

Thomas Helwys' Confession

1611

To all the humble minded which love the truth in simplicity Grace and Peace.

We believe and confess:

That there are three which bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and these three are one God, in all equality. By whom all things are created and preserved, in Heaven and in Earth.

That this God in the beginning created all things of nothing, and made man of the dust of the earth, in his own image, in righteousness and true holiness. Yet being tempted, fell by disobedience. Through whose disobedience, all men sinned. His sin being imputed unto all; and so death went over all men.

That by the promised seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, and by his obedience, all are made righteous. All are made alive. His righteousness being imputed unto all.

That notwithstanding this, men are by nature the children of wrath, born in iniquity and in sin conceived. Wise to all evil, but to good they have no knowledge. The natural man perceives not the things of the Spirit of God. And therefore man is not restored unto his former estate, but that as man, in his estate of innocence, having in himself all disposition unto good, and no disposition unto evil, yet being tempted might yield, or might resist: even so now being fallen, and having all disposition unto evil, and no disposition or will unto any good, yet God giving grace, man may receive grace, or may reject grace, according to that saying; Deut. 30.19, I call Heaven and Earth to record. This day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.

That God before the foundation of the world hath predestinated that all that believe in him shall be saved, and all that believe not shall be damned. All which he knew before. And this

is the election and reprobation spoken of in the Scriptures, concerning salvation, and condemnation, and not that God hath predestinated men to be wicked, and so to be damned, for God would have all men saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, and would have no man to perish, but would have all men come to repentance, and wills not the death of him that dies.

And therefore God is the of no mans condemnation, according to the saying of the Prophet, Hosea 13, Thy destruction O Israel, is of thy self, but thy help is of me.

That man is justified only by the righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith, yet faith without works is dead.

That men may fall away from the grace of God, and from the truth, which they have received and acknowledged, after they have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come. And after they have escaped from the filthiness of the World, may be tangled again therein and overcome. That a righteous man may forsake his righteousness and perish. And therefore let no man presume to think that because he has, or had one grace, therefore he shall always have grace. But let all men have assurance, that if they continue unto the end, they shall be saved: Let no man then presume; but let all work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

That Jesus Christ, the Son of God the second Person, or subsistence in the Trinity, in the fullness of time was manifested in the flesh, being the seed of David, and of the Israelites, according to the flesh, and the son of Mary the Virgin, made of her substance, by the power of the Holy Ghost overshadowing her, and being thus true man was like unto us in all things, sin only excepted.

Being one person in two distinct natures, TRUE GOD, and TRUE MAN.

That the church of Christ is a company of faithful people separated from the world by the word and Spirit of God, being knit unto the Lord and one unto another, by baptism. Upon their own confession of the faith and sins.

That though in respect of Christ, the Church be one, yet it consists of diverse particular congregations, even so many as there shall be in the World, every of which congregation, though they be but two or three, have Christ given them, with all the means of their salvation, are the body of Christ and a whole Church. And therefore may and ought, when they are come together, to Pray, Prophecy, break bread, and administer in all the holy ordinances, although as yet they have no Officers, or that their Officers should be in Prison, sick, or by any other means hindered from the Church.

That as one congregation hath Christ, so hath all. And that the Word of God comes not out from any one, neither, to any one congregation in particular. But unto every particular Church as it doth unto all the world. And therefore no church ought to challenge any prerogative over any other.

That every Church is to receive in all their members by Baptism upon the Confession of their faith and sins wrought by the preaching of the Gospel, according to the primitive Institution and practice. And therefore Churches constituted after any other manner, or of any other persons are not according to Christ's testament.

That baptism or washing with water is the outward manifestation of dying unto sin, and walking in newness of life. And therefore in to wise appertains to infants.

That the Lord's Supper is the outward manifestation of the Spiritual communion between Christ and the faithful mutually to declare his death until he comes.

That the members of every Church or Congregation ought to know one another that they may perform all the duties of love one towards another both to soul and body. And especially the Elders ought to know the whole flock, whereof the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. And therefore a Church ought not to consist of such a great multitude as cannot have particular knowledge one of another.

That Brethren impenitent in one sin after the admonition of the Church, are to be excluded the communion of the Saints, therefore not the committing of sin cuts of any from the Church, but refusing to hear the Church to reformation.

That Excommunicants in respect of civil society are not to be avoided.

That every Church ought (according to the example of Christ's disciples and primitive Churches) upon every first day of the week, being the Lord's Day, to assemble together to pray, prophecy, praise God, and break bread, and perform all other parts of Spiritual communion for the worship of God, their own mutual edification, and the preservation of true religion, and piety in the church and that ought not to labor in their callings according to the equity of the moral law, which Christ came not to abolish, but to fulfill.

That the officers of every Church or congregation are either elders, who by their office do especially feed the flock concerning their souls, or deacons, men, and women who be their office relive the necessities of the poor and impotent brethren concerning their bodies.

That the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are written for our instruction and that we ought to search them for they testify of Christ. And therefore to be used withal reverence, as containing the Holy Word of God, which only is our direction in all things whatsoever.

That magistracy is a Holy ordinance of God, that every soul ought to be subject to it not for fear only but for conscience sake. Magistrates are the ministers of God for our wealth, they

bear not the sword for naught. They are the ministers of God to take vengeance on them that do evil. That it is a fearful sin to speak evil of them that are in dignity, and to despise Government. We ought to pay tribute, customs and all other duties. That we are to pray for them, for God would have them saved and come to the knowledge of his truth. And therefore they may be members of the Church of Christ, retaining their magistracy, for no Holy Ordinances of God debars any from being a member of Christ's Church. They bear the sword of God, which sword in all lawful administration is to be defended and supported by the servants of God that are under their Government with their lives and all that they have according as in the first Institutions of that Holy Ordinance. And whosoever hold otherwise must hold, (if they understand themselves) that they are the ministers of the devil, and therefore not to be prayed for nor approved in any of their administrations, seeing all things they do (as punishing offenders and defending their countries, state, and persons by the sword) as unlawful.

That it is Lawful in a just cause for the deciding of strife to take an oath by the Name of the Lord.

That the dead shall rise again, and the living being changed in a moment, having the same bodies in substance though diverse in qualities.

That after the resurrection all men shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged according to their works, that the Godly shall enjoy life Eternal, the wicked being condemned shall be tormented everlastingly in hell.