

The Preface to the Orthodox Confession of 1679

IN his stimulating address to the Baptist Historical Society's Annual Meeting on April 28th, 1952, Dr. Hugh Martin drew attention to the significance of the Confession of 1679, the fullest statement of the faith and order of the orthodox General Baptists. The Fifty Articles, drafted by Thomas Monk, Messenger or Bishop of the Bucks. and Herts. churches, were signed by 54 Messengers, Elders and Brethren on 30th January, 1679, and printed in London later in the year under the title "An Orthodox Creed, or a Protestant Confession of Faith, being an essay to unite and confirm all true Protestants in the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, against the errors and heresies of Rome." The anti-Romanist polemic is evident both in the preface and in the articles on the Sacraments, but the main attack is directed not against Rome but against the complicated heresies ascribed to Matthew Caffyn, the "battle-axe and weapon of war" of the Kent and Sussex Baptists. Caffyn dissuaded the General Assembly of the General Baptists from adopting the Orthodox Confession, but it was regarded as authoritative by the General Association which seceded from the Assembly in 1696.

Only four copies of the original edition are known. Those at Rawdon College and in the Angus Library at Regent's Park College were catalogued by Dr. Whitley (i. 110) and the former was used by Dr. A. C. Underwood in his *History of the English Baptists* (1947), pp. 105-107. The fourth copy, a 12 mo. in calf to which Dr. E. J. Tongue kindly directed my attention, is in the Historical Society's Library at Bristol. On the second leaf is written "Joseph Chubb* his Book Aprill the 14th in The yeare of our Lord 1699." Then a line is drawn, and there follows in a nineteenth-century hand: "I never heard of another copy of this book. Adam Taylor regrets in his history that Crosby had not inserted the names of the Subscribers to this confession. *J Rd.* It is probably unique." On the leaf before this, in another hand, is written "Dr. Underhill could not find a copy anywhere when editing the 'Confessions of Faith' in the Hanserd Knollys series. T.G." *J Rd.* was evidently James Read of Ipswich, from whose copy J. H. Wood reproduced the list of subscribers in his *Condensed History of the General Baptists of the New Connexion* (1847), pp. 132-3. This copy was afterwards acquired by the library of the General Baptist College at Chilwell, Nottingham, later the Midland Baptist College. When the College was closed

* Not yet identified. Thomas Chubb, "deist and tallow-chandler" (1679-1747) wrote against the Seventh-day Baptists in 1737.

in 1919, the Baptist Historical Society inherited 426 of its books, including this one.

Crosby reprinted the Confession as an appendix to his third volume in 1740, but omitted the preface and post-script, the subscribers' names, the list of the books of the Old and New Testaments in Article 37, the text of the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds in Article 38, and some of the marginal references. Dr. Tongue, who has been good enough to collate the 1679 and 1740 texts, finds only one material difference: in Article 25 Crosby rightly changed "utterable" to "unutterable." Crosby's text has been reprinted by Underhill and McGlothlin, and quoted at some length by Taylor, Goadby and others, so that the Fifty Articles are fairly well known; but the preface and postscript are of considerable interest and it seems desirable to make them generally accessible. In this reprint, the marginal notes and references have been transferred to the foot of the page, a few notes have been added, and some obvious errors of punctuation and misspellings in the original have been corrected, e.g. "Impatial" for "Impartial" (twice) in the heading of the preface. Suggested emendations are enclosed in square brackets. Some account of the 54 subscribers will be given in a future *Quarterly*.

