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**Tom Hicks**

Pastor of First Baptist Church, Clinton, LA

“This study guide by Jimmy Johnson gives to churches a highly useful tool for learning Scripture, doctrine, and personal growth in grace through truth. The combination of the questions from the Baptist Catechism, the corresponding chapters from the *Second London Confession*, and the Scripture proofs gives opportunity for pertinent questions concerning the meaning of Scripture and grasping of doctrinal truth. This will be an effective tool for both instruction in righteousness and contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.”

**Tom J. Nettles**

Senior Professor of Historical Theology of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“There are many aspects of discipleship but this curriculum focuses on the foundational substance of discipleship. There is no discipleship if God’s word is not taught properly. There is no discipleship if God’s word is not challenging us to live God honoring lives. There is no discipleship if there is not a strong encouragement in affection for our Lord. This curriculum encourages all three healthy aspects of discipleship: orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthopathy.”

**Creston Thomas**

Pastor of Christ the Redeemer Church, Pine Bluff, AR

“One of the great needs of our day is a return to the time-honoured method of discipleship through catechetical instruction. The Ancient Church developed such as it moved out from its Jewish matrix into the Gentile world of paganism. Leaders in that day rightly recognized that new converts needed such grounding to make sense of what they had committed themselves to. So catechism preceded baptism. And down through the centuries catechizing became a key element of disciple-making. There is no doubt in my mind that the present-day loss of any basic understanding of the meta-narrative of the Christian Faith in the West necessitates some renewed vehicle of catechism. So I am thrilled by this skilful adaptation of the Second London Confession of Faith and the traditional Baptist Catechism. Pick up and use it in your families and churches!”

**Michael A.G. Haykin,**

Chair & Professor of Church History of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary



*Confessing Sound Words*

Jimmy Johnson



To Vista Baptist Church of Osceola



JIMMY JOHNSON

# CONFESSING SOUND WORDS

*A Curriculum through the  
Second London Baptist  
Confession of Faith*



*Confessing Sound Words*

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## Foreword

To many modern Christians, confessionalism may seem strange. After all, they have been told, we have the Bible. Why would we need anything else?

However, it is often also the case that these same modern Christians don't understand their Bibles, even if they read them regularly. They have been implicitly taught to view their Bibles as containing many seemingly unrelated stories whose only connective tissue is some vague relation to God.

Good creeds and confessions are valuable precisely because they reflect and summarize biblical teaching in a clear manner. I firmly believe the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 (the 1689, in shorthand) to be the most biblical, and therefore most valuable, of these historic Protestant confessions. That is why I wrote *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith* 32 years ago, on the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its original wide publication. The 1689 has served the Baptist church well these past 300 plus years. I rejoice greatly at its modern rediscovery!

You will find in this book a helpful starting point to introduce yourself and your church to the 1689 and the Baptist Catechism. Jimmy Johnson does a wonderful job of guiding you through the confession, chapter by chapter. I am confident that, as you work through this study, you too will see the value in the 1689 and the Baptist Catechism as helpful and accurate summaries of God's revelation to his church, the Bible.

May the Lord greatly bless this study and use it to continue to shape you into the image of his blessed Son, Jesus Christ!

Dr. Sam Waldron  
Owensboro, KY  
November, 2021



# Introduction

## **The purpose of this curriculum**

Before signing to publish the work in your hands, I was writing it for use in the church I pastor. I have been privileged to take two men of my church through several chapters. By doing it this way, I ensure the work is practical. Being practical is key to achieving my purpose in writing it: to equip the saints with the truths of God's Word, reform churches, retrieve Baptist Confessional heritage, and glorify God. As these two men and I have worked through this curriculum, I've seen them encounter God in his Word and converse with the framers of the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (2LBCF) and the Baptist Catechism (BC).

While working on this project, I was asked and thought to myself, "Why use historic confessions and catechisms for the basis of a discipleship curriculum?" To answer this question, I will define confessions and catechisms, give reasons for their use for discipleship, and provide some benefits of using them for discipleship.

## **Confessions and catechisms defined**

To begin with, a confession of faith is a summary of doctrines logically ordered that are confessed by an individual church or group of churches. In other words, it is a statement of what a group believes the Bible teaches on various topics in a concise, orderly, and comprehensive manner. A catechism is a series of questions and answers written for teaching and memorization. A Christian catechism aims to teach people Christian truth or doctrines in a memorable manner. Both confessions and catechisms have been used for great profit by Christians throughout church history.

