

THE SOMERSET CONFESSION
OF
FAITH

1656

LONDON, PRINTED BY HENRY HILLS, AND ARE TO BE SOLD BY THOMAS BREWSTER,
AT THE THREE BIBLES AT THE WEST END OF PAULS, 1656. AUGUST 10.

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A CONFESSION OF THE FAITH
OF SEVERAL
CHURCHES OF CHRIST

In the County of Somerset, and of some Churches
in the Counties neer adjacent.

1 Peter iii. 15.

*Sanctifie the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready alwaies
to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of
the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*

Matthew x. 32.

*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will
I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven.*

Isaiah viii. 20.

*To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according
to this rule it is because there is no light in them.*

Acts xvii. 11.

*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that
they received the word with all readiness of minde, and
searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

London, Printed by Henry Hills, and are to be sold by Thomas Brewster,
at the three Bibles at the West end of Pauls, 1656. August 10.

A CONFESSION of the FAITH of several congregations of Christ in the
county of Somerset, and some churches in the counties near adjacent.

Printed at London, Anno

1656.

I.

WE believe that there is but one God (1 Cor. 8:6.), who is immortal, eternal, invisible, only wise (1 Tim. 1:17.), holy (Lev. 11:44.), almighty (Gen. 17:1.) infinite (1 Kings 8:27; Isa. 40:28; Ps. 147:5); a Spirit (John 4:24.), glorious in holiness (Ex. 15:11), just, merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in mercy and truth (Ex. 34:6, 7.), faithful in all things (Deut. 7:9.).

II.

THAT this God, who is so in himself, did according to his own will in time, create all things, by, and for Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:2; Col. 1:16; John 2:3); who is the word of God (John 1:1) and upholds all things by the word of his power (Heb. 1:3.).

III.

THAT God made man after his own image (Gen. 1:27), in an estate of uprightness and human perfection (Eccles. 7:29.),

IV.

THAT God gave Adam a just law, requiring obedience under the penalty of death (Gen. 2:17), which law he brake, and brought himself and his posterity under the guilt and judgment denounced (Gen. 3:6; Rom. 5:12, 17, 18, 19.).

V.

MAN being in this undone estate, God did in the riches of his mercy hold forth Christ in a promise (Gen. 3:15.).

VI.

THAT in process of time God gave forth his laws by the hand of Moses (Exod. 20; John 1:17), to fallen man (Gal. 3:19), not for justification to eternal life (Gal. 3:17; Rom. 3:20.), but that all might appear guilty before the Lord by it (Rom. 3:19; 5:20).

VII.

THAT out of this condition none of the sons of Adam were able to deliver themselves (Rom. 8:3; Eph. 2:1, 5; Rom. 5:6.).

VIII.

THAT God continued and renewed the manifestation of his grace and mercy in Christ after the first promise made (Gen. 3), in other promises (Gen. 22:18

with Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:16.); and in types, as the passover (Exod. 12:8 and ver. 13 with 1 Cor. 5:7.), and the brazen serpent (Numb. 21:9 compared with John 3:14); with the ministry and ministration of Moses and Aaron, the sacrifices, &c. being all figures of Christ (Heb. 7:8 and Chap. 9.); and in prophetesies (as Isa. 9:6; 11:1, 2; 53:6 compared with 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 Cor. 15:3.).

IX.

THAT God in his son did freely, without respect to any work done, or to be done by them as a moving cause, elect and choose some to himself before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3, 4; 2 Tim. 1:9.), whom he in time hath, doth, and will call, justify, sanctify and glorify (Rom. 8:29, 30).

X.

THAT those that were thus elected and chosen in Christ were by nature (before conversion) children of wrath even as others (Eph. 2:3; Rom. 3:9.).

XI.

THAT those that are chosen of God, called and justified, shall never finally fall from him, but being born from above are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (John 6:39; 10:28; 11:26; 1 Pet. 1:5; Ps. 89:30, 31, 32, 33, 34; 1 John 3:9; John 14:19; Heb. 12:2; Jer. 31:3; John 10:29; Ps. 37:28; Jer. 32:40; Rom. 8:39; 1 Cor. 1:8, 9; Rom. 8:30; Ps. 48:14.).

XII.

THAT when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman (Gal. 4:4, 5.) according to the promises and prophetesies of the scriptures; who was conceived in the womb of Mary the virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit of God, (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:20.), and by her born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:11; Luke 2:6, 7.).

XIII.