To The
Judicious and Impartial
Reader.¹

Courteous Reader,

The truly Ancient and Apostolical Faith, that^(a) was once delivered unto the Saints, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and miraculously confirmed unto us, by Signs, and Wonders, and divers gifts of the Holy Ghost,^(b) according to the good pleasure of Almighty God; Which said Faith, and Practice, recorded in the holy Oracles of Truth, and miraculously preserved from Age to Age, even in the darkest times of Popery, and Apostacy, by the Infinite Wisdom, Mercy and Goodness of God, is yet remaining, and to be continued^(c) to the end of the World; and hath been manifested in all, or most Nations^(d) for the obedience of Faith; the which Preservations of the Sacred Scriptures, or Revelation of Gospel-Light therein, contained, (of which this Nation hath had a great share, especially within this last Hundred Years) is^(e) undoubtedly a very great Evidence, of the Divine Verity, and Authority of the same; And the End of God in revealing this Light of the holy Scriptures, or Gospel of Christ, is that it might be read and known of all Men, and it's our duty^(f) to believe it, and thereby come through Faith, not only to have a saving, but a satisfactory

(a) Jude 3. (b) Heb. 2. 4. (c) Mat. 28. 20. (d) Rom. 16. 26.
(e) See Doct. Usher's *Body of Divinity*, pag. 11. (f) John 20. 30, 31.

knowledge of those foundation and fundamental Truths, which have been the same in all Generations; have been and shall be transmitted^(g) more clear from Age to Age in the times^(h) of Reformation, until that which⁽ⁱ⁾ is Perfect is come, and that which is Imperfect is done away; such addition is no Innovation, but Illustration²; not a new Light, but a new Sight; the Looking-Glass slurd³ and cleared more or less, is the same Glass. Columbus did not make a new World, when he made a discovery of the Old.

Truth wants so much of its Glory, as it is unseen: The Understanding wants so much of its perfection, as it is short in seeing thereof.

And all Unbelief is Presumption, not Faith, which hinders Nourishment, and genders Humours.

Grace and Glory hold proportion with the Truth. Though Knowledge may be without Grace, yet Grace is not without Knowledge, according to the measure of our approach to an exact total and adequate union of the Understanding with the truth of the Gospel; so is the glory of the Truth believed, and the communion of the Soul believing.

Now after some years profession of the Ancient way, and Truths of Christ, evidenced by the holy Oracles in Scripture, we have in most cordial manner published this little Manuel, or Orthodox Confession of our Faith, to the consideration of all sober Persons, and Religious, or well-meaning Protestants, that own the Authority and Verity of the sacred Scriptures; and by comparing of this our Confession of Faith, with the sacred Writ, we doubt not but they will then conclude, that those strange Conceptions, hard Thoughts, and Persecuting Reflections cast upon us, and spoken of us, will be much abated, if not wholly taken away, in all Sober Religious Protestants in England, or elsewhere, differing from us. And to that end, in this Cloudy Day, we might arrive at a more general Concord among our selves, in the main Points of the Protestant Religion, and take off the false and unjust Accusations of the Papists, and all other Enemies of the Faith, once delivered to the Saints by Christ and his Apostles, at least stop their Mouths, or prevent the Simple, of being deluded by them, in their boasting of the unity of their Pseudo, or Catachrestical Church.

As also their Discriminating the Protestants in England, and elsewhere, with the names of Hereticks, and Schismatics; and that they have no Agreement among themselves. And the cause is (say they) because they have no true Faith, nor infallible Judge to guide, and direct them. Now that we may refute these Calumnies, and false Charges of theirs, against the English Protestants, we

(g) Isa. 11. 9.

(h) Heb. 9. 10.

(i) Eph. 4. 13. (& 1 Cor. 13. 10).

will give them, and all others, an account of our Faith, grounded upon God's holy Word, written in the Scriptures of Truth, and wrought in us by his Infallible Spirit, which inspired his holy Prophets, and Apostles, to write them for our Rule, both in Faith and Practice; and as for our Agreement in matters of Faith, there are but three main Opinions among our Protestant Professors in England, and they are commonly known by these three Names, (viz.) Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or Independants⁴ and Anabaptists, (but rightly called Baptists.) Now the difference between these may be much in Ceremonies, or Circumstantial things, and in their Discipline, and Government of the Church.

But as for their Faith in most, or all of the main Fundamentals of the Christian Religion, they do agree; as may appear to every Impartial Reader, that shall consider the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, and Mr. Beza's Confession of Faith, and the Confession of Faith signed and published by the Assembly of Divines, and many others by the Baptists in England.