## **Why?**

Now that confessions and catechisms have been defined, it is time to consider why you or your church might use them for discipleship. Below are four of what could be many more reasons.

### *They were written for discipleship*

Even if confessions and catechisms weren't intended by their original framers for discipleship, we still might find them of use. However, the framers themselves wrote them for this very purpose. Consider the two documents used in my curriculum as examples below.

First, the framers of 2LBCF say their rationale for publishing the confession and include that it is for the spiritual formation of those who read it.

## *Confessing Sound Words*

One thing that greatly prevailed with us to undertake this work was (not only to give a full account of ourselves to those Christians that differ from us about the subject of baptism, but also) the profit that might from thence arise unto those that have any account of our labours, in their instruction and establishment in the great truths of the gospel; in the clear understanding and steady belief of which our comfortable walking with God, and fruitfulness before him in all our ways is most nearly concerned.<sup>1</sup>

Second, both of the general assemblies of the Baptists in London and Bristol of 1693 mention the catechism that would eventually be published. The fourth resolution in the minutes of the London Assembly states it was resolved “that a Catechism be drawn up, containing the substance of Christian religion, for the instruction of children and servants, and that brother William Collins be desired to draw it up.”<sup>2</sup>

The Bristol Assembly in a letter stated their desire that the London Churches would “remember [their] agreement at [their] last assembling, and minuted in the narrative that brother Collins should draw up a catechism and that it should be printed, a thing so needful and useful that the country have been longing to have it, and are troubled at the delay of it, and earnestly desire that you will hasten the printing of it.”<sup>3</sup> The Bristol Assembly thought the catechism would sell, covering the printing cost, and “They think [the London Assembly] cannot do anything that will be of more general use.”<sup>4</sup>

### *They work for discipleship*

Next, confessions and catechisms work for discipleship. This reason is straightforward but is it true? Do confessions and catechisms work for discipleship? The answer is yes. In saying yes, I do not intend to imply that confessions and catechisms are the only things necessary for Christian discipleship. I intend to say that they are immensely helpful at assisting a Christian embrace the system of doctrine as we find it in the Bible. Catechisms and confessions can do this because they are structured in an orderly way. Catechisms can be memorized with some discipline. Each provides the most explicit scripture references to support the doctrine being promoted.

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<sup>1</sup> James M. Renihan, ed., *Faith and Life for Baptists: the Documents of the London Particular Baptist General Assemblies, 1689-1694* (Palmdale, CA: RBAP, 2016), 213–214.

<sup>2</sup> Renihan, ed., *Faith and Life for Baptists*, 134.

<sup>3</sup> Renihan, ed., *Faith and Life for Baptists*, 136.

<sup>4</sup> Renihan, ed., *Faith and Life for Baptists*, 136.

As I have taken two gentlemen from my church through the BC, I've noticed that they were able to articulate what the catechism is saying in their own words almost immediately. In the curriculum, I provide discussion questions that promote delving deeper into the truth stated in the catechism and some implications it has. With a study Bible, Scripture cross-references, and the scripture references within the BC, they can answer these questions with accuracy. That is not to say that it is easy. They put in the work, but the results have already been positive. Moreover, both the BC and 2LBCF work well to facilitate discussion, cultivating relationships between those involved. By developing relationships and probing theological inquiry and discovery, confessions and catechisms are helpful tools that promote discipleship and growth.

### *They are sound*

Not only do confessions and catechisms work for discipleship, but they are sound. They articulate the healthy and life-giving doctrines of the Scripture. They structure and formulate doctrines in a way that is logical and orderly. Take the order of the 2LBCF and BC as an example: first-principles (Chapters 1-6 and Questions 1-22), the covenant (Chapters 7-20 and Questions 23-92), God-centered Christian living (Chapters 21-30 and Questions 93-114), and last things (Chapters 31-32).

Suppose one goes back and reads some of the discussions and debates during the Westminster Assembly. In that case, one will see that the framers of the Westminster Standards sought to be sound and precise in their presentation and summation of the doctrines of the Bible. Their *Annotations* on Scripture provide the exegetical rationale for why they formulated the doctrines as they did. The Westminster Standards serve as one of the foundations of the 2LBCF and BC.

