

A Short Confession of Faith (1610)

(This confession was written by John Smyth, an early English Separatist Baptist, in 1610)

Article:

1. We believe, through the power and instruction of the Holy Scriptures that there is one only God, who is a Spirit, eternal, incomprehensible, infinite, almighty, merciful, righteous, perfectly wise, only good, and only fountain of life and all goodness, the Creator of heaven and earth, things visible and invisible.
2. This only God in the Holy Scriptures is manifested and revealed in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, being three, and nevertheless but one God.
3. The Father is the original and the beginning of all things who bath begotten his Son from everlasting before all creation. That Son is the everlasting Word of the Father, and his wisdom. The Holy Ghost is his virtue, power, and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son. These three are not divided, nor separated in essence, nature, property, eternity, power, glory or excellency.
4. This only God bath created man good, according to his image and likeness, to a good and happy estate, and in him all men to the same blessed end. The first man was fallen into sin and wrath and was again by God, through a sweet comfortable promise, restored and affirmed to everlasting life, with all those that were guilty through him so that none of his posterity (by reason of this institution) are guilty, sinful, or born in original sin.
5. Man being created good, and continuing in goodness, had the ability, the spirit of wickedness tempting him, freely to obey, assent, or reject the propounded evil: man being fallen and consisting (sic) in evil, had the ability, the T . . . —himself moving freely to obey, assent or reject the propounded good; for as he through free power to the choice of evil, obeyed and affirmed that evil; so did he through free power to the choice of good, obey and reassent that propounded good. This last power or ability remains in all his posterity.
6. God bath before all time foreseen and foreknown all things, both good and evil, whether past, present, or to come. Now, as he is the only perfect goodness, and the very fountain of life itself, so is he the only author, original, and maker of such good things as are good, holy, pure, and of nature like unto him; but not of sin, or damnable uncleanness. He forbids the evil, he forewarns to obey evil, and threatens the evil doer: he is the permitter and punisher. But evil men, through free choice of all sin and wickedness, together with the spirit of wickedness which rule in them, are the authors, originals, and makers of all sin, and so worthy the punishment.
7. The causes and ground, therefore, of man's destruction and damnation, are the man's free choice of darkness or sin, and living therein. Destruction, therefore, cometh out of himself, but not from the good Creator. For being perfect goodness and love itself

(following the nature of love and perfect goodness) he wills the health, good, and happiness of his creatures; therefore hath he predestinated that none of them should be condemned, nor ordained, or will the sinner, or means whereby they should be brought to damnation: yea, much more (seeing he hath no delight in any man's destruction, nor willing that any man perish, but that all men should be saved or blessed) hath he created them all to a happy end in Christ, hath foreseen and ordained in him a medicine of life for all their sins, and hath willed that all people or creatures, through the preaching of the gospel, should have these tidings published and declared unto them; now all they that with penitence and faithful hearts receive and embrace the gracious benefits of God, manifested in Christ, for the reconciliation of the world, they are and continue the elect which God hath ordained before the foundation of the world, to make partakers of his kingdom and glory. But they which despise and condemn this proffered grace of God, which love the darkness more than the light, persevere in impenitence and unbelief, they make themselves unworthy of blessedness, and are rejected, excluded from the end whereto they were created and ordained in Christ, and shall not taste forever of the Supper of the Lord, to which they were invited.

8. The purpose which God, before the foundation of the world, had for the reconciliation of the world (which he saw would fall into wrath and want of grace), he hath in the fullness of time accomplished; and for this purpose hath sent out of heaven his everlasting Word, or Son, for the fulfilling of the promises made unto the fathers and hath caused him to become flesh . . . in the womb of the holy virgin (called Mary) by his word, and power, and the working of the Holy Ghost. Not that the essence of God, the eternal Word, or any part thereof, is changed into a visible mortal flesh or man, ceasing to be Spirit, God, or God's essence; but that he, the everlasting Son of God, continuing that he was before, namely, God or Spirit, became what he was not, that is, flesh or man; and he is one person true God and man, born of Mary, being visibly and invisibly, inwardly and outwardly, the true Son of the living God.
9. This Person, God and Man, the Son of the living God, is come into the world to save sinners, or to reconcile the sinful world to God the Father: therefore now acknowledge him to be the only Mediator, King, Priest and Prophet, Lawgiver and Teacher, which God hath promised to send into the world, whom we must trust, believe, and follow.
10. In him is fulfilled, and by him is taken away, an intolerable burden of the law of Moses, even all the shadows and figures; as, namely, the priesthood, temple, altar, sacrifice; also the kingly office, kingdom, sword, revenge appointed by the law, battle and whatsoever was a figure of his person or office, so thereof a shadow or representation.
11. And as the true promised Prophet he hath manifested and revealed unto us whatsoever God asks or requires of the people of the New Testament; for as God, by Moses and the other prophets, hath spoken and declared his will to the people of the Old Testament; so hath he in those last days, by his Prophet spoken unto us, and revealed unto us the mystery (concealed from the beginning of the world), and hath now manifested to us whatsoever yet remained to be manifested. He hath preached the promised glad tidings, appointed and ordained the sacraments, the offices and ministries, by God thereto