Now if these several Confessions of Faith, be compared with this our Confession now published, it will appear we have endeavoured to unite with other Protestants aforesaid, in the main Fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith. Therefore not so divided among our selves, as we are all represented to be by the slanderous Tongues of the Papists. Nor are we in any Points of Religion, so much divided among our selves,^(k) as the Roman Catholicks be in their Church, notwithstanding their vain boasting of Unity.

And for other Noval Opinions in England we have reason to believe, that the Roman Catholicks have had a great hand in helping forward and fomenting of them,⁵ yet nevertheless by this our positive Creed, or Confession of Faith, it's most manifest to all Orthodox Christians, that we have sufficiently bore Testimony against their false Doctrines, as also against Atheism, Epicurism, the mad worshipping of Idols, and multiplicity of Gods, which the blind Heathen worship; the Heresie of Manichaeus, who held two beginnings of Good and Evil; and also the blasphemous Opinions of the Anthropomorphites,⁶ who make God like unto Man^(l): Which impious Idolatrous Opinions we do abominate, and those wicked Opinions and Heresies, of the Macedonians, Marcionites, Valentinians, Apelles, Apolinarians,⁷ Eunomians, Ebionites, Nestorians,^(m) Eutychieans; who held that

(k) See Mr. Shelden's Book of Recantation.

(l) The wicked opinions of the Muggletonians, and Hobbists.

(m) Eutyches, who thought the Union to be made so in the Natures, that the Humanity was absorpt, or wholly turned into the Divinity.—So that by that Transubstantiation the Humane Nature had no longer being. See Dr. Pearson, in his Exposition of the Creed, pag. 162.—See Leo, Bishop of Rome, Sermon 8. De nativ. hic autem, etc.

the Humane Nature after the Union was indued with the properties of the Divinity, (viz.) The Divine Nature was turned into Flesh; Manichees, Ubiquitarians, Socinians, or Biddelians, Arians, Sabellians, Samosatensians, Servetus, Patripassians, Tritheites, Anti-Trinitarians, Anti-scripturians, Quakers, who have gilded over old Heresies, and gave them new Names, the better to deceive; Seekers, or such that are above Ordinances. All which said Opinions and Heresies, have been learnedly Confuted, by the Learned and Orthodox Pens of Dr. Usher, Mr. Perkins, Dr. Owen, Dr. Hall, Mr. Tombs,⁸ Mr. Hicks,⁹ and Mr. Monck,¹⁰ in his little book entituled, *A Cure for the Canckering Error of the New Eutychians*, and many other Orthodox Men, both Ancient and Modern, that have asserted the Truth in opposition to these and such like abominable Hereticks, and Heresies, too large to be inserted here. We have also in this our Confession of Faith, laboured to avoid the dangerous Rocks of Pelagianism,¹¹ Antinomianism, Arminianism¹² and the Remonstrants. As also, (as well as we may) we have endeavoured to avoid the extreams of the Superlapsarians, and Sublapsarians, and others: Which said latter Opinions, we humbly conceive, and judge in many things, are inconsistent with God's Revealed Will in Scripture, especially that of irrespective Reprobation of particular Persons, before they have done either Good, or Evil.

But the Socinian Doctrine, and such like most dangerous Opinions, or Doctrines, which raze at once the foundation of the Christian Religion, in that they do most plainly deny, a Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity; Three Persons, (viz. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost), and one God; and so by consequence, the only true object of Faith and Worship: As also, their damnable opinions in denying Christ's satisfaction by his Death, and Merits, to the Father's Justice for sinful Man; as also the imputation of the Mediatoral Righteousness of Christ, to every true Believer in order to his Justification, Christ having lived an holy Life, and perfectly kept, or fulfilled the Law for us, without which we could never have been saved: All which Opinions, and many more, in part, or in whole, we have bore our Testimony against in this our positive Creed, or Confession of Faith. And thus it's plainly manifest to every Impartial Reader, that we have unfeignedly from our Hearts, joyned issue Concordably, with the Learned and Orthodox Pens of both the Ancients, and Modern Protestant Christians, that have Maintained, Professed and Defended the truly Ancient, and Apostolick, fundamental Faith; and do oppugne, as well as they, to our power, according to the Word of God, the whole Army, or Legion of Heresies, that have and do by subtil Instruments, encumber the Christian Religion.