WE believe that Jesus Christ is truly God (Isa. 9:6; Heb. 1:8; Rom. 9:5.) and truly man, of the seed of David (1 Tim. 2:5; Acts 13:23; Rom. 1:3.).

XIV.

THAT after he came to be about thirty years of age, being baptized, he manifested himself to be the Son of God (Luke 3:21, 23 with John 2:7, 11.), the promised Messiah, by doing such works both in his life and in his death which were proper unto, and could be done by none but the Son of God, the

true Messiah (John 1:49; 6:9, &c.).

XV.

THAT this man Christ Jesus suffered death under Pilate, at the request of the Jews (Luke 23:24.), bearing the sins of his people on his own body on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24), according to the will of God (Isa. 53:6), being made sin for us, (2 Cor. 5:11) and so was also made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13, 14; 1 Pet. 3:18.), that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:11), and by his death upon the cross, he hath obtained eternal redemption and deliverance for his church. (Col 1:14; Eph. 1:7; Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet 1:18, 19.).

XVI.

THAT this same Jesus having thus suffered death for our sins, was buried (Matt. 27:59, 60.), and was also raised by the power of God (Eph. 1:19.) the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3, 4.), for our justification (Rom.4:25.).

XVII.

THAT after he had been seen forty days upon the earth, manifesting himself to his disciples (Acts 1:3.), he ascended into the heavens (Acts 1:9, 10, 11; Heb. 4:14.), and is set on the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 8:1; Heb. 1:3.), whom the heavens must receive until the time of the Restitution of all things. (Acts 3:21.).

XVIII.

THAT the Father having thus exalted him, and given him a name above every name (Phil. 2:9.), and hath made him who is mediator (1 Tim. 2:5), priest (Heb. 10:21; 8:1), prophet (Acts 3:22.), and king to his people (Ps. 2:6; Rev. 15:3.). As he is our priest, so is he our peace and reconciliation (Eph. 2:14, 15; Rom. 5:9, 10.), and being entered into the holy place, even heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God (Heb. 9:24.), making continual intercession for us (Heb. 7:24, 25.), he is become our advocate (1 John 2:1.) by whom we have boldness and access unto the throne of grace with acceptance (Heb. 10:19; Eph. 3:12; Heb. 4:16.). As he is our prophet, so he hath given us the scriptures, the Old and New Testament, as a rule and direction unto us both for faith and practice (John 5:39; 1 Pet. 1:10, 11, 12; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:20, 21; Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 14:37; Tit. 1:2, 3.); and that he

hath sent, doth and will (according to his promise) send his Holy Spirit the Comforter, by whom he leadeth us into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13.); and by his continual presence with us, and in us (John 14:16, 17.), teaching, opening and revealing the mysteries of the kingdom, and will of God unto us (1 Cor. 2:10, 11, 12, 13; Rev. 2:29; 5:5.), giving gifts in his church for the work of the ministry, and edifying the body of Christ (Eph. 4:8, 12; 1 Cor. 12:4, 5, 6.), that through the powerful teachings of the Lord, by his Spirit in his church, they might grow up in him (Eph. 4:15.), be conformed to his will (Ezek. 36:27; 1 Pet. 1:2.), and sing praises unto his name (Heb. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:15.). And as he is our prophet, and king, lord, and law-giver (Isa. 33:22; 55:4.), Prince of life (Acts 3:15.), Prince of peace (Isa. 9:6.), Master of his people (Matt. 23:8.), Head of his church (Col. 1:18.), the Almighty (Rev. 1:8.), so he hath given rules unto us, by the which he ruleth over us (Luke 6:46; John 10:16; 1 John 2:4; John 14:15; Matt. 28:20.), and ruleth over all things for his church (Eph. 1:22; Rev. 19:16.) and by the power of love ruleth by his Spirit in us (2 Cor. 5:14; 1 John 2:5.), making us (in a measure) both able and willing to honour him (Phil. 4:3; Heb. 13:21; Eph. 6:10; Phil. 2:13), and bow before him (Ps. 95:6; 110:3; Rev. 4: 10, 11.), submitting ourselves to him alone in all his commands with joy (John 15:14; Rev. 14:4; 7:15; Ps. 119:2, 47; Rev. 15:3, 4.).

XIX.

