

JOHN SPILSBURY

AND

HIS CONFESSION

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The personal confession of ten articles Spilsbury submitted for the "Godly reader to judge, what difference there is between him and me, in the main, that men should be so incensed against me, as to seek my life, as some have done." Spilsbury wanted to disarm those who cast "reproachful clamors... upon all without exception, that seem to be of my judgment about baptism" by declaring "a word of my faith, what I believe and hold to be truth, and desire to practice the same." One year later, Spilsbury would join with the other Particular Baptist churches in London in publishing and signing the First London Confession.

1. I do believe that there is only one God, who is distinguished in 3 persons; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; yet but one in nature, or essence, without divisions, and incommunicable, who made the world, and all things therein, by the word of his power, & governs them by his wise providence.

2. I believe that God made man in his own Image, an upright and perfect creature, consisting of soul and body: which body God framed of the earth, and breathed into the same the breath of life, and man became a living soul. To whom God gave a law, upon his keeping of which depends all his happiness, and upon the contrary attended his misery, which took effect; for he breaking that law, he fell under the curse, and wrath of God lay upon him and all his posterity. By which fall man lost the knowledge of God, and utterly disabled himself of all ability ever to recover the same again.

3. I believe God out of the counsel of his will, did, before he made the world, elect and choose some certain number of his foreseen fallen creatures, and appointed them to eternal life in his Son, for the glory of his grace: which number so elected shall be saved, come to glory, & the rest left in sin to glorify his justice.

4. I believe that God in the fullness of his own time, did send his son, the 2d. person, who in the womb of the virgin Mary, assumed mans nature, and in the same he suffered death upon the cross, only as he was man, to satisfy his Fathers justice, for the sins of his elect, & that he lay 3 days and 3 nights in his grave, from whence he arose the third day by the power of his Godhead, for the justification of all for whose sins he died, and that in the same body Christ died, he arose from the death, and afterwards ascended into heaven,

the place of glory, where he was before, and there to remain until he comes at the last day to judge the world in righteousness.

5. I believe that God of his grace, in his own time, effectually calls such as shall be saved to the knowledge of the truth, who is said, of his own will to beget us by the word of truth: in which work of grace, nature is as passive, as a child in the parents begetting of it; and so God by His Spirit works faith in the hearts of all such to believe in Christ, and his righteousness, only for justification. And thus they are made righteous before God in Christ, and so conformable to the will of God the Father through the Son; and also made holy through the work of regeneration, and the holy Spirit of grace dwelling in them; yet all such have still, as long as they live here in the flesh, remaining in them, an old man, that original corruption, the flesh that wars against the spirit, which hinders them in their obedience both to God and to man, and many times draws them to that which is evil, and contrary to their intentions; yet all of them shall through Christ overcome, and safely be brought to glory at last.

6. I believe the holy Scriptures to be the word of God, and have the only authority to bind the conscience to the obedience of all therein contained, and are the all sufficient rule, by the Spirit of God to guide a man in all his obedience both to God and man.

7. As for the absence of original sin, and power in the will to receive and refuse grace and salvation being generally offered by the Gospel, and Christ dying for all persons universally, to take away sin that stood between them and salvation, and so laid down his life for a ransom for all without exception, and for such as have been one in God's love, so as approved of by him in Christ for salvation, and in the Covenant of Grace, and for such to fall so as to be damned eternally, and all of the like nature, I do believe is a doctrine from beneath, and not from above, and the teachers of it from Satan, and not from God, and to be rejected as such that oppose Christ and his Gospel.

8. I do believe the resurrection of the dead, that all shall rise and come to judgment, and every one give account of himself to God, and receive according to the things done in their bodies, whether they be good or bad; therefore no conscience ought to be forced in the matters of Religion, because no man can bear out another in his account to God, if in case he

should cause him to sin.

9. I do believe the powers that are, as the civil Magistrates, and so, are of God, to whom God hath committed the Sword of justice, for the punishing of evil doers, and for the good of such as do well, in which respect they ought to be honored, obeyed, and assisted by all men, and of Christians especially, and that out of conscience to God, whose ordinance and ministers they are, and bear not the sword in vain, Rom. 13, I Pet. 2, Tit. 3.

And lastly, I do believe that there is an holy and blessed communion of Saints, that God of his grace calls such as belong to life by election, unto the fellowship of his Son by the Gospel, of which matter, God by his word and Spirit joins them together in his Covenant of grace, and so constitutes his Church, as I have before showed: And as God hath thus built for himself an holy habitation of such pure matter, and also after so holy a manner, even so hath he provided a way of preservation and safety for the same; as Isa. 26:1. We have a strong City, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks: which City is said to have a wall both great and high, and built upon twelve foundations; great, that none shall break through, and high, that none shall overtop or get over, and strong in the foundation, that nothing shall shake it, and God hath said, that he will be a wall of fire round about, and the glory in the midst of it, and that he will keep it, and watch over it by night and by day, that nothing shall hurt it; and as God hath built himself a house after his own mind, and is a guard to the same; even so he is also said to beautify the same with salvation, and to make the place of his feet glorious, and that he will lay all her stones with fair colors, and her foundations with Sapphires, and her windows of Agars, and her gates of Carbuncles, and all her borders of pleasant stones, and all her children taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of her children. And as Christ does thus signify unto us the nature of his church both in respect of her matter, her form, her grace, and comely order in him her head; even so he holds forth his love to her, and delight in her, by these and the like expressions of comfort and solace. The Lord hath chosen Zion, &c. Pas. 132. 13, 14; Eph. 2. 21, 23; Pas. 87. 2, 3; Gal. 4. 26, 31; Isa. 2. 2; Isa. 62. 1, 12; Ezek. 48. 35; Rev. 21. 12, 14; Zech. 2. 5; Isa. 26. 3; Isa. 4. 11, 12, 13; Rev. 21. 11, 18, 21; Cant. 4. 7; Psal. 45. 13.