And let not any Persons, or Congregations that are separated from the Romish Religion, or Church of Rome, and yet notwithstanding hold some gross Heresie, repugnant to any of the Foundation-Articles of the Christian Faith, contained in Athanasius's or the Apostles' Creed (so called), conclude that they are so much better than they, though differing from them in other smaller Matters. And let such Congregations, or Persons, that hold, maintain, connive at, or suffer these or such like Heresies, and Hereticks, (we have named, and by our Articles have Opposed and Confuted) take heed lest such Doctrine do not in the end unchurch them, especially if they do not defend, and contend for the Orthodox Faith, by bearing a Testimony against such Hereticks, according to the Rule which St. Paul gives the Churches, in Titus 3. 10. to reform them.¹³

And for any Persons to be so zealous as some seem, or pretend to be, in several Congregations, of some Duty contained in the second Table, and to slight, or make little Conscience of the Duties of the first Table, is very strange to Men of Conscience and Reason (notwithstanding it is the practice of such, as pretend to be Masters of Reason)¹⁴: for how can it be that such persons can be good Christians, or have true love to Christ, that have Courage enough to speak, or act, when their own Persons, Estates or Relations are persecuted, or oppressed, or when some⁽ⁿ⁾ Statute-Law of Christ is broken, or misinterpreted (though this is well, and their Duty, especially the latter); and yet make no conscience at all to oppose, or deal with them that do take away the King's^(o) Dignity, Power, and Crown of Glory, or Blaspheme him by their Erroneous Opinions, or^(p) Heresies? And yet these must be suffered, and connived at in Congregations, which we are sure, neither consisteth^(q) with Scripture, or Right Reason; but is indeed the proper effects of ignorance in God's Laws, as also Self-interest, and Hypocritical Partiality, or Covetous Impiety. In a word, if such persons repent not, nor Congregations reform not, by purging out such Cankering Heresies, or Hereticks, we must conclude from God's Word, Right Reason, and Common Experience, that such things are the sad^(r) Prodroms of some sore and dismal Cloud of Judgments, that may sooner, or later, more, or less, (we have too much cause to fear) fall upon such Congregations, if they repent not.

And for such Persons, that through Pride, or Vain-Glory do

⁽ⁿ⁾ For we are sure that the denying of Baptism is a less evil, than to deny the Divinity, or Humanity of the Son of God.

^(o) Yea, all his three Offices of Priest, Prophet and King.

^(p) 2 Pet. 2. 1. By denying his Godhead, &c.

^(q) Gal. 5. 20.

^(r) Rev. 2. 20, 21, 23, 24.

pretend to Singularity, in finding out new Doctrines, or Opinions, and in their Preachings, or Writings, charge the Orthodox with Plagiarism, because they speak the same Truths, Doctrine, or Principles, that the Orthodox Christians have taught, written, and delivered to us from Age to Age, according to the Analogue of Faith recorded in holy Scripture; let such glory still in this their Singularity. For our parts we do profess, and ingenuously declare to all the World, that we are far off from assuming such Singularity, but rather have studied a Concord, or Unity, with our Fore-fathers, in the good Old Way of the Gospel; and have laboured to speak in the very same Words, or Language of Canaan, that our Fore-fathers, the godly Saints spoke in; and do desire to walk in the ancient Footsteps of the Flock of Christ, firmly believing in the same Gospel-Covenant, and Mediator, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the holy Apostles, &c. believed in, and were saved by, through Faith in Christ, there being no alteration of the Covenant of Grace (as we know of), neither Objectively, nor Subjectively, it being one and the same in Substance, from the Fall of Adam, to this Day. And so, the Old and New Testaments, like the Faces of the Cherubims, look one towards another, holding forth but one^(a) Mediator, and Way of Salvation by him, though revealed to us by sundry degrees, and in divers manners.

