

THE LONDON BAPTIST  
**C**ONFESSION  
OF 1646

A Modern Version for the Church Today



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“I have no doubt that our Sovereign God will use this updated version of the Confession to reform today’s church for His glory, and thus increase our joy in Christ.”

—CHARLES R. MOORE, JR.  
Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church of  
Paducah, Kentucky

“For various reasons – theological, doxological, ecclesiastical and now even legal/political – churches need thorough, historic and orthodox confessions of faith. The London Confession should be the one to which Reformed Baptists look for all of these. Hopefully this modern version will help maintain and enhance its usefulness for a new generation.”

—CARL TRUEMAN  
Paul Woolley Professor of Church  
History, Westminster Theological  
Seminary, Pennsylvania

“With the help of the Holy Spirit and the faith and love of those before us, the good deposit continues to get passed down from generation to generation. Lord willing, this modern confession will help churches articulate their faith and guard it as others did before them.”

—GREGORY BROWN  
Lead Pastor, Handong International  
Congregation, South Korea



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“In the seventeenth century, Baptist churches of Reformed convictions were not afraid to explain their faith for the benefit of fellow-believers and for others. This version of the 1646 confession, changed only in points of expression, will serve the same Christian purpose in the twenty-first century.”

—DAVID BEBBINGTON

Professor of History, University of  
Stirling, Scotland

“In a day and age when compromise and concessions are all too prevalent, a modern rendering of this humble, yet noble, confession is needed more than ever.”

—JON J. CARDWELL

Pastor of Sovereign Grace Baptist Church,  
Anniston, Alabama

“Creeds and confessions are an essential means to maintain, teach, and transmit the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. Modern saints are certainly enriched by the reprint of this first Particular Baptist Confession.”

—PASCAL DENAULT

Pastor, Evangelical Reformed Baptist  
Church of Saint-Jérôme, Québec



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“One of the most classic and doctrinally rich Baptist confessions of faith has been made accessible for this and coming generations.”

—CHRIS WHORTON  
Pastor, Grace Christian Fellowship of  
Wyandotte Co., Kansas

“The first advance of Calvinistic Baptist truth in the British Isles during the tumultuous 1640s and 1650s took place on the basis of this confession of faith. I am thrilled that it is still considered of great value for use by modern congregations. May the blessing that attended its first publication likewise attend this modern rendition.”

—MICHAEL A.G. HAYKIN  
Professor of Church History,  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“What could be better for today’s church than a closer acquaintance with those great doctrines on which it rests. This new edition of the 1646 London Baptist confession, preserving that historic document for a new generation, will doubtless be of help to that end. Warmly recommended!”

—FRED G. ZASPEL  
Pastor, Reformed Baptist Church,  
Franconia, PA, and Adjunct Professor  
of Theology at The Southern Baptist  
Theological Seminary

“My hope and prayer is that pastors and churches will use this updated confession not only as a doctrinal statement that summarizes the teaching of their churches, but they will also use it in their worship and discipleship in their churches. My heart rejoiced as I read over these glorious truths, and I hope this accessible version will help many more hearts to rejoice as well.”

—PHILL HOWELL  
Pastor, Embassy Church, Palatine, IL

“It is my hope that this modern version will be mightily used to help the individual Christian and the Church to walk in godliness and peace according to the New Covenant rule of Christ (Gal. 6:14-16).”

—GARY D. LONG  
Faculty President Emeritus,  
Providence Theological Seminary

“I am very pleased to endorse this modern version of the *London Baptist Confession of 1646*. It is greatly needed in our day.”

—GEOFF VOLKER  
Pastor, New Covenant Bible Fellowship,  
Gilbert, Arizona



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# THE LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSIO OF 1646

A Modern Version for the Church Today

Edited with an Introduction  
by David H. Wenkel, PhD



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## INTRODUCTION

There are three important Baptist confessions from the Calvinistic tradition: (1) the *London Baptist Confession of 1644*, (2) the *London Baptist Confession of 1646*, and (3) the *London Baptist Confession of 1689*. This modern version of the *London Baptist Confession of 1646* (hereafter “Confession” unless otherwise noted) is designed for use in the local church today. It was edited for use as a confession (or statement of faith) for Baptist churches in the Reformed tradition.

The Confession was originally drawn up and signed in 1646 by seven churches in London. This was a “corrected and enlarged” edition of the first confession published in 1644. The title of the original Confession of 1646 was: “A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London, Which are Commonly (But Unjustly) Called Anabaptists.” A copy of the original Confession is widely available on the internet and is published in standard reference books such as *Baptist Confessions of Faith* edited by W.L. Lumpkin and B.J. Leonard (2011). The modern version presented here is based on the edition printed by Matthew Simmons and John Hancock in Popes-head Alley, London, 1646. This edition is available online from The Angus Library and Archive at Regent’s Park College, University of Oxford.

## CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF THE CONFESSION

Local churches interested in using the Confession today should first consider these four challenges.

The first challenge is its omission of statements on the doctrine of Scripture that subsequent debates through the centuries now require. The Confession addresses the doctrine of Scripture, but this doctrine is sometimes assumed rather than explained. The Confession celebrates the truthfulness and excellence of Scripture, yet nowhere does it identify the Bible as inerrant or even inspired. However, the concept of the inspiration of Scripture is certainly present even if the term is not used. There are references to the nature of faith in relation to God's "revealed or written word" (article 22), the centrality of preaching the word of God (article 44), and the concept of the authority of the Old and New Testament (article 49), etc. This issue might be addressed by supplementing the Confession with the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

Second, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, his person and work, is not singularly addressed in any article. Like the doctrine of Scripture, a close reading of the articles will demonstrate that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is found in many places. Rather than having a dedicated article, the doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit is woven throughout. He is referenced at least fourteen times and is

given specific attention in articles 1 and 2 in relation to the doctrine of God. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is actually robust when all of the statements in the Confession are considered together.

Third, the Confession does not address human sexuality and the roles of men and women in marriage. The requirement for elders or pastors to be men is clearly stated in article 44; however, the topic of human sexuality and the role of women in the church was not a major issue at the time this Confession was originally written. Today, the cultural and legal context of the world requires that churches have a clear written statement about these matters. This omission might be addressed by adopting the Denver's Statement by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.

Fourth, the Confession is rather long compared to contemporary denominational statements of faith. The length of any confession is a double-edged sword. If a confession is too detailed, it can become impractical for use in a local church with people who have varying levels of theological training. But if a confession is too short, it can lead to division, confusion, and deviant doctrine. For example, some churches may be uncomfortable with the lack of detail in this Confession regarding the "end times." However, some Christians may view this brevity as an opportunity for Christian unity.



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## CONTEXTUALIZING THE CONFESSION

*The goal of this modern version is to maintain the meaning and message of the original Confession while presenting it in a new way for today's readers in the local church.* Therefore, this version does not introduce any substantial changes to the text. The changes have been minimal. The following characteristics have remained the same: the general style of English, the number of articles, the order of the articles, and the concluding Bible verse with prayer (the benediction).

Statements of faith, or Confessions, should be relatively accessible to those considering church membership. As such, core Christian doctrines should be made understandable even for new Christians. This requires a degree of contextualization -- stripping away some historical elements of the past and adding contemporary elements so that the text can be understood by a wide range of people. The primary goal of this modern version is to expand this Confession's relevance for the church today without losing its message and doctrine.

This modern version of the Confession has elements that reflect a spectrum of contextualization. Some aspects were changed, while others remain untouched. Some aspects of the Confession's historical character have been removed: the original preface, signatures, a special note on obeying the King and Parliament after article 48, and the conclusion. While these items remain important for historians and

theologians, they would prove unhelpful or distracting to average church members today.

This modern version of the Confession reflects the desire of the pastors and churches who first wrote it. They were not afraid to update and change their first edition, the London Baptist Confession of 1644. The cover page of the London Baptist Confession of 1646 indicates in bold type that it is a “second impression – corrected and enlarged.” This modern version shares the same perspective: confessions need to be updated.

It is sometimes necessary to introduce changes for several reasons. One simple but important reason is that, like all languages, English has changed and will continue to change. All languages change over time, and English is no exception. Perhaps in another three-hundred years, this modern version of the Confession will need to be updated again to reflect future changes to the English language. The Confession includes seven types of changes:

(1) Updates. Words like “hath,” “doth,” “befalls,” and “saith” and words with antiquated endings like “giveth” have been updated to modern equivalents. Some words that were previously separated have been joined (e.g. for evermore is now “forevermore”). British spellings of words such as “honour” and “saviour” have been preserved in order to reflect the British heritage of the Confession. Following the pattern of the original, this version has not capitalized every pronoun for God.

(2) Interpretations. A few changes are better labeled “interpretations” rather than simply updates. For example, the word “Prophecie” in article 45 has been changed to “preach” in order to reflect its meaning.

(3) Phraseology. Phrases have been updated to reflect a modern English idiom (e.g. “to wit” meaning “that is to say”). At other times, commas and other punctuation have been inserted to add clarity to long and difficult sentences. In some instances, comparisons of the KJV with modern bible versions such as the ESV, NIV, and NET provide parallels with older English idioms (e.g. “made nigh” was changed to “brought close”).