My reason for mentioning the debates and *Annotations* is that they show that what we find in the 2LBCF and BC, following The Westminster Standards, wasn't adopted hastily. Where the 2LBCF and BC differ from The Westminster Standards, we may consult Baptist writings of the day on those subjects. Where they are the same, we may look at the writings consulted and written by members of the Assembly or those who accepted its confessional documents. The 2LBCF and BC, following their Christian brothers who formulated The Westminster Standards and The Savoy Declaration, sought to provide a sound summary of Biblical doctrine. In my estimation, they were successful.

In stating why they affixed Scripture references to points made in the 2LBCF, the framers of the 2LBCF show that they saw the Scriptures to be the sole infallible authority in matters of faith and obedience,

## *Confessing Sound Words*

We have also taken care to affix text of Scripture, in the margin for the confirmation of each article in our confession; in which we have studiously endeavored to select such as are most clear and pertinent, for the proof of what is asserted by us: and our earnest desire is, that all into whose hands this may come, would follow that (never enough commended) example of noble Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily, that they might find out whether the things preached to them were so or not.<sup>5</sup>

The intent in producing and the soundness of the 2LBCF and BC, linked with the fact that they work for discipleship, are ample reasons one should consider using them for personal and corporate discipleship. I have already found them beneficial for my walk with Jesus and the discipleship of some within the congregation I pastor. These reasons are why I have gone forward in editing and publishing this curriculum using them. You might find them useful too. Below are some of the benefits I've witnessed in using confessions and catechisms for discipleship.

### **What benefits?**

#### *1. Depth*

Any of the confessions of faith or catechisms written in the seventeenth century have a level of depth to them that a Christian won't get from an ordinary Sunday School class or small group. Let me give you two examples: one from the 2LBCF and another from the BC.

First, consider what the 2LBCF says in chapter 19, which covers the subject of God's Law. It starts with Adam, who "God gave... a law of universal obedience written in his heart and a particular precept of not eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." God required both the law written on man's heart and the particular precept to be obeyed perfectly by Adam and his descendants. The failure to obey resulted in death. The reward for obedience was life. The confession goes further in the next paragraph to explain how the same law, the law written on Adam's heart, "continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall." It was then given at Mount Sinai in the ten commandments. Not only the moral law was given at Sinai. Positive laws were also provided. These were ceremonial and judicial in nature. These positive laws were limited to the people of Israel under that covenant. The ceremonial laws, in particular, pointed to Christ and were abrogated when he established the New Covenant. The judicial laws also passed away with that nation, and "their general equity only being of moral use." The chapter later explains that the moral law is binding upon all, including believers. Paragraph six is the longest and

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<sup>5</sup> Renihan, ed., *Faith and Life for Baptists*, 215.



shows how the law applies to the believer. This theological application is rich and of great benefit for discipleship. Consider what it says:

Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned, yet it is of great use to them as well as to others, in that as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their natures, hearts, and lives, so as examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against, sin; together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his obedience; it is likewise of use to the regenerate to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin; and the threatenings of it serve to shew what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse and unallayed rigour thereof. The promises of it likewise shew them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof, though not as due to them by the law as a covenant of works; so as man's doing good and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the one and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law and not under grace.

Paragraph 7 shows us how the explication of the law in the preceding paragraph is perfectly complementary and consistent with the grace of God in the gospel.

Second, the catechism on the same subject the law spans from question 44 through 89. It systematically goes through each of the ten commandments, defining and applying them. Take a look at its treatment of the first commandment:

50. Which is the first commandment?

The first commandment is, Thou shalt have no other gods before Me (Exodus 20:3).

51. What is required in the first commandment?

The first commandment requireth us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God and our God (Deuteronomy 26:17; 1 Chronicles 28:9), and to worship and glorify Him accordingly (Psalm 29:2; Matthew 4:10).

52. What is forbidden in the first commandment?

The first commandment forbiddeth the denying (Psalm 14: 1), or not worshipping and glorifying the true God (Romans 1:21), as God and our God (Psalm 81:10, 11), and the giving of that worship and glory to any other, which is due unto him alone (Romans 1:25, 26).

## *Confessing Sound Words*

53. What are we especially taught by these words before me, in the first commandment?

These words before me, in the first commandment teach us, that God, who seeth all things, taketh notice of and is much displeased with the sin of having any other god (Exodus 8:5, to the end).