And if any Matter, we have now published, in these Fifty Articles, shall seem Noval, or Singular to any, being soberly weighed, and impartially considered by the Reader, it will appear, it is more by way of Explanation, and Accommodation, in order to a Union, than any new Matter, or Words: All the Articles being delivered in a plain and modest style, and in Scripture Language, fitted to the meanest Capacities,¹⁵ we not pretending to any Rhetorical, or Humane Eloquence in speaking, no farther forth than it serves to express the truth Intelligibly to others. For Reason itself, as well as Tongues, or Humane Learning, ought to be subservient to the Mind of the Holy Ghost, or Divine Mysteries of Faith, revealed in Scripture; for we believe it, *ex autoritate dicentis*, relying upon the Truth of him that saith it, and not upon Reason: And all the Evidence which we get by Reason, is nothing to this Certitude. For if Reason shall go before, like an Usher to make way to Faith in Divine Mysteries, we should never believe. In many Divine Truths, the Schoolmen say well. *Rationes praeecedentes minuunt fidem, sed Rationes subsequentes augent fidem*: Reasons going before Faith weaken Faith, but Reasons coming after Faith strengthen it.

For Philosophy itself, though maintained by the successive

(a) Viz. True God and true man, united in one Person.

force of the greatest Wits, yet is purblind, or dark-sighted, in Divine Mysteries, and evaporates into nothing, before Divine Revelation: but Christianity, attended by its own Authority, established its^(t) Dominion, and raised an eternal Empire of Truth and Holiness in the World; yet the Reason of Men cannot inspire into its own Productions, or principle of Life¹⁶: for the Conversion of Men and Women to Christianity was, and is, the effect of Infinite Mercy, and equal Power, and the Simple, Plain, and Divine Truths of Jesus Christ in the Gospel shall survive its uttermost Periods, maugre all its Enemies, and greatest Opposition; although it be in a showre of Blood, yet it shall thereby be made Fruitful: According to that true Axiom, That the Blood of the Martyrs is the Seed of the Church: And by its everlasting Monuments, remain for ever, by its victorious permanent Efficacy. And though the Way of the Gospel be attended (especially the powerful profession of it) with some difficulty, yet remember what St. Chrysostom saith,^(u) *Non aspicias aspera est via, sed attende quo ducit, nec considera quod est arcta, sed ubi definit*: Regard thou not that the way to Life is streight, but mark whither it leadeth, and where it endeth. ^(w) *Nemo potest hic gaudere cum seculo, & illic regnare cum Deo*.—No man may have his full contentment and delight, both in this, and God's kingdom. Consider Souls,^(x) God's Tabernacle is in Salem, and his Dwelling-place is in Sion: How then shall we esteem of the^(y) Truth, and Worship of God? and desire to meet him where he hath promised his Presence, setting a low esteem of the Glory, and Grandure of this World, in its greatest Riches. Consider all true, and lasting Felicity, and Riches, are in Christ; and as^(z) St. Bernard saith, O Lord Jesus, he that will not live to Thee, is worthy of Death, and is already Dead; and he that is not Wise to Thee, is become a Fool; he that desireth any Being but for Thee, is to be esteemed as nothing, &c.

Oh consider what Christ hath done for us! As* St. Augustine hath it, Oh Son of God! how great was thy Humility! how great was thy Charity! how exceeding was thy Pity! I sinned, thou art Chastised; I offended, thou art Punished; I was disobedient, thou Obedient for me; I transgressed, and thou art

(t) Dr. Bates Harmony of the Divine Attributes.

(u) Chrys. in Mat. 16.

(w) Greg. the Great in Mat. 13.

(x) Psal. 77 [76. 2]

(y) Viz. The true object of Divine worship, viz. Fa[ther] Son and Holy Spirit.

(z) Bern. in Cant. Hom. 20.

* Aug. Med. Cap. 7.