THAT the Spirit is administred by or through the word of faith preached (Gal. 3:2) which word was first declared by the Lord himself, and was confirmed by them that heard him (Heb. 2:3.), which word is called the gospel of God's grace (Acts 20:24.), the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19.), the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17.), the weapon of a Christian (2 Cor. 10:4.); a faithful (Rev. 22:6.), quick, powerful (Heb. 4:12.), plain (Prov. 8: 9.), comfortable (Rom. 15:4.), pure (Ps. 12:6.), right, true (Ps. 33:4.), sound (Tit. 2:8.), and wholesome word (1 Tim. 6:3.).

XX.

THAT this spirit of Christ, being administer'd by the word of faith, worketh in us faith in Christ (John 3: 5; 1 Pet. 1:22 Acts 16:14; Gal. 5:22.) by virtue of which we come to receive our sonship (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26.), and is further administer'd unto us through faith in the promises of God (Eph. 1:13; Acts 2:38, 39; Acts 1:4.), waiting on him in those ways and means that he hath

appointed in his word (John 14:15, 16, 17; Luke 11:9, 13.), this faith being the ground of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1.).

XXI.

THAT justification is God's accounting and declaring that man justified from the guilt and condemnation of all his sin, who hath received Jesus Christ and doth believe in him (in truth and power) according to the record given of him by God in scripture (Rom. 4: 5; 1 John 5:10, 11; Joh. 3:36.).

XXII.

THAT justification from the guilt and condemnation of sin is only obtained through faith in that man Jesus Christ, crucified at Jerusalem, and by God raised from the dead (Rom. 5:1, 9; Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 4:25; 10:9.). And that those who bring in any other way of justification, do therein make void, and acquit themselves of having any interest in the gospel and grace of Christ (Gal. 2:21; 5:4.).

XXIII.

THAT this faith being wrought in truth and power, it doth not only interest us in our justification, sonship, and glory, but it produceth as effects and fruits, a conformity, in a measure, to the Lord Jesus, in his will, graces and virtues (Rom. 5:3, 4; 1 John 3:23, 24; 2 Pet. 1:5, 6, 7; Gal. 5:6; Acts 26:18; 1 Thess 1:3.).

XXIV.

THAT it is the duty of every man and woman, that have repented from dead works, and have faith towards God, to be baptized (Acts 2:38; 8:12, 37, 38.), that is, dipped or buried under the water (Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:12.), in the name of our Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16.), or in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19.), therein to signify and represent a washing away of sin (Acts 22:16.), and their death, burial, and resurrection with Christ (Rom. 6:5; Col. 2:12.), and being thus planted in the visible church or body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:3.), who are a company of men and women separated out of the world by the preaching of the gospel (Acts 2:41; 2 Cor. 6:17.), do walk together in communion in all the commandments of Jesus (Acts 2:42.), wherein God is glorified and their souls comforted (2 Thes. 1:11, 12; 2 Cor. 1:4.).

XXV.

THAT we believe some of those commandments further to be as followeth.

1. CONSTANCY in prayer (Col. 2:23, 24.).
2. BREAKING of bread (1 Cor. 11:23, 24.).
3. GIVING of thanks (Eph. 5:20.).
4. WATCHING over one another (Heb. 12:15.).
5. CARING one for another (1 Cor. 12:25) by visiting one another, especially in sickness and temptations (Matt. 25:36.).
6. EXHORTING one another (Heb. 3:13.).
7. DISCOVERING to each other, and bearing one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2.).
8. LOVING one another (Heb. 13:1.).
9. REPROVING when need is one another (Matt. 18:15.).
10. SUBMITTING one to another in the Lord (1 Pet. 5:5.).
11. ADMINISTERING one to another according to the gift received, whether it be in spirituals, or temporals (1 Pet. 4:10.).
12. THE offender to seek reconciliation, as well as the offended (Matt. 5:23, 24.).
13. LOVE our enemies and persecutors, and pray for them (Matt. 5:23, 24.).
14. EVERY one to work if he be able, and none to be idle (2 Thes. 3:10, 11, 12.).
15. THE women in the church to learn in silence, and in all subjection (1 Tim. 2:11; 1 Cor. 14:37.).
16. PRIVATE admonition to a brother offending another; and if not prevailing, to take one or two more; if he hear not them, then to tell it to the church; and if he hear not them, to be accounted as an heathen and publican (Matt. 18:15.).
17. PUBLICK rebuke to publick offenders (1 Tim. 5:20.).
18. THE brethren in ministring forth their gifts, ought to do it decently and in order, one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted (1 Cor. 14:31,

40.).