destined; and hath showed by doctrine and life, the law of Christians, a rule of their life, the path and way of everlasting life.

12. Moreover, as a High Priest and Mediator of the New Testament, after that he hath accomplished the will of his Father in the foresaid works, he hath finally given himself obediently (for the reconciliation of the sins of the world) to all outward suffering, and hath offered up himself in death upon the cross unto the Father, for a sweet savor and common oblation.
13. We acknowledge that the obedience of the Son of God, his suffering, dying, bloodshed, bitter passion, death, and only sacrifice upon the cross, is a perfect reconciliation and satisfaction for our sins and the sins of the world; so that men thereby are reconciled to God, are brought into power, and have a sure hope and certainty to the entrance into everlasting life.
14. Christ, our Prophet and Priest, being also the promised, only spiritual, heavenly King of the New Testament, hath erected, or built, a spiritual kingdom, and united a company of faithful, spiritual men; these persons hath he endowed with spiritual, kingly laws, after the nature of the heavenly kingdom, and hath established therein justice, righteousness, and the ministers thereof.
15. Having accomplished and performed here upon the earth, by dying the death, his office of the cross he was afterwards buried, thereby declaring that he was truly dead; the third day he rose again, and stood up from the dead, abolishing death, and testifying that he was Lord over death, and he could not possibly be detained by the hands of death, thereby comfortably assuring all the faithful of their resurrection and standing up from death.
16. Afterwards, forty days spent, he conversed amongst his disciples, and oftentimes showed himself unto them that there might no doubt be had concerning his resurrection; after that, being compassed by a cloud, he was carried up into heaven, and entered into his glory, leading captivity captive, and making a show of his enemies, hath gloriously triumphed over them, and is sat at the right hand of the Majesty of God, and is become a Lord, and Christ, glorified in body, advanced, lifted up, and crowned with praise and glory, and remains over Mount Zion a Priest, and King for everlasting.
17. The holy office of this glorified Priest, King, Lord and Christ, in the heavenly glorious being is to help, govern, and preserve, by his Holy Spirit, his holy church and people in the world, through the Storm, wind, and troubles of the sea; for, according to his priestly office, as an overseer or steward of the true tabernacle, is he our Intercessor, Advocate, and Mediator by the Father. He teaches, comforts, strengthens, and baptizes us with the Holy Ghost, his heavenly gifts and fiery victims, and keeps his spiritual supper with the faithful soul, making it partaker of the life giving food and drink of the soul, the fruit, virtue, and worth of his merits obtained upon the cross; the only and necessary good signified in the sacraments.