Tortured, &c. Hearken to the Word of God, as^(a) St. Ambrose adviseth us,—*Interrogentur Scripturae, &c.*, that is, Consult with the Scripture, the Apostles, the Prophets; what they spake, Christ speaketh.

But if it be said, the Scriptures be hard to be understood: Consider what St. Augustine hath said, in answer to such an Objection.^(b) *Magnificè, & salubriter Spiritus Sanctus Scripturas ita modificavit, ut locis apertioribus fami occurreret, obscurioribus autem fastidia detergeret, nihil ferè de illis obscurioribus eruit, quod non planissimè alibi dictum reperitur.* The Holy Ghost hath therefore magnifically, and wholesomely so tempered the Scriptures, that by plain, and easie places, he might prevent Famine: By obscure places, he might wipe away all Loathsomeness (or Disdain): For nothing almost, is gathered out of those obscure places, which is not in some other places delivered plainly.

And this Authority of the Word of God, puts an Honour upon the Ministry thereof, that we should honour them, and hearken to them, when they come in the Name of Christ; for Christ saith, *Qui vos audit, me audit*: He that heareth you, heareth me. Therefore let such that make no conscience of disdaining, and reflecting calumniously, upon the sober godly Ministers, or Servants of Christ, forbear such practice¹⁷; for God saith, Touch not mine Anointed, and do my Prophets no harm; and the dust of their Feet, will be a witness against such Persons (if they do not repent), in the Day of Judgment.

Finally, Consider Immortal Souls! This place you are now in, is not *Terra Viventium*, the Land of the Living, which maketh us blessed, and which the Meek shall inherit: But *terra morientium*, the Land of the Dying, wherein we dwell as Strangers and Pilgrims, for a short time: And as the Vail of the Temple before it was rent, did hinder us from the sight of the Cherubims, and Mercy seat: So must our Corruptions be rent from us, which hinder us from the beatifical sight of Christ, our Saviour. *Sed si recte Deum amemus.*—But if we truly love God the Father, and Jesus Christ and his Kingdom, this love will symbolize¹⁸ our Minds, into that which we love; for the Mind is not where it liveth, but where it loveth. An[d] endeavour so to live in this World, that short time we have to live among the Wicked, and slanderous backbiting Tongues, and tempestuous proud Waves, and dangerous Rocks of Heresie, and ungodly Professors; who glory more in the formal name of a Christian, or Professor, than their care, or endeavour to live in the power of it; that being too straight a way, or too heavy a burthen for many now a-days. Yet

^(a) Ambr. ad Gratia Imper.

^(b) Aug. de Doct. Christ. lib. 2.

the Godly should be as the Lillies themselves, *Quae ipsas utique pungentes se spinas candore proprio illustrare non cessant*: Which by their own Beauty do adorn the Thorns themselves, by whom they are pricked. And though their proud Waves beat upon thee, and they be as Thorns to thee, yet *ne tribuletur Cor tuum*, let not thy Heart be troubled; for^(c) Jesus Christ is Musick in the Ear, Pleasure and Comfort in the Heart. So that from the experience of God's Grace, thou wilt say with the Psalmist,^(d) O how amiable are thy Dwellings, O Lord of Hosts? My Heart and my Flesh shall rest in the Living God.

Consider these things, Christian Reader, which are here humbly proposed, to that end the Protestant Interest might be united in the love of, and practice, and power of Godliness, in Church and Family; and Heresie oppugned, and Hereticks detected, Schism prevented, and Scandals removed, were¹⁹ undeserved and humble Souls comforted, and all good Christians in the unity of the true Faith, established according to God's Word; and Christian Congregations reformed, and Obedience to Superiours (in all lawful things) performed. These, and such like, being the main Ends of our publishing this Confession of Faith at this time: Therefore if any shall Censure it, we only beg this favour, That first they will be pleased to weight and consider, those things herein proposed, in the ballance of the Sanctuary, according to our Saviour's Rule^(e) to search the Scriptures, &c. And like the ^(f) noble Bereans, to search and see whether these things be so or no, and after that to judge. And as St. Paul saith,^(g) To prove all things, and hold fast that which is good, and contend earnestly for the Faith that was once delivered to the Saints. And if thou findest any Profit, or Advantage to thy Soul, give God the Glory, and help us by thy Prayers, and we have our end. *Vale.*

[After this Preface the next page begins "The Titles of the Fifty Articles, with the Pages where to find every of them in this Book." The Articles are printed on pages numbered from 1 to 76. Page 77 has the following "Advertisement to the Reader"].