Taking a person through the chapter on the Law of God in 2LBCF and corresponding BC questions will give them a deeper understanding of God's law and how it applies to their lives.

### *2. Breadth*

Not only do confessions and catechisms provide depth for discipleship, but they also provide breadth. The 2LBCF contains 32 chapters, including topics like Scripture, the church, free will, the ordinances, the final judgement, and much more. The BC has 114 questions and covers much of the same material but in short, memorable questions and answers. It also gives greater depth on the ten commandments, as mentioned above, and the Lord's Prayer.

### *3. Humility*

In addition to the depth and breadth needed for discipleship, confessions and catechisms foster humility. They require a person to reckon with the fact that Christianity didn't begin when they came to Christ. They force them to listen to people who lived in a time different than our own, yet wrestled with the same Holy Scriptures and God who inspired them. Moreover, some of the concepts it covers are challenging to the intellect and convicting to the soul. Most importantly, the fact that many confessions and catechisms, including the 2LBCF and BC, cite copious Scripture references drives the readers to humbly see if the statements within them are true. In fact, the framers of the 2LBCF encouraged people to compare all that is within it to the Holy Scriptures:

We have also taken care to affix text of Scripture, in the margin for the confirmation of each article in our confession; in which we have studiously endeavored to select such as are most clear and pertinent, for the proof of what is asserted by us: and our earnest desire is, that all into whose hands this may come, would follow that (never enough commended) example of noble Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily, that they might find out whether the things preached to them were so or not.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Renihan, ed., *Faith and Life for Baptists*, 215.

### 4. *Unity*

Lastly, confessions of faith and catechisms foster unity among those who subscribe and use them for discipleship. They provide a common vocabulary. They give us those principles that are most essential to Christian belief and the distinctives of our respective Christian traditions. In my case, that is the Baptist tradition of the particular variety. I have seen this firsthand at the church I pastor. The church doesn't subscribe to the 2LBCF (for now), but using it as a discipleship tool opens the door for that possibility. The men I have been taking through it find it helpful, challenging, enlightening, and biblical. It has fostered deep conversations, which in turn have brought us closer together. In this way, among others, the 2LBCF as a discipleship tool fosters unity.

### **How?**

The work you hold is my attempt to help you use both the LBCF and BC for discipleship in your church. It contains the entirety of the 2LBCF, and its chapter divisions are the same as the confession. Therefore, the curriculum like the confession covers a wide range of subjects and should not be completed in haste. I, for example, do one part per week with the guys I am taking through it. Some may be able to go faster; others may need to go slower. Discipleship is not a sprint. It is a marathon. Take your time. Pray a lot. Chase some rabbits. Grow together in the knowledge of God and all things as they relate to him. Structure your meeting times as you please. Mine typically go as follows: prayer requests, prayer, weekly recap, study a part from a chapter, prayer, dismiss. Sometimes we run out of time, so we pick up where we left off the following week.

All of that said, a chapter contains three to four parts: catechism, Bible study, Scripture memory, and confession. Some chapters do not have a catechism portion because no questions from the catechism pertained to the chapter of the confession.<sup>7</sup> Every part has discussion questions to help guide study and facilitate discussion. There is space provided to write down your answers to the questions. I encourage those I take through the curriculum to complete the portion we will discuss before the meeting. Coming to meetings prepared makes for better discussion. For the remainder of the introduction, I will suggest how one might utilize this curriculum. To do this, I will talk about each part.

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<sup>7</sup> Not all BC questions are within the curriculum. I plan, however, to modernize what questions are not in the curriculum and put them on [covenantconfessions.com](http://covenantconfessions.com) for any who would like to use them.

## *Confessing Sound Words*

### *Part 1: Catechism*

For the catechism part of each chapter, I encourage memorizing both the question and the answers. Quiz and help one another recite them at the beginning of the meeting. If you opt not to memorize, then read the questions and answers before discussing the questions. Also, Scripture references are found in the footnotes.

### *Part 2: Bible study<sup>8</sup>*

When you discuss the Bible study portion of a chapter, read the whole text. Go through the provided questions, accounting for the context, making observations, deducing meaning, and applying the text. Discuss whatever other questions may come up along the way. By the end of the study, one should have a good grasp of the passage and its relation to the chapter's topic.

