

Confession of Faith 1

Andrew Fuller, edited by Michael A. G. Haykin

I.
When I consider the heavens and the earth with their vast variety, it gives me reason to believe the existence of a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness that made and upholds them all. Had there been no written revelation of God given to us, I should have

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been without excuse, if I had denied a God or refused to glorify him as God.

II.
Yet, considering the present state of mankind, I believe we needed a revelation of the mind of God to inform us more fully of his and our own character, of his designs towards us, and will concerning us. And such a revelation I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be, without excepting any one of

its books, and a perfect rule of faith and practice. When I acknowledge it as a perfect rule of faith and practice, I mean to disclaim all other rules as binding on my conscience, and as well to acknowledge that if I err, either in faith or practice, from the rule, it will be my crime. For I have ever considered all deviations from divine rules to be criminal.

III.
From this divine volume, I learn many things concerning God, which I could not have learned from the works of nature, and the same things in a more convincing light. Here I learn especially the infinitely amiable moral character of God. His holiness, justice, faithfulness, and goodness are here exhibited in such a light by his holy law and glorious gospel as is nowhere else to be seen.

Here, also, I learn that though God is one, yet he also is three—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The idea which I think the Scriptures give us of each of the sacred three

is that of person.

I believe the Son of God to be truly and properly God, equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Everything I see in this sacred mystery appears to me above reason, but nothing contrary to it.

IV.

I believe, from the same authority, that God created man in the image of his own glorious moral character, a proper subject of his moral government, with dispositions exactly suited to the law he was under and capacity equal to obey it to the uttermost against all temptations to the contrary. I believe if Adam, or any holy being, had had the making of a law for himself, he would have made just such an one as God's law is, for it would be the greatest of hardships to a holy being not to be allowed to love God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and all his mind.

V.

I believe the conduct of man, in breaking the law of God, was most unreasonable and wicked in itself, as well as fatal in its consequences to the transgressor, and that sin is of such a nature that it deserves all the wrath and misery with which it is threatened, in this world, and in that which is to come.

VI.

I believe the first sin of Adam was not merely personal, but that he stood as our representative. So that when he fell, we fell in him, and became liable to condemnation and death. And what is more, [we] are all born into the world with a vile propensity to sin against God.

I own there are some things in these subjects, which appear to me profound and awful. But seeing God hath so plainly revealed them in his Word, especially in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, I dare not but bow my shallow conceptions to the unerring testimony of God, not doubting but that he will clear his own character sufficiently at the last day. At the

same time, I know of no other system that represents these subjects in a more rational light.

VII.

I believe, as I before stated, that men are now born and grow up with a vile propensity to moral evil, and that herein lies their inability to keep God's law, and as such, it is a moral and a criminal inability. Were they but of a right disposition of mind, there is nothing now in the law of God but what they could perform; but, being wholly under the dominion of sin, they have no heart remaining for God, but are full of wicked aversion to him. Their very "mind and conscience are defiled."² Their ideas of the excellence of good and of the evil of sin are as it were obliterated.

These are subjects which seem to me of very great importance. I conceive that the whole Arminian, Socinian, and Antinomian systems, so far as I understand them, rest upon the supposition of these principles being false. So that, if it should be found, at last, that God is an infinitely excellent being, worthy of being loved with all the love which his law requires; that, as such, his law is entirely fair and equitable and that for God to have required less, would have been denying himself to be what he is; and if it should appear, at last, that man is utterly lost, and lies absolutely at the discretion of God; then, I think it is easy to prove, the whole of these systems must fall to the ground. If men, on account of sin, lie at the discretion of God, the equity, and even necessity, of predestination cannot be denied, and so the Arminian system falls. If the law of God is right and good, and arises from the very nature of God, Antinomianism cannot stand. And if we are such great sinners, we need a great Saviour, infinitely greater than the Socinian Saviour.

VIII.

From what I have said, it must be supposed that I believe the doctrine of eternal personal

election and predestination. However, I believe that though in the choice of the elect, God had no motive out of himself, yet it was not so in respect to punishing the rest. What has been usually, but perhaps, improperly, called the decree of reprobation, I consider as nothing more than the divine determination to punish sin, in certain cases, in the person of the sinner.

IX.

I believe that the fall of man did not at all disconcert the great Eternal, but that he had from eternity formed a plan upon the supposition of that event (as well knowing that so it would be) and that, in this everlasting covenant, as it is called, the Sacred Three (speaking after the manner of men) stipulated with each other for the bringing about their vast and glorious design.

X.

The unfolding of this glorious plan to view, I believe, has been a gradual work from the beginning. First, it was hinted to our first parents, in the promise of the woman's seed. Then, by the institution of sacrifices, by types, prophecies, and promises, it was carried on throughout the Mosaic dispensation. At length the Son of God appeared, took our nature, obeyed the law, and endured the curse, and hereby made full and proper atonement for the sins of his own elect, rose again from the dead, commissioned his apostles to go into all the world and preach his gospel, and then triumphantly ascended above all heavens, where he sitteth at the right hand of God, interceding for his people, and governing the world in subserviency to their welfare, till he shall come a second time to judge the world.

I cannot reflect upon this glorious procedure, with its all-glorious Author, without emotions of wonder and gratitude. As a workman, he might be truly said to have "his work before him!" At once he glorified the injured character of God, and confounded the devil—destroyed sin and saved the sinner.

