



The
Old Baptist Union
Confession
of Faith.

Reprinted from the Edition of A.D. 1660.

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The Old Baptist Union Confession of Faith

As Old Baptists, we need make no apology for re-printing this "Confession of Faith" of our forefathers. It was first issued in March, 1660, by the English Old or General Baptists (not Calvinistic). Forbidden to meet together for the worship of God, persecuted "for righteousness' sake" by the enemies of the truth, and obtaining no redress from the authorities, they resolved to appeal to the king—Charles II.—who in order to obtain the Crown, had but a few months before promised liberty of worship to all. Accordingly they presented this "Confession of Faith" to the king, by the hands of two of their ministers—Mr. Grantham and Mr. Joseph Wright—on July 23th, 1660. In his important work, "Christianismus Primitivus," Mr. Grantham has reprinted it, adding thereto explanatory supplements, and "the testimony of many of the ancient writers of Christianity, to show that, though the composition of these articles be new, yet the doctrine contained therein is truly ancient, being witnessed both by the Holy Scriptures and later writers of Christianity." We will even go farther and affirm the teaching they (and also the Confession of 1611) convey, to be the doctrine of the first Baptist church, founded by Christ and His disciples.

Some of the General Baptists of later times became associated with Unitarianism; and others, through laying aside the Scriptural simplicity of certain of the truths herein contended for, have, like their Calvinistic brethren, lost their identity with the Old Baptists, so that modern Baptists do not dare in every respect to stand by the Faith and practice of their predecessors of only 250 years ago.

Feeling that there has been far too much of this "drifting downward" among Baptists, and that it is high time the tide set in in the other direction, "The International Old Baptist Union"—which not only comprises a growing number of Churches in England, and Missions in various other lands, but also the Old Baptists of America who date back to 1636, and are "the mother church" of all American Baptists—is seeking to revive the Scriptural teachings of the Old Baptists, the true followers of Christ and His Apostles. We believe that if the principles of the early Baptists were more widely known, many would gladly embrace them, therefore we have reprinted this, which may be truthfully said to be THE OLD BAPTIST UNION CONFESSON OF FAITH to-day. The following is the old "Confession" in the identical language of the first edition:—

"A brief Confession or declaration of faith set forth by many of us who are (falsely) called Ana-Baptists, to inform all men (in these days of scandal and reproach) of our innocent belief and practice; for which we are not only resolved to suffer persecution to the loss of our goods, but also life itself, rather than to decline the same.

"Subscribed by certain Elders, Deacons, and Brethren, met at London in the first month (called March, 1660) in the behalf of themselves and many others unto whom they belong, in London and in several counties of this Nation who are of the same faith with us.

"1.—We believe and are verily confident, That there is but one God the Father, of Whom are all things, from everlasting to everlasting, glorious, and unwordable in all His attributes (1 Cor. viii. 6; Isa. xl. 28).

"2.—That God in the beginning made man upright, and put him into a state and condition of glory without the least mixture of misery, from

which he by transgression fell, and so came into a miserable and mortal estate subject unto the first death (Gen. i. 31; Eccles. vii. 29; Gen. ii. 17; iii. 17, 18, 19).

"3.—That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, Who is the only begotten Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, yet as truly David's Lord and David's Root as David's son and David's offspring (Luke xx. 44; Rev. xxii. 16); Whom God freely sent into the world (because of His great love unto the world), Who as freely gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Tim. ii. 5, 6), *tasting death for every man* (Heb. ii. 9), *a propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only*, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John ii. 2).

"4.—That God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. iii. 9) and the knowledge of the truth, that they might be saved (1 Tim. ii. 4). For which end Christ hath commanded that the Gospel (to wit, the glad tidings of remission of sins) should be preached to every creature (Mark xvi. 15). So that no man shall eternally suffer in hell (that is, the second death) for want of a Christ that died for them; but, as the Scripture saith, for *denying the Lord that bought them* (2 Pet. ii. 1); or because they *believe not in the Name of the only begotten Son of God* (John iii. 18). Unbelief, therefore, being the cause why the just and righteous God will condemn the children of men, it follows against all contradiction that all men at one time or other are put into such a capacity as that (through the grace of God) they may be eternally saved (John i. 7; Acts xvii. 30; Mark vi. 6; Heb. iii. 10, 18, 19; 1 John v. 10; John iii. 7).