18. And according to his kingly office, in his heavenly being he governs the hearts of the faithful by his Holy Spirit and Word; he takes them into his protection, he cover them under the shadow of his wings, he armd them with spiritual weapons for the spiritual warfare against all their enemies, namely, the Spirit of wickedness, under heaven, and whatsoever depends on them in this earth. He, their most Glorious, Almighty, Heavenly King, stands by them, delivers and frees them from the hands of their enemies, gives them victory and the winning of the field, and hath prepared for them a crown of righteousness in heaven. And they being the redeemed of the Lord, who dwell in the house of the Lord, upon the Mount Zion, do change their fleshly weapons, namely, their swords into shares, and their spears into scythes, do lift up no sword, neither bath nor consent to fleshly battle.
19. All these spiritual good things and beneficial, which Christ, by his merits, hath obtained for the saving of sinners, we do graciously enjoy through a true, living, working faith. Which faith is an assured understanding and knowledge of the heart, obtained out of the Word of God, concerning God, Christ, and other heavenly things which are necessary for us to know, and to believe to salvation, together with a hearty confidence in the only God, that he, as a gracious and heavenly Father, will give and bestow upon us, through Christ, and for his merits, whatsoever is helpful and profitable for body and soul for salvation.
20. Through such a faith we obtain true righteousness, forgiveness, absolution from sin through the bloodshed of Christ, and through righteousness, which through the Christ Jesus, by the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, is plentifully shed and poured into us, so that we truly are made, of evil men, good; of fleshly, spiritual; of covetous, liberal; of proud, humble; and through regeneration are made pure in heart, and the children of God.
21. Man being thus justified by faith, lives and works by love (which the Holy Ghost sheds into the heart) in all good works, in the laws, precepts, ordinances given them by God through Christ; he praises and blesses God, by a holy life, for every benefit, especially of the soul; and so are all such plants of the Lord trees of righteousness, who honor God through good works, and expect a blessed reward.
22. Such faithful, righteous people, scattered in several parts of the world, being the true congregations of God, or the Church of Christ, whom he saved, and for whom he gave himself, that he might sanctify them, ye whom he bath cleansed by the washing of water in the word of life: of all such is Jesus the Head, the Shepherd, the Leader, the Lord, the King, and Master. Now although among these there may be mingled a company of seeming holy ones, or hypocrites; yet, nevertheless, they are and remain only the righteous, true members of the body of Christ, according to the spirit and the truth, the heirs of the promises, truly saved from the hypocrites the dissemblers.
23. In this holy church bath God ordained the ministers of the Gospel, the doctrines of the holy Word, the use of the holy sacraments, the oversight of the poor, and the ministers of the same offices; furthermore, the exercise of brotherly admonition and correction, and, finally, the separating of the impenitent; which holy ordinances, contained in the Word of

God, are to be administered according to the contents thereof.

24. And like as a body consists of divers parts, and every part hath its own proper work, seeing every part is not a hand, eye, or foot; so is it also the church of God: for although every believer is a member of the body of Christ, yet is not every one therefore a teacher, elder, or deacon, but only such as are orderly appointed to such offices. Therefore, also, the administration of the said offices or duties pertains only to those who are ordained thereto, and not to every particular common person.
25. The vocation or election of the said officers is performed by the church, with fasting, and prayer to God; for God knows the heart; he is amongst the faithful who are gathered together in his name; and by his Holy Spirit doth so govern the minds and hearts of his people, that he by them brings to light and propounds whom he knows be profitable to his church.
26. And although the election and vocation to the said offices is performed by the aforesaid means, yet, nevertheless, the investing into the said service is accomplished by the elders of the church through the laying on of hands.
27. The doctrine which by the foresaid ministers must be proposed to the people, is even the same which Christ brought out of heaven, which he, by word and work, that is, by doctrine and life, bath taught, which was preached by the apostles of Christ, by the commandment of Christ and the Spirit, which we find written (so much as is needful for us to salvation) in the Scripture of the New Testament, whereto we apply whatsoever we find in the canonical book of the Old Testament, which hath affinity and verity, which by doctrine of Christ and his apostles, and consent and agreement, with the government of his Spiritual Kingdom.
28. There are two sacraments appointed by Christ, in his holy church, the administration whereof he bath assigned to the ministry of teaching, namely, the Holy Baptism and the Holy Supper. These are outward visible handlings and tokens, setting before our eyes, on God's side, the inward spiritual handling which God, through Christ, by the cooperation of the Holy Ghost, sets forth the justification in the penitent faithful soul; and which, on our behalf, witnesses our religion, experience, faith, and obedience, through the obtaining of a good conscience to the service of God.
29. The Holy Baptism is given unto these in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, which hear, believe, and with penitent heart receive the doctrines of the Holy Gospel. For such bath the Lord Jesus commanded to be baptized, and no unspeaking children.
30. The whole dealing in the outward visible baptism of water, sets before the eyes, witnesses and signifies, the Lord Jesus doth inwardly baptize the repentant, faithful man, in the layer of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, washing the soul from all pollution and sin, by the virtue and merit of his bloodshed; and by the power and working of the Holy Ghost, the true, heavenly, spiritual, living Water, cleanses the inward evil of the

soul, and makes it heavenly, spiritual, and living, in true righteousness or goodness. Therefore, the baptism of water leads us to Christ, to his holy office in glory and majesty; and admonishes us not to hang only upon the outward, but with holy prayer to mount upward, and to beg of Christ the good thing signified.