### *Part 3: Scripture memory*

Scripture memory is an invaluable discipline for a Christian. Thus, I provide many such verses, the context for them, and discussion questions related to them. When discussing this part, take turns reciting the memory verse(s). Help one another if someone gets stuck or forgets. There is no grade given but memorizing a passage of Scripture is reward enough.

### *Part 4: Confession<sup>9</sup>*

As I wrote earlier, the entirety of the confession is within the curriculum. The final part provides the text with limited editing.<sup>10</sup> *Pay attention to the footnotes because I provide definitions, limited commentary on terms and concepts throughout the curriculum, or Scripture references.* You will find a corresponding super script in the Scripture proofs below showing which proofs align with each statement.

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<sup>8</sup> The method utilized in this curriculum utilizes the COMA acronym, meaning Context, Observation, Meaning, and Application. This acronym and similar questions to the ones found in this curriculum can be found in David Helm's *One to One Bible Reading: A Simple Guide for Every Christian* (Sydney, NSW: Matthias Media, 2020). The above resource will also show how such a method can be practically utilized in discipling other believers. To see a similar acronym with a fuller explanation, see Jason Shane DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply The Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2017) and, less explicitly, see Andrew David Naselli, *How to Understand and Apply the New Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> The text of *1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith* and *Baptist Catechism* I use with the permission of the publisher, Solid Ground Christian Books. *The Baptist Confession of Faith & The Baptist Catechism* (Vestavia Hills, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> I do not change the word order or the substance of the text. Instead, I change words like *hath* to *has* or *doeth* to *does*.

## Introduction

Read each chapter of the confession slowly and maybe more than once. Underline things that are interesting or confusing. When you meet, read the chapter together, discuss the questions, and talk about anything you underlined.

### **A parting word**

I have given you reasons to use confessions and catechisms for discipleship. I have offered suggestions on how you can use this curriculum to that end. I pray that God uses this resource to bless both you and your church by his grace and for his glory.



# Preface

## To the Judicious and Impartial Reader

### Part 1: Catechism (Q1–2)

Q1. Who is the first and best of beings?

God is the first and best of beings.<sup>1</sup>

- Review the Scripture references.
- How can we demonstrate the truth that God is the first and best in our lives? What habits can we cultivate in our lives and families to show that we affirm this truth?
- What are some things we might be tempted to put before God? How might we avoid putting these things before God?

Q2. Should everyone believe there is a God?

Everyone should believe there is a God, and it is their great sin and folly who do not.<sup>2</sup>

- Review the Scripture references.
- What are some things in creation that remind you that there is a God?
- Are those who have no access to the Bible still guilty of sin if they do not believe in God? Why or why not?
- Why might some of the most intelligent people in the modern world reject God's existence?

### Part 2: Bible Study (Isaiah 40:9–31)

*Read*

- Read the passage multiple times.
- Read the passage in a few different translations.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 97:9; Isaiah 44:6; 48:12.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 14:1; Hebrews 11:6.

## *Confessing Sound Words*

- Take note of what is similar and what is different.

### *Context*

- What sort of writing is this passage: a letter, narrative, poem, wisdom literature, and/or prophecy?
- Are there any clues about the background and the circumstance under which it was written?
- What is before and after this passage?
- Are there any persons or places that are mentioned that you do not know? (Search them out earlier in the book, or with commentary)
- Does this passage allude to or quote any Old Testament passages or events that precede this text?
- Is this passage quoted elsewhere in the Old Testament or the New Testament?

### *Observation*

- Are there any significant sub-sections or breaks in the text?
- Who is speaking?
- What is the main point or points?
- What surprises are there? What are some things you do not understand?
- What are the keywords? What words or ideas are repeated?

### *Meaning*

- How does this text relate to other parts of the book?
- Does this anticipate something happening in the future?



- Are there any commands?
- How does the passage relate or point to Jesus?
- What does this teach us about God?
- How could we sum up the meaning of this passage in our own words?

*Application*

- What are some differences between you and the original audience?
- How does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding?
- Is there some attitude you need to change?
- How does this passage call on you to change the way you live?

**Part 3: Bible memory (Isaiah 44:6/Psalm 14:1)**

*Putting Isaiah 44:6 in context:* Isaiah 44 is in the context of a promised new Exodus (40–66). Chapter 43 ends with a promise of judgement for rejecting Yahweh as Israel's only saviour. However, chapter 44 gives hope of redemption and reasserts God as the source of said salvation.