19. A SPECIAL care to assemble together, that their duty to God, and the church may not be neglected (Heb. 10:24, 25.).

20. AND all things in the church, done in the name and power of the head, the Lord Christ Jesus (Col. 3:7.).

21. THAT in admitting of members into the church of Christ, it is the duty of the church, and ministers whom it concerns, in faithfulness to God, that they be careful they receive none but such as do make forth evident demonstration of the new birth, and the work of faith with power (John 3:3; Matt. 3:8, 9; Acts 8:37; Ezek. 44:6, 7, Acts 2:38; 2 Cor. 9:14; Ps. 26:4, 5; 101:7.).

XXVI.

THAT those that truly repent, and believe, and are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, are in a fit capacity to exercise faith, in full assurance to receive a greater measure of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, 39; Eph. 1:13.).

XXVIII. (Sic Original)

THAT it is the duty of the members of Christ in the order of the gospel, tho' in several congregations and assemblies (being one in the head) if occasion be, to communicate each to other, in things spiritual, and things temporal (Rom. 15:26; Acts 11:29; 15:22; 11:22.).

XXIX.

THAT the Lord Christ Jesus being the foundation and corner stone of the gospel church whereon his apostles built (Eph. 2:20; Heb. 2:3), He gave them power and abilities to propagate, to plant, to rule and order (Matt. 28:19, 20; Luke 10:16), for the benefit of that his body, by which ministry he did shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace, by his kindness towards it in the ages to come (Eph. 2:7), which is according to his promise (Matt. 28:20.)

XXX.

THAT this foundation and ministration aforesaid, is a sure guide, rule and direction, in the darkest time of the anti-christian apostacy, or spiritual Babylonish captivity, to direct, inform, and restore us in our just freedom and liberty, to the right worship and order belonging to the church of Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 3:14, 15; 2 Tim. 3:15, 16, 17; John 17:20; Isa. 59:21; Rev. 2:24; Isa.

40:21; Rev. 2:5; 1 Cor. 14:37; Rev. 1:3 2 Thes. 3:14; Rev. 2: 11; 1 Pet. 1:25; 1 John 4:6; 2 Pet. 1:15, 16; Isa. 58: 11, 12; 2 Pet. 3:2; Isa. 8:20.).

XXXI.

THAT the church of Jesus Christ with its ministry may from among themselves, make choice of such members, as are fitly gifted and qualified by Christ, and approve and ordain such by fasting, prayer, and laying on of hands (Acts 13:3; 14:23.), for the performance of the several duties, whereunto they are called (Acts 20:28; Rom, 12:6, 7, 8; 2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 6:3.).

XXXII.

THAT such a ministry labouring in the word and doctrine, have a power to receive a livelihood of their brethren, whose duty it is to provide a comfortable subsistence for them, if they be able, to whom for Christ's sake they are servants (1 Cor. 9:4,7; 1 Tim. 5:17, 18.). Yet it is commendable in cases of necessity, for them, for example sake, and that they may be able to support the weak, to labour and work with their hands (Acts 20: 24, 25.).

XXXIII.

THAT the authority of Christ in an orderly ministry in his church, is to be submitted unto (Heb. 13: 17; 2 Thes. 3: 14.).

XXXIV.

THAT as it is an ordinance of Christ, so it is the duty of his church in his authority, to send forth such brethren as are fitly gifted and qualified through the Spirit of Christ to preach the gospel to the world (Acts 13:1, 2, 3; 11:22; 8:14.).

XXXV.

THAT it is the duty of us believing Gentiles, not to be ignorant of that blindness that yet lieth on Israel, that none of us may boast (Rom. 11:25.), but to have bowels of love and compassion to them, praying for them (Rom. 10:1.), expecting their calling, and so much the rather, because their conversion will be to us life from the dead (Rom. 11: 15.).

XXXVI.

THAT it is the will of the Lord, and it is given to the saints not only to believe in him, but to suffer for his name (John 16:13; Phil. 1:26.) and so to

pass through many tribulations into the kingdom of God (Acts 14: 22; 2 Tim. 3:12; 2:12.).

XXXVII.

THAT the angels of the Lord are ministring spirits, sent forth for the good of those that shall be the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14; Ps. 91:11, 12; Acts 27:23; Luke 22:43.).

XXXVIII.