31. The Holy Supper, according to the institution of Christ, is to be administered to the baptized; as the Lord Jesus hath commanded that whatsoever he hath appointed should be taught to be observed.
32. The whole dealing in the outward visible supper, sets before the eye, witnesses and signifies that Christ's body was broken upon the cross and his holy blood spilt for the remission of our sins. That the being glorified in his heavenly Being, is the alive-making bread, meat, and drink of our souls; it sets before our eyes Christ's office and ministry in glory and majesty, by holding his spiritual supper, which the believing soul, feeding and . . . the soul with spiritual food: it teaches us by the outward handling to mount upwards with the heart in holy prayer, to beg at Christ's hands the true signified food; and it admonishes us of thankfulness to God, and of verity and love one with another.
33. The church discipline, or external censures, is also an outward handling among the believers, whereby the impenitent sinner, after Christian admonition and reproof, is severed, by reason of his sins, from the communion of the saints for his future good; and the wrath of God is denounced against him until the time of his contrition and reformation; and there is also, by this outward separation of the church, manifested what God before had judged and fore-handled, concerning this secret sinner, by reason of his sin. Therefore, first before the Lord, the prejudging and predetermining of the matter must pass . . . in respect of the sinner . . . and the after-judging and handling by the church. Therefore the church must carefully regard that none in the church be condemned with it, and be condemned in the Word of God.
34. The person separated from the church may not at all be admitted (so long as he proceeds in sin) to the use of the holy supper or any other . . . handling, but he must be avoided therein, as also in all other things betokening the communion of saints or brotherhood. And as the rebellious life, conversation, or daily company of the godless and perverse, or anything with them, is dangerous and hurtful, and oftentimes promotes scandal and slander to the godly, so must they withdraw themselves from the same rebels, avoiding them in all works and ends whereby their pure souls might be polluted and defiled: yet so that always the Word of God take place, and that nothing take place or be performed that is contrary to love, mercy, Christian discretion, promise, or any other like matter.
35. Worldly authority or magistracy is a necessary ordinance of God, appointed and established for the preservation of the common estate, and of a good, natural, politic life, for the reward of the good and the punishing of the evil; we acknowledge ourselves obnoxious, and bound by the Word of God to fear, honor, and show obedience to the magistrates in all causes not contrary to the Word of the Lord. We are obliged to pray God Almighty for them, and to thank the Lord for good reasonable magistrates, and to yield unto them, without murmuring, beseeching tribute, toll and tax. This office of the worldly authority

the Lord Jesus hath not ordained in his spiritual kingdom, the church of the New Testament, nor adjoined to the offices of his church. Neither hath he called his disciples or followers to be worldly kings, princes, potentates, or magistrates; neither hath he burdened or charged them to assume such offices, or to govern the world in such a worldly manner; much less hath he given a law to the members of his church which is agreeable to such office or government. Yea, rather they are called of him (whom they are commanded to obey by a voice heard from heaven) to the following of his unarmed and unweaponed life, and of his cross-bearing footsteps. In whom approved nothing less than a worldly government, power, and sword. This then considered (as also further, that upon the office of the worldly authority many other things depend, as wars . . . to hurt his enemies in body or good . . . which evilly or not at all will fit or consort with the Christ, and the crucified life of the Christians), so hold we that it is not seemly for Christians to administer these offices; therefore we avoid such offices and administrations, notwithstanding by no means thereby willing to despise or condemn reasonable discreet magistrates, nor to place him in less estimation than he is described by the Holy Ghost, of Paul.

36. Christ, the King and Lawgiver of the New Testament, hath prohibited Christians the swearing of oaths therefore it is not permitted that the faithful of the New Testament should swear at all.
37. The married estate, or matrimony, hold we for an ordinance of God, which, according to the first institution, shall be observed. Every man shall have his one only wife, and every woman shall have her one only husband; those may not be separated but for adultery. We permit none of our communion to marry godless, unbelieving, fleshly persons out of the church; but we censure such (as other sinners) according to the disposition and desert of the cause.
38. Lastly, we believe and teach the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust, as Paul (1 Cor. 15) soundly teaches and witnesses: The soul shall be united to the body, every one shall be presented before the judgment seat of Christ Jesus, to receive in his own body wages according to his works. And the righteous, whosoever hath lived holily, and through faith brought forth the works of love and mercy, shall enter into everlasting life with Christ Jesus, the Bridegroom of the Christian host. But the unsanctified, which have not known God, and have not obeyed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall go into everlasting fire. The Almighty, gracious, merciful God, preserve us from the punishment of the ungodly, and grant us grace and gifts helpful to a holy life, saving death, and joyful resurrection with all the righteous. Amen.

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[Forty-two names are attached to this document.]