- How does having a proper view of God provide comfort for those to whom he has promised salvation?
- What are some other gods in which people place their faith?
- How might we keep ourselves from falling into the idolatry of Israel?

*Putting Psalm 14:1 in context:* David shows the folly of rejecting God and the hope of those who receive him.

- Why might rejecting God's existence lead to doing abominable and sinful things?

## *Confessing Sound Words*

### **Part 4: Confession**

*Read*

#### **Purpose proposed**

Courteous Reader: It is now many years<sup>3</sup> since divers<sup>4</sup> of us (with other sober Christians then living and walking in the way of the Lord that we profess) did conceive ourselves to be under a necessity of publishing a *Confession* of our faith, for the information and satisfaction of those that did not thoroughly understand what our principles were, or had entertained prejudices against our profession, by reason of the strange representation of them by some men of note who had taken very wrong measures, and accordingly led others into misapprehension of us and them. This was first put forth about the year 1643 in the name of seven congregations then gathered in London. Since which time, divers impressions thereof have been dispersed abroad, and our end proposed in good measure answered, inasmuch as many (and some of those men eminent both for piety and learning) were thereby satisfied that we were no way guilty of those heterodoxies<sup>5</sup> and fundamental errors which had too frequently been charged upon us, without ground or occasion given on our part.

And forasmuch as that *Confession* is not now commonly to be had, and also that many others have since embraced the same truth which is owned therein, it was judged necessary by us to join together in giving a testimony to the world of our firm adhering to those wholesome principles by the publication of this which is now in your hand. And forasmuch as our method and manner of expressing our sentiments in this does vary from the former (although the substance of this matter is the same), we shall freely impart to you the reason and occasion thereof. One thing that greatly prevailed with us to undertake this work was not only to give a full account of ourselves to those Christians that differ from us about the subject of baptism, but also the profit that might from thence arise unto those that have any account of our labors in their instruction and establishment in the great truths of the gospel, in the clear understanding and steady belief of which our comfortable walking with God, and fruitfulness before Him in all our ways, is most nearly concerned. Therefore, we did conclude it necessary to express ourselves the more fully and distinctly, and

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<sup>3</sup> This letter to the to the reader and the *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith* was written in 1677. The former *London Confession* was written published in 1644, making it 33 years between the two. The original confession was published to differentiate the Particular Baptist from continental Anabaptists and the General Baptist.

<sup>4</sup> *Divers* meaning several or various.

<sup>5</sup> *Heterodoxies* meaning beliefs that differ from orthodoxy, or sound doctrine.

also to fix on such a method as might be most comprehensive of those things we designed to explain our sense and belief of.

### **Resources referenced**

Finding no defect in this regard in that fixed on by the Assembly,<sup>6</sup> and after them by those of the Congregational way,<sup>7</sup> we did readily conclude it best to retain the same order in our present Confession. Also, when we observed that those last mentioned did in their confessions (for reasons which seemed of weight both to themselves and others) choose not only to express their mind in words concurrent with the former in sense concerning all those articles wherein they were agreed, but also for the most part without any variation of the terms, we did in like manner conclude it best to follow their example in making use of the very same words with them both in these articles (which are very many) wherein our faith and doctrine are the same with theirs. This we did the more abundantly to manifest our consent with both in all the fundamental articles of the Christian religion, as also with many others whose orthodox Confessions have been published to the world on the behalf of the Protestant in diverse nations and cities—and also to convince all that we have no itch to clog religion with new words, but do readily acquiesce in that form of sound words which has been, in consent with the Holy Scriptures, used by others before us; hereby declaring, before God, angels, and men, our hearty agreement with them in that wholesome Protestant doctrine which, with so clear evidence of Scriptures, they have asserted. Some things, indeed, are in some places added, some terms omitted, and some few changed; but these alterations are of that nature as that we need not doubt any charge or suspicion of unsoundness in the faith from any of our brethren upon the account of them.

### **Differences and desires declared**

In those things wherein we differ from others, we have expressed ourselves with all candour and plainness, that none might entertain jealousy of aught secretly lodged in our breasts that we would not the world should be acquainted with. Yet, we hope we have also observed those rules of modesty and humility as will render our

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<sup>6</sup> *Assembly* meaning the Westminster Assembly of Divines (1643). This assembly of 121 theologians was appointed by parliament to make proposals for church reform. They produced among other things the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. They taught and practiced Presbyterian church polity and infant baptism.