THAT the wicked angels (Ps. 78: 49.) kept not their first estate in which they were created (Jude 6.), the prince of whom is called the devil (Matt. 8: 28.), and the great dragon, and the old serpent, and satan (Rev. 12:9.), and the accuser of our brethren (Rev. 12:10.), and the prince of this world (John 14:30.), and a prince that ruleth in the air; a spirit working in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2: 2.), and our adversary (1 Pet. 5:8.), whose children the wicked are (Matt. 13:39; John 8:44.) To him we ought not to give place (Eph. 4:27.), whose power Christ hath overcome for us (Heb. 2: 14.), and for him and his angels everlasting fire is prepared (Matt. 25:41.).

XXXIX.

THAT it is our assured expectation, grounded upon promises, that the Lord Jesus Christ shall the second time appear without sin unto salvation, unto his people, to raise and change the vile bodies of all his saints, to fashion them like unto his glorious body, and so to reign with him, and judge over all nations on the earth in power and glory (Phil. 3:20, 21; Heb. 9:28; Acts 3:19,20, 21; Matt. 19:28; Rev. 2:26, 27; 1 Cor. 6:2; Ps. 72:8, 11; Dan. 7:27; Zech. 14:9; PS. 2:8, 9; Jer. 23:5, 6; Ezek. 21:26, 27; Isa. 32:1; Rev. 11:15; Ps. 82:8; Rev. 5:9, 10; 20:6.).

XL.

THAT there is a day appointed, when the Lord shall raise the unjust as well as the righteous, and judge them all in righteousness (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15.), but every man in his own order (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thes. 4:16.), taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose punishment will be everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord (2 Thes. 1:7, 8, 9, 10; Jude 14, 15; Rev. 20:11, 12, 13, 14.).

XLI.

THAT there is a place into which the Lord will gather all his elect, to enjoy him for ever, usually in scripture called heaven (2 Cor. 5:1; John 14:2, 3.).

XLII.

THAT there is a place into which the Lord will cast the devil, his angels and wicked men, to be tormented for ever, from his presence and the glory of his power, usually in scripture called hell (Mark 9:43, 44, 45; Ps. 9:17; Matt. 25:41; 10:28; 23:33; Luke 10:15; 16:23.).

XLIII.

THAT it is both the duty and privilege of the church of Christ (till his coming again) in their fellowship together in the ordinances of Christ, to enjoy, prize, and press after, fellowship through and in the Spirit with the Lord, and each with other (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:26; Eph. 2:21,22; Eph. 4:3,4, 5, 6; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 3: 9; Col. 2:2), which we believe to be attained through the exercise of faith in the death, resurrection, and life of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 16; Col. 2:12; Phil. 3:9, 10, 11; 1 Pet. 2:5.).

XLIV.

THAT the ministry of civil justice (being for the praise of them that do well, and punishment of evildoers) is an ordinance of God, and that it is the duty of the saints to be subject thereunto not only for fear, but for conscience sake (Rom. 13:1, 2, 3, 4, 5; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14.) and that for such, prayers and supplications are to be made by the saints (1 Tim. 2: 1, 2.).

XLV.

THAT nothing doth come to pass by fortune or chance, but all things are disposed by the hand of God, and all for good to his people (Gen. 45:5; 50:20; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11; Job 14:5; Isa.4:5,7.).

XLVI.

AND that a church so believing, and so walking, though despised, and of low esteem, is no less in the account of her Lord and King, than though:

BLACK, yet comely, Cant. 1:5.

FAIREST, without spots Cant. 4:7.

PRECIOUS, Isa. 43:4.

BEAUTIFUL, Cant. 7:1.

HOLY, without blemish, Eph. 5:27.

PLEASANT, Cant. 1:15.

WHOSE soul loveth Christ, Cant. 1:7.

RUNNERS after Christ, Cant. 1:4.

HONOURABLE, Isa. 43:4.

THE desire of Christ, Cant. 7:10.

COMPLEAT in Christ, Col. 2:10.

LOVERS of the Father, John 16:27.

THE blessed of the Father, Matt. 25:34.

KEPT by the Lord, 1 Pet. 1:5; Isa. 27:3.

GRAVEN on the palms of his hands, Isa. 49:16.

TENDER to the Lord as the apple of his eye, Zech. 2:8.

TAUGHT of the Lord, Isa. 54:13.

ONE that hath obtained mercy, 1 Pet. 2:10.

ONE that hath a redemption, Eph. 1:7.

THE gates of hell shall not prevail against it, Matt. 16:18.

IN that church be glory unto God by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages
world without end. Amen. Eph. 2:21.