This Protestant Confession of Faith, containing Fifty Articles, [is] believed and professed, and now published by many Baptized Protestant Christians, whose names are hereunto Subscribed, and [who] do most heartily and unfeignedly own, believe, and profess the said Articles; and desire through the Grace of God, to persevere in this our Faith, or professed Belief, &c. And have with one consent, agreed that this Confession of our Faith be Printed and Published, in the Name of many Baptized Chris-

(c) Bern. in Cant. Hom. 15.

(d) Psal. 84. 1, 2.

(e) John. 5. 39.

(f) Act. 17. 11.

(g) 1 Thes. 5. 21.

tians, or Congregations in the several Counties of Bucks, Hertford, Bedford, and Oxford: To which said Protestant Confession of Faith, we have this 30th Day of January, Anno Dom. 1678.²⁰ subscribed our Names, in the behalf of our selves and many others, to whom we belong in the Counties aforesaid, which are as followeth, viz.

[Fifty-four signatures follow, and then a "Post-script" on page 79].

Courteous Reader,

I Doubt not but that some of these things before premised in this Confession of Faith, especially those Articles that relate to the Doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity, and Justification by the Blood, Merits and Satisfaction of Jesus Christ our Saviour; Together with the Authority of the holy Scriptures, and that Godly Doctrine manifestly asserted in those three Creeds we have published; all which Doctrine in part, or whole, will have little entertainment by some, and without question great opposition from many, that do oppose the Church of England, and others also, as well as us, in these great Fundamental Truths, wherein we are all agreed, (viz.) The Doctrine of the Trinity, and Christ's Satisfaction to his Father's Justice, for sinful Man. And no wonder there is such Instruments, and Cunning Sophisters abroad: For it's evident that Satan knows, that if the Foundations be destroyed, we shall be at a loss; and what greater Foundation than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ, (viz.) The True Christ, God Man, or Immanuel, God with us. But St. Peter sheweth us, that some shall bring in such damnable Heresies into the World, in denying this true Object of Faith and Worship, and so worship and believe a meer Idol, and Invention of their own. And now altho these Articles be passed over with brevity, as some may judge, and yet happily [? haply] others may, and will conclude they are too large, and have too much repetition in the Preface, &c. in many of them, which the Critical will call Tautologies, &c. Let them if they please; yet the Sober and Intelligent, will conclude there is need of it, for the benefit of the Ignorant and meaner sort of People, for whose sakes it is written in a plain manner, for their Instruction, and as brief as it could for the benefit of the poorer sort, who cannot buy great Volumes.

Finis.

¹ An introductory address "to the judicious and impartial reader" occurs in the 1646 edition of the *Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations* and the Assembly or Second London Confession of 1677. (McGlothlin 191-3, 223-7.)

² The General Baptists held that all Christian doctrine was contained implicitly at least in the Old and New Testaments, and that under the

guidance of the Holy Spirit this revelation would be ever more clearly apprehended. "The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word."

³ "Slurd" must here mean "tarnished".

⁴ By 1679 there was little doctrinal difference between Presbyterians and Independents, and no practical difference in polity: the English Presbyterian churches were in practice congregational.

⁵ The Roman Catholics were often accused of making men sceptics as the readiest way to make them Papists.

⁶ Matthew Caffyn was accused of maintaining that God is a limited being, in a form or shape much like a man (Taylor i, 471 n.). In 1709 the orthodox General Assembly declared that an "expedient in Scripture words" drawn up by Caffyn's adherents was not a sufficient barrier against the Anthropomorphites. If Caffyn really entertained these notions, he may have derived them from the Karaite Jews or the Keramian Moslems, or directly from such passages as *Exodus xxxiii, 22-23*.