"5.—That such who first orderly come into, and are brought up in the school of Christ's church, and waiting there, come to degrees of Christianity, rightly qualified, and considerably gifted by God's Spirit, ought to exercise their gifts not only in the church, but also (as occasion serves) to preach to the world (they being approved of the church so to do) (Acts ii. 22-24; Acts ii. 19, 20); and that among such, some are to be chosen by the church, and ordained by fasting, prayer, and laying-on-of-hands, for the work of the ministry (Acts xiii. 2, 3; Acts i. 23). Such so ordained (and abiding faithful in their work) we own as ministers of the Gospel; but all such who come not first to repent of their sins, believe on the Lord Jesus, and so be baptised in His Name unto the remission of their sins, but are only brought up in the schools of human learning, to the attaining of human arts and variety of languages, with many vain curiosities of speech (1 Cor. i. 19, 21; ii. 1, 4, 5), seeking rather the gain of large revenues than the gain of souls to God; such (we say) we utterly deny, being such as have need rather to be taught themselves than are fit to teach others (Rom. ii. 21).

"6.—That the way set forth by God for men to be justified in, is by faith in Christ (Rom. v. 1). That is to say, when men shall assent to the truth of the Gospel, believing with all their hearts that there is remission of sins and eternal life to be had in Christ, and that Christ, therefore, is most worthy their constant affections, and subjection to all His commandments, and therefore resolve with full purpose of heart so to be subject unto Him in all things and no longer unto themselves (2 Cor. v. 15); and so shall (with Godly sorrow for the sins past) commit themselves to His grace, confidently depending upon Him for that which they believe is to be had in Him; such so believing, are justified from all their sins, their faith shall be accounted unto them for righteousness (Rom. iv. 22, 23, 24; Rom. iii. 25, 26).

"7.—That there is one Holy Spirit, the precious gift of God, freely given to such as obey Him (Eph. iv. 4; Acts v. 32), that thereby they may

be thoroughly sanctified and made able (without which they are altogether unable) to abide steadfast in the faith, and to honour the Father and His Son Christ the Author and Finisher of their faith (1 Cor. vi. 11). There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and those three are (as) one; which Spirit of promise such have not yet received (though they speak much of Him) that are so far out of love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and temperance—the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23)—so that they breathe out much cruelty, and great envy against the liberties and peaceable living of such as are not of their judgment, though holy as to their conversations.

“8.—That God hath even before the foundation of the world chosen (or elected) to eternal life, *such as believe*, and so are in Christ (John iii. 16; Eph. i. 4, 2; Thess. ii. 13); yet confident we are that the purpose of God according to the election was not in the least arising from foreseen faith in, or works of righteousness done by the creature, but only from the mercy, goodness, and compassion dwelling in God, and so it is of Him that calleth (Rom. ix. 11), Whose purity and unwordable holiness cannot admit of any unclean person or thing to be in His presence, therefore His decree of mercy reaches only the Godly man, whom (saith David) God hath set apart for Himself (Ps. iv. 3).

“9.—That men, not considered simply as men, but ungodly men, were of old ordained to condemnation, who turn the grace of God into wantonness, and deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 4). God indeed sends a strong delusion to men that they might be damned, but we observe that they are such (as saith the apostle) that *received not the love of the truth that they might be saved* (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12), and so the indignation and wrath of God is upon every soul of man that doeth evil (living and dying therein) for there is no respect of persons with God (Rom. ii. 9, 10, 11).

“10.—That all children dying in infancy, having not actually transgressed against the law of God in their own persons, are only subject to the first death which comes upon them by the sin of the first Adam, from whence they shall all be raised by the Second Adam; and not that any one of them dying in that estate shall suffer for Adam's sin eternal punishment in hell (which is the second death) *for of such* is the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. xv. 22; Matt. xix. 14); not daring to conclude with that uncharitable opinion of others, who though they plead much for the bringing of children into the visible church here on earth by baptism, yet nevertheless, by their doctrine that Christ died but for some, shut a great part of them out of the kingdom of heaven for ever.

“11.—That the right and only way of gathering churches (according to Christ's appointment—Matt. xxviii. 19, 20) is first to teach or preach the Gospel (Mark xvi. 16) to the sons and daughters of men, and then to baptise (that is, in English, to dip) in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, such only of them as profess *repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ* (Acts ii. 38; viii. 12; xviii. 8). And as for all such who preach not this doctrine, but instead thereof that Scriptureless thing of sprinkling of infants (falsely called baptism), whereby the pure word of God is made of no effect, and the New Testament way of bringing members into the church by regeneration, cast out, when as the bondwoman and her son—that is to say, the Old Testament way of bringing children into the Church by generation, is cast out, as saith the Scripture (Gal. iv. 30, 22, 23, 24; Matt. iii. 8, 9); all such we

utterly deny, forasmuch as we are commanded to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them (Eph. v. 11).

