

Reformed Confessions
of the 16th and 17th Centuries in
English Translation: Volume 4, 1600–1693

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Compiled with Introductions by
James T. Dennison Jr.



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in English Translation: Volume 4, 1600–1693*
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Permissions	ix
Abbreviations	xi
92. The Points of Difference (1603).	1
93. Waldensian Confession (1603).	5
94. Confession of the Synod of Cassel (1607).	8
95. Hessian Catechism (1607)	15
96. Confession of the Heidelberg Theologians (1607).	27
97. The Remonstrance (1610).	41
98. The Counter Remonstrance (1611).	45
99. The Bentheim Confession (1613)	49
100. Confession of the Evangelical Church of Germany (1614)	55
101. The Confession of John Sigismund (1614).	75
102. The Irish Articles (1615).	88
103. Scottish Confession (1616).	108
104. Seven Articles of the Church of Leiden (1617).	117
105. The Canons of Dort (1618–1619).	120
106. The Confession of Cyril Lukaris (1629).	154
107. Leipzig Colloquy (1631)	164
108. The London Baptist Confession (1644).	182
109. Brief Confession of the Westminster Assembly (1645).	200
110. The Colloquy of Thorn (1645).	205
111. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646).	231
112. The London Confession (1646).	273
113. Benjamin Cox's Baptist Appendix (1646)	290
114. Westminster Larger Catechism (1647).	299
115. Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647).	353
116. The Cambridge Platform (1648)	369
117. The Geneva Theses (1649)	413
118. The Principles of Faith (1652)	423

119. A New Confession of Faith (1654) 428
120. The Midlands Confession (1655) 432
121. Waldensian Confession (1655). 435
122. The Somerset Confession (1656). 445
123. The Savoy Declaration (1658) 457
124. Waldensian Confession (1662). 496
125. The Formula Consensus Helvetica (1675) 516
126. The London Baptist Confession (1677) 531
127. The Baptist Catechism (1693) 572

PERMISSIONS

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Reformed Fellowship, Inc., Wyoming, Michigan for The Counter Remonstrance (1611).

Northwest Theological Seminary, Lynnwood, Washington and *Kerux: The Journal of Northwest Theological Seminary* for The Bentheim Confession (1613/1617).

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Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland for The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), The Westminster Larger Catechism (1647), and The Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647).

John Cargill for his internet version of The Midlands Confession (1655).

Trinity Journal and Martin I. Klauber for his translation of the canons of The Formula Consensus Helvetica (1675).

ABBREVIATIONS

- Müller E. F. Karl Müller, ed. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der reformierten Kirche*. Waltrop: Hartmut Spenner, 1999 [1903].
- Niemeyer H. A. Niemeyer, *Collectio confessionum in ecclesiis reformatis publicatarum*. Lipsiae, 1840.
- Schaff Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966 [1877].




The Points of Difference (1603)

On the death of Elizabeth I (1533–1603), the Puritan faction in the Church of England expectantly awaited the progress of James VI (to be James I, [1566–1625]) of Scotland from Edinburgh to London. Eagerly they presented the so-called 1603 Millenary Petition to the new monarch, hoping for some reform in the established church. Though trained under Scottish Presbyterians, James was in fact contemptuous of the lairds of the Kirk and sneered at the proposed petitioners. A year later, at the Hampton Court Conference, James reinforced the tenets of Anglican and monarchical supremacy and threatened to “harrie [the Puritans] out of the land or do worse.”

The London-Amsterdam Separatists joined in the optimism of their Puritan (non-Separatist) brethren in England by presenting the king with a copy of their 1598 statement of faith (revised 1596 version). Francis Johnson (1562–1617/18) and Henry Ainsworth (1571–1622) were the bearers of this document to the court. Ignored by the crown, they persisted with the fourteen-point declaration below. This too was ignored, evidently; and when a third petition failed to elicit any response from the court, the Separatists realized that James was as hostile or indifferent to their principles as Elizabeth had been.

Our text is found in Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (1893), 77–80. Spelling and punctuation have been modified. The text is also found in Müller, 539–41.



THE POINTS OF DIFFERENCE

1. That Christ the Lord has by His last Testament given to His church, and set therein, sufficient ordinary offices, with the manner of calling or entrance, works, and maintenance, for the administration of His holy things, and for the sufficient ordinary instruction, guidance, and service of His church, to the end of the world.
2. That every particular church has like and full interest and power to enjoy and practice all the ordinances of Christ given by Him to His church to be observed therein perpetually.
3. That every true visible church is a company of people called and separated from the world by the Word of God, and joined together by voluntary profession of the faith of Christ, in the fellowship of the gospel. And that therefore no known atheist, unbeliever, heretic, or wicked liver is to be received or retained a member in the church of Christ, which is His body; God having in all ages appointed and made a separation of His people from the world, before the law, under the law, and now in the time of the gospel.
4. That discreet, faithful, and able men (though not yet in office of ministry) may be appointed to preach the gospel and whole truth of God, that men being first brought to knowledge, and converted to the Lord, may then be joined together in holy communion with Christ our Head and one with another.
5. That being thus joined, every church has power in Christ to choose and take unto themselves meet and sufficient persons into the offices and functions of pastors, teachers, elders, deacons, and helpers, as those which Christ has appointed in His Testament, for the feeding, governing, serving, and building up of His church. And that no anti-Christian hierarchy or ministry of popes, archbishops, lord-bishops, suffragans, deans, archdeacons, chancellors, parsons, vicars, priests, dumb-ministers, nor any such like are to be set over the spouse and church of Christ, nor retained therein.