⁷ According to Joseph Wright's *Speculum haereticis* (1691) Caffyn was a leader of the Apollinarian (perhaps rather Eutychian) party for nearly twenty years—presumably from 1656, when disputes concerning the Incarnation first arose in the General Assembly, until after the publication of Monk's *Cure for the Cankering Error* in 1673. Later his views developed towards Arianism. His final position was apparently that the Word of God is a created being, not of one substance with the Father, and a God only by deputation; and that the Word became flesh in the Virgin's womb by a new creation, so that even Christ's body was not truly human. Caffyn's earlier Christology was identical with that of Melchior Hoffman; later it was a blend of Hoffman and Socinus. H. John McLachlan's *Socinianism in Seventeenth Century England* has references to Caffyn and other Baptists.

⁸ John Tombes had died in 1676. The reference is probably to his *Emmanuel, or God man* (1669), a defence of the doctrine of the two natures in Christ, defined at Chalcedon: perhaps also to his earlier tracts against the Quakers and Romanists.

⁹ The reference is presumably to Thomas Hicks' three *Dialogues Between a Christian and a Quaker* (1672-4) to which William Penn and others replied.

¹⁰ The mention of Thomas Monk suggests that this part of the preface was drafted by someone else, perhaps Stephen Dagnall, the intrepid bookseller who was elder of Aylesbury, and had been sentenced to death with Monk in 1663.

¹¹ The General Baptists were often called Pelagians. In 1646 Stephen Dagnall was accused by Thomas Edwards of denying original sin (*Gangraena* pt. 3, p. 105). In 1707 the church at Cuddington excluded its elder, Henry Gosse, for teaching that his own righteousness, not Christ's, should be imputed unto him for justification, and that infants were born clean from any defilement of nature. Yet both Dagnall and Gosse signed this Confession, which declares (art. 15) that every man justly deserves God's wrath and damnation.

¹² It is clear that the subscribers of this Confession did not regard themselves as Arminians; indeed, their theology anticipates that of Fuller, Hinton and Robert Hall, over a century later. In Buckinghamshire a member could move from a General to a Particular church in 1689 without incurring censure (*Church Book of Ford*, ed. Whitley (1912) p. 5). Later, attempts by Benjamin Keach and others to disrupt the General Baptist churches led to a worsening of relations.

¹³ This paragraph is probably aimed at the Spilshall church, which had long tolerated heterodox views on the Trinity, and in 1677 had peacefully separated into two churches, one of which (the "Biddenden party") held it

unnecessary to Christian communion to believe that Christ is of the same essence with the Father, or that His body was derived from the Virgin Mary.

¹⁴ This attack is directed at Caffyn, who as Messenger in Kent and Sussex had facilitated the formation of the Biddenden church and later promoted the excommunication of those of its members who opposed his views. These and other disputes in Kent convinced many orthodox General Baptists that Caffyn could not be appeased but must be resolutely "oppugned".

¹⁵ Terms such as "hypostatical union" (art. 9) are scarcely "Scripture language, fitted to the meanest Capacities"! But in general the Confession keeps close to Scripture. It does not warrant Taylor's description "this essay at the explication of inexplicables".

¹⁶ The text has no obvious meaning. Perhaps we should read "the Reason of Man cannot inspire into its own Productions a principle of Life".

¹⁷ This may be aimed at Nehemiah Neale and Daniel Field, who split the church at Berkhamsted and Chesham in 1677 on the question of maintenance of ministers, and contended with their elder, John Russell. Thomas Monk, Messenger in Bucks. and Herts., strongly supported Russell, and Article 31 insists on the rights of bishops and elders to "a sufficient and honourable maintenance of the people that chose them, answerable to the dignity of their places".

¹⁸ "Symbolize . . . into" is used in the very rare sense "cause to become similar in qualities or properties".

¹⁹ The word "were" should apparently be deleted.

²⁰ 1679, new style (the year then began on 25th March).

ARNOLD H. J. BAINES.

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E.M.H.