“12.—That it is the duty of all such who are believers baptized, to draw nigh unto God in submission to that principle of Christ's doctrine, to wit, prayer and laying on of hands, that they may receive the promise of the Holy Spirit (Heb. vi. 1, 2; Acts viii. 12, 15, 17; xix. 6; 2 Tim. i. 6); whereby they may mortify the deeds of the body (Rom. viii. 13), and live in all things answerable to their professed intentions and desires, even to the honour of Him Who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.

“13.—That it is the duty of such who are constituted as aforesaid, to continue steadfastly in Christ's and the Apostles' doctrines, and assembling together, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts ii. 42).

“14.—That although we thus declare for the primitive way and order of constituting churches, yet we verily believe and also declare, that unless men so professing and practising the form and order of Christ's doctrine, shall also beautify the same with a holy and wise conversation, in all Godliness and honesty, the profession of the visible form will be rendered to them of no effect; *for without holiness no man shall see the Lord* (Heb. xii. 14; Isa. i. 11, 12, 15, 16).

“15.—That the elders or pastors which God hath appointed to oversee and feed His church (constituted as aforesaid) are such who, first being of the number of the disciples, shall in time appear to be vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, &c., not greedy of filthy lucre (as too many ministers are); but patient, not brawlers, not covetous, &c., and as such chosen and ordained to office, according to the order of Scripture (Acts xiv. 23), who are to feed the flock with meat in due season, and in much love to rule over them, with all care seeking after such as go astray. But as for all such who labour to feed themselves with the fat more than to feed the flock (Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 3), seeking more after their's than them, expressly contrary to the practice of the ministers of old who said, ‘We seek not yours but you’ (2 Cor. xii. 14)—all such we utterly deny, and hereby bear our continued testimony against them, as such whom the prophets of old bore testimony against (Ezek. xxxiv).

“16.—That the ministers of Christ that have freely received from God, ought freely to minister to others (1 Cor. ix. 17), and that such who have spiritual things freely ministered unto them, ought freely to communicate necessary things to the ministers (upon the account of their charge, 1 Cor. ix. 11; Gal. vi. 6). And as for tithes or any forced maintenance, we utterly deny such to be the maintenance of Gospel ministers.

“17.—That the church of Christ ought, after the first and second admonition, to reject all heretics (Tit. iii. 10, 11), and in the Name of the Lord to withdraw from all such as profess the way of the Lord but walk disorderly in their conversations (2 Thess. iii. 6), or in any ways cause divisions or offences contrary to the doctrine of Christ which they have learned (Rom. xvi. 17).

“18.—That such who are true believers, even branches in Christ the Vine (and that in His account whom He exhorts to abide in Him, John xv. 1-5); or such who have charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned (1 Tim. i. 5), may nevertheless, for want of watchfulness, swerve and turn aside from the same (verses 6 & 7) and become as withered branches cast into the fire and burned (John xv. 6). But such who add unto their faith virtue, and unto virtue knowledge, and unto knowledge temperance, &c. (2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7), such shall never fall (verses 8, 9, 10);

it is impossible for all the false Christs and false prophets that are and that are to come, to deceive such, for *they are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation* (1 Pet. i. 5).

“19.—That the poor saints belonging to the church of Christ are to be sufficiently provided for by the churches, that they neither want food nor raiment, and this by a free and voluntary contribution and not of necessity or by the constraint or power of the magistrate (2 Cor. ix. 7; 1 Cor. viii. 11, 12), and this through the free and voluntary help of the DEACONS (called overseers of the poor), being faithful men, chosen by the church, and ordained by prayer and laying on of hands to that work (Acts vi. 1-6).

“20.—That there shall be (through Christ who was dead but is alive again from the dead) a resurrection of all men from the graves of the earth (Isa. xxvi. 19), both the just and the unjust (Acts xxiv. 15); that is, the fleshy bodies of men, sown into the graves of the earth, corruptible, dishonourable, weak, natural (which so considered cannot inherit the kingdom of God), shall be raised again, incorruptible, in glory, in power, spiritual: and so considered, the bodies of the saints—united again to their spirits—which here suffer for Christ, shall inherit the kingdom, reigning together with Christ (1 Cor. xv. 21, 22, 42, 43, 44, 49).

“21.—That there shall be after the resurrection from the graves of the earth, an eternal judgment, at the appearing of Christ and His kingdom (2 Tim. iv. 1; Heb. ix. 27); at which time of judgment, which is unalterable and irrevocable, every man shall receive according to the things done in his body (2 Cor. v. 10).