<sup>7</sup> *Congregational Way* meaning dissenting Congregationalists who met in 1658 and drafted the *Savoy Declaration*. It is almost identical to *Westminster Confession* except in the article on church government. They taught and practiced congregational polity and infant baptism.

## *Confessing Sound Words*

freedom in this respect inoffensive, even to those whose sentiments are different from ours.

We have also taken care to affix texts of Scripture at the bottom, for the confirmation of each article in our Confession, in which work we have studiously endeavored to select such as are most clear and pertinent for the proof of what is asserted by us. Our earnest desire is that all into whose hands this may come would follow that (never enough commended) example of the noble Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily that they might find out whether the things preached to them were so or not (Act 17:11).

There is one thing more which we sincerely profess and earnestly desire credence in, viz.,<sup>8</sup> that contention is most remote from our design in all that we have done in this matter. We hope that the liberty of an ingenuous<sup>9</sup> unfolding our principles and opening our hearts unto our brethren, with the Scripture grounds of our faith and practice, will by none of them be either denied to us or taken ill from us. Our whole design is accomplished if we may have attained that justice, as to be measured in our principles and practice, and the judgement of both by others, according to what we have now published, which the Lord (Whose eyes are as a flame of fire) knows to be the doctrine which with our hearts we most firmly believe and sincerely endeavor to conform our lives to. And oh, that—other contentions being laid asleep—the only care and contention of all upon whom the name of our blessed Redeemer is called, might for the future be to walk humbly with their God in the exercise of all love and meekness toward each other; to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, each one endeavoring to have his conversation such as becometh the gospel. And also, suitable to his place and capacity, vigorously to promote in others the practice of true religion and undefiled in the sight of God our Father! And that, in this backsliding day, we might not spend our breath in fruitless complaints of the evils of others, but may every one begin at home, to reform in the first place our own hearts and ways, and then to quicken all that we may have influence upon to the same work: that if the will of God were so, none might deceive themselves by resting in and trusting to a form of godliness without the power of it, and inward experience of the efficacy of those truths that are professed by them.

### **Parental responsibility proclaimed**

And verily, there is one spring and cause of the decay of religion in our day which we cannot but touch upon and earnestly urge a redress of, and that is the neglect of

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<sup>8</sup> viz. meaning that is to say.

<sup>9</sup> *Ingenuous* meaning honest.

the worship of God in families by those to whom the charge and conduct of them is committed. May not the gross ignorance and instability of many, with the profaneness of others, be justly charged upon their parents and masters, who have not trained them up in the way wherein they ought to walk when they were young, but have neglected those frequent and solemn commands which the Lord has laid upon them, so to catechize and instruct them that their tender years might be seasoned with the knowledge of the truth of God as revealed in the Scriptures—and also by their own omission of prayer and other duties of religion of their families, together with the ill example of their loose conversation,<sup>10</sup> having inured<sup>11</sup> them first to a neglect and the contempt of all piety and religion. We know this will not excuse the blindness and wickedness of any, but certainly it will fall heavy upon those that have been thus the occasion thereof. They indeed die in their sins; but will not their blood be required of those under whose care they were, who yet permitted them to go on without warning—yea, led them into the paths of destruction? And will not the diligence of Christians with respect to the discharge of these duties in ages past rise up in judgement against and condemn many of those who would be esteemed such now?

### Conclusion

We shall conclude with our earnest prayer that the God of all grace will pour out those measures of His Holy Spirit upon us, that the profession of truth may be accompanied with the sound belief and diligent practice of it by us, that His name may in all things be glorified through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### *Answer*

- Why would a church compose and subscribe to a confession of faith?
- What is a confession of faith?
- Why would individual Christians subscribe and make use of a confession of faith?
- On what other *Confessions* is the *1689* based (see footnote 17 and 18)?
- Why did the writers use these confessions?

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<sup>10</sup> *Conversation* meaning way of life.

<sup>11</sup> *Inured* meaning hardened.

### *Confessing Sound Words*

- What is one of the reasons for spiritual decay in the day of those who wrote the Confession? How might confessions and catechisms be used in the remedy of this problem?

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