(4) Headings. New headings have been added to simplify and clarify the content of each article. Each header now begins with a word or phrase that identifies it as a doctrine. The ending of the Confession has been labeled a “benediction.”

(5) Sections. Another new characteristic of this modern version of the London Baptist Confession of 1646 is the inclusion of section headers such as “The Doctrine of God” and “The Doctrine of Christ.” The Confession contains fifty-two articles, and this length is somewhat unwieldy for today’s readers. The section headers are intended to provide readers with an easy way to understand the content and to locate articles.

(6) Scripture References. The original Confession had numerous biblical proof-texts in the footnotes and margins.

This was done to demonstrate that these articles reflect the truth of Scripture. The order of the proof-texts generally follows the order of the original. It should be possible for a church to adopt this Confession without adopting all of the individual decisions about various supporting Bible verses. In a few instances, proof-texts have been changed because it is evident there was a mistake by the authors or printer. Ultimately, the Scripture is the foundation for our faith, and the strength of any confession is its faithfulness to it.

(7) Culture. This version attempts to keep some elements of the historical British character of this Confession while making it suitable for other English-speaking countries. Again, the goal of this modern version is to expand its relevance without sacrificing its content and message.

To summarize: this modern version seeks to strike a balance that will preserve the meaning and message of the articles while contextualizing it for today's readers in the local church.



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## CHRIST AS COVENANTED

Jesus Christ is made the Mediator of the new and everlasting covenant of grace between God and man, ever to be perfectly and fully the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church of God forevermore.

*1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:15; John 14:6; Isaiah 9:6-7*

## CHRIST AS ANOINTED

Unto this office he was appointed by God from everlasting, and in respect of his manhood, he was from the womb called, separated, and anointed most fully and abundantly with all gifts necessary for God, having without measure, poured out his Spirit upon him.

*Proverbs 8:23; Isaiah 42:6, 49:1, 6; Isaiah 11:2-5, 61:1-2,  
Luke 4:17, 22; John 1:14, 16, 3:34*

## CHRIST AS CALLED

Concerning his mediatorship, the Scripture holds forth Christ's call to his office: For none takes this honour upon him but he that is called of God, as was Aaron, it being an action of God; whereby, a special promise being made, he ordains his Son to this office; which promise is, that Christ should be made a sacrifice for sin, that he should see his seed and prolong his

days, that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, all of mere free and absolute grace towards God's elect, and without any condition foreseen in them to procure it.

*Hebrews 5:4-6; Isaiah 53:10-11; John 3:16; Romans 8:32*

## CHRIST AS UNIQUE

This office to be Mediator, to be Prophet, Priest, and King of the church of God, is so proper to Christ that it can neither in whole, nor any part thereof be transferred from him to any other.

*1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:24; Daniel 7:14; Acts 4:12;  
Luke 1:33; John 14:6*

## CHRIST AS THREE-FOLD

This office, to which Christ is called, is threefold as a Prophet, Priest, and King. This number and order of offices is necessary because, in respect of our ignorance, we stand in need of his prophetic office. And in respect of our great alienation from God, we need his priestly office to reconcile us, and in respect of our opposition and utter inability to return to God, we need his kingly office to convince, subdue, draw, uphold, and preserve us to his heavenly kingdom.

*Deuteronomy 18:15, Acts 3:22-23; Hebrews 3:1, 4:14-15;  
Psalm 2:6; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:21;*

*John 16:8; Psalm 110:3; Song of Songs 1:4; John 6:44;  
Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:18*

## CHRIST AS PROPHET: HIS WORK

Concerning the prophecy of Christ, it is that whereby he has revealed the will of God, whatsoever is needful for his servants to know and obey, and therefore, he is called not only a Prophet, Healer, the Apostle of our profession, and the Messenger of the covenant, but also, the very Wisdom of God, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who forever continues revealing the same truth of the gospel to his people.

*John 1:18, 12:49-50, 17:8; Deuteronomy 18:15; Matthew 23:10;  
Hebrews 3:1; Malachi 3:1; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Colossians 2:3*

## CHRIST AS PROPHET: HIS PERSON

That he might be a Prophet in every way complete, it was necessary he should be God and also, that he should be man; for unless he had been God, he could never have perfectly understood the will of God, and unless he had been man, he could not suitably have unfolded it in his own person to others.

*John 1:18; Acts 3:22, with Deuteronomy 18:15; Hebrews 1:1*

  
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