“22.—That the same Lord Jesus who showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs (Acts i. 3), Who was taken up from the disciples and carried up into heaven (Luke xxiv. 51), *shall so come in like manner, as He was seen go into heaven* (Acts i. 9, 10, 11). And when Christ Who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with Him in glory (Col. iii. 4). For then shall He be King of kings, and Lord of lords (Rev. xix. 16), for the kingdom is His and He is the Governor among the nations (Ps. xxii. 28), and King over all the earth (Zech. xiv. 9); *and we shall reign with Him on the earth* (Rev. v. 10); the kingdoms of this world (which men so mightily strive after here to enjoy) shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ (Rev. xi. 15), for all is yours (O ye that overcome this world), for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). *For unto the saints shall be given the kingdom, and the greatness of the kingdom, under* (mark that) the whole heaven (Dan. vii. 27). Though (alas) now many men be scarce content that the saints should have so much as a being amongst them; but when Christ shall appear, then shall be their day, then shall be given unto them power over the nations to rule them with a rod of iron (Rev. ii. 26, 27), then shall they receive a crown of life which no man shall take from them, nor shall they by any means be turned or overturned from it, for the oppressors shall be broken in pieces (Ps. lxxii. 4), and their now vain rejoicings turned into mourning and bitter lamentations, as it is written (Job xx. 5, 6, 7)—‘The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment; though his excellency mount up to the heavens and his head reach unto the clouds, yet shall he perish for ever; they which have seen him shall say—Where is he?’

“23.—That the holy Scriptures are the rule whereby saints both in matters of faith and conversation are to be regulated, they being able to make men wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus, profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God

may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17; John xx. 31; Isa. viii. 20).

"24.—That it is the will and mind of God in these Gospel times that all men should have the free liberty of their own conscience in matters of religion and worship, without the least oppression or persecution, as simply upon that account; and that for any in authority otherwise to act, we confidently believe is expressly contrary to the mind of Christ, Who requires that whatsoever men would that others should do unto them, they should even so do unto others (Matt. vii. 12), and that the tares and wheat should grow together in the field (which is the world), until the harvest, which is the end of the world (Matt. xiii. 29, 30, 38, 39).

"25.—We believe that there ought to be civil magistrates in all nations, for the punishment of evil doers and for the praise of them that do well (1 Pet. ii. 15), and that all wicked lewdness and fleshly filthiness, contrary to just and wholesome (civil) laws, ought to be punished according to the nature of the offences; and this without respect of any persons, religion, or profession whatever; and that we and all men are obliged by Gospel rules to be subject to the higher powers, to obey magistrates (Tit. iii. 1), and to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, as saith 1 Pet. ii. 13. But in case the civil powers do or shall at any time impose things about matters of religion which we through conscience to God cannot actually obey, then we with Peter also do say, that we ought (in such cases) to obey God rather than men (Acts v. 29), and accordingly do hereby declare our whole and holy intent and purpose, that through the help of grace, we will not yield, nor (in such cases) in the least actually obey them; yet humbly purposing in the Lord's strength patiently to suffer whatsoever shall be inflicted upon us, for our conscionable forbearance.

"These things, O ye sons and daughters of men, we verily believe to be the Lord's will and mind, and therefore cannot but speak, and if herein we differ from many, yea from multitudes, from the learned, the wise and prudent of this world—we, with Peter and John, do herein make our solemn and serious appeal, namely, *whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto men* (of a contrary persuasion) *more than unto God?* Oh, let the judicious, judge righteous judgment (Acts iv. 19. 20).

"And in the belief and practice of these things (it being the good old Apostolical way) our souls have found that rest and soul-peace which the world knows not, and which they cannot take from us.

"Of whom then should we be afraid? God is become our strength, our light, our salvation; therefore are we resolved, through grace, to seal the truth of these things in way of suffering persecution, not only to the loss of our goods, freedoms, or liberties, but with our lives also, if called thereunto.

"Subscribed by certain elders, deacons, and brethren met at London, in the first month (called March 1660), in the behalf of themselves, and many others unto whom they belong, in London and in several counties of this nation, who are of the same faith with us."

Here followed 40 signatures of the most prominent and influential Baptists of the period, and the historian Crosby adds the following sentence:—

"Owned and approved by more than twenty thousand."

It is our earnest desire that the perusal of this "form of sound words," may lead those who are desirous of the simplicity of the unchangeable Gospel of Christ, to "Stand in the ways, and see and ask for *the old paths* wherein is the good way and walk therein" (Jer. vi. 16).

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