XI.

I believe that such is the excellence of this way of salvation that every one who hears, or has opportunity to hear it proclaimed in the gospel, is bound to repent of his sin, believe, approve, and embrace it with all his heart; to consider himself, as he really is, a vile, lost sinner; to reject all pretensions to life in any other way; and to cast himself upon Christ that he may be saved in this way of God's devising. This I think to be true faith, which whoever have, I believe, will certainly be saved.

XII.

But, though the way of salvation is in itself so glorious, that a man must be an enemy to God, to mankind, and to himself, not to approve it, yet I believe the pride, ignorance, enmity, and love to sin in men, is such that they will not come to Christ for life; but, in spite of all the calls and threatenings of God, will go on, till they sink into eternal perdition. Hence, I believe, arises the necessity of an almighty work of God the Spirit, to new-model the whole soul, to form in us new principles or dispositions, or, as the Scriptures call it, to give us "a new heart and a right spirit."³ I think, had we not first degenerated, we had stood in no need of being regenerated. But as we are by nature depraved, we must be born again. The influence of the Spirit of God, in this work, I believe to be always effectual.

XIII.

I believe the change that takes place in a person at the time of his believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, is not only real, but relative. Before our believing in Christ, we are considered and treated by God, as a lawgiver, as under condemnation; but having fled to him for refuge, the law, as to its condemning power, hath no more dominion over us, but we are treated, even by God the judge, as in a state of justification. The subject-matter of justification, I

believe to be nothing of our own moral excellence, but the righteousness of Christ alone, imputed to us and received by faith.

Also, I believe that before we believe in Christ, notwithstanding the secret purpose of God in our favour, we are considered by the moral governor of the world as aliens, as children of wrath, even as others; but that, on our believing on his Son, we are considered as no more strangers and foreigners, but are admitted into his family and have power, or privilege, to become the sons of God.

XIV.

I believe that those who are effectually called of God never fall away so as to perish everlastingly, but persevere in holiness till they arrive at endless happiness.

XV.

I believe it is the duty of every minister of Christ plainly and faithfully to preach the gospel to all who will hear it. And, as I believe the inability of men to spiritual things to be wholly of the moral, and therefore of the criminal kind—and that it is their duty to love the Lord Jesus Christ and trust in him for salvation, though they do not—I, therefore, believe free and solemn addresses, invitations, calls, and warnings to them, to be not only consistent, but directly adapted, as means in the hands of the Spirit of God to bring them to Christ. I consider it as a part of my duty, which I could not omit without being guilty of the blood of souls.

XVI.

I believe the ordinances which Christ, as king of Zion, has instituted for his church to be found in, throughout the gospel day, are especially two, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I believe the subjects of both to be those who profess repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and on such I consider them as incumbent duties. I

believe that it is essential to Christian baptism that it be by immersion, or burying the person in water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I likewise believe baptism as administered by the primitive church to be prerequisite to church communion. Hence I judge what is called strict communion to be consistent with the word of God.

XVII.

Although I disclaim personal holiness as having any share in our justification, I consider it absolutely necessary to salvation, for without it "no man shall see the Lord."⁴

XVIII.

I believe the soul of man is created immortal, and that, when the body dies, the soul returns to God who gave it and there receives an immediate sentence, either to a state of happiness or misery, there to remain till the resurrection of the dead.

XIX.

As I said that the development of God's plan has been gradual from the beginning, so I believe this graduation will be beautifully and gloriously carried on. I firmly and joyfully believe that the kingdom of Christ will yet be gloriously extended by the pouring out of God's Spirit upon the ministry of the Word. And I consider this as an event, for the arrival of which it becomes all God's servants and churches most ardently to pray! It is one of the chief springs of my joy in this "day of small things" that it will not be so always.

XX.

Finally, I believe that Christ will come a second time, not as before, to save the world, but to judge the world. There, in the presence of an assembled universe, every son and daughter of Adam shall appear at God's tremendous bar and give an account of the things done in the body. There sin-

ners, especially those who have rejected Christ, God's way of salvation, will be convicted, confounded, and righteously condemned! These shall go away into everlasting punishment. But the righteous, who through grace have embraced Christ and followed him whithersoever he went, shall follow him there likewise and enter with him into the eternal joy of their Lord. This solemn event, I own, on some accounts strikes me with trembling. Yet, on others, I cannot but look on it with a mixture of joy. When I consider it as the period when God will be vindicated from all the hard thoughts which ungodly sinners have indulged and the hard speeches which they have spoken against him; when all wrongs shall be made right, truth brought to light, and justice done where none here could be obtained; when the whole empire of sin, misery, and death shall sink like a mill-stone into the sea of

eternal oblivion and never rise more. When, I say, I consider it in this view, I cannot but look upon it as an object of joy and wish my time may be spent in this world in "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God."⁵

ENDNOTES

¹ From *The Last Remains of the Rev. Andrew Fuller: Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Other Miscellaneous Papers, not included in his Published Works* (ed. Joseph Belcher; Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1856), 209–217. This confession was delivered by Fuller on the occasion of his installation as pastor of the Baptist Church in Kettering on October 7, 1783.

² Titus 1:15.

³ Ezekiel 18:31. Cf. also Ezekiel 36:26.

⁴ Cp. Hebrews 12:14.

⁵ 2 Peter 3:12.