us understand the metaphorical nature of the confessions, and serve as a gentle correction to some of the current trends in Calvinistic Evangelicalism.

*The Westminster Confession of Faith* two is not only a theological statement about the nature of God and the trinity, but also a metaphysical statement about the nature of God in his being. These positive metaphysical statements were standard in Western Christianity, following the early patristic and councilary era, all the way to *The Westminster Confession of Faith* in the west. The use of this language and explanation reveal an underlying assumption of a metaphysical system that is lost by the time we reach modern theologians, taking Karl Barth as an example. Finally, we see examples of the trends of the reclamation of a confessional metaphysics, drawing most heavily on the work of Craig Carter, James Dolezal, and Steven Duby.

### **Conclusion**

*The Westminster Confession of Faith* is a metaphysical and theological document that assumes the metaphysics at the onset. Not understanding proper and contextual metaphysics can lead to serious and damnable errors. The modern church has been given a gift in that there is now a recovery of this metaphysical nature of the Confession so that those who are confessional Christians can have a deeper understanding of the triune God that they worship and place their hope in. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* section two has given short, clear, and concise statements that summarize the entire history of Western theological and metaphysical debate. It is a blessing to the church that the document could summarize this in such a concise manner, and can be easily handed to the layman for reading, or for study in the church. As modern theology is

in the process of reclaiming this metaphysics, we should come to understand that it is a confessional metaphysics that find its full expression in Westminster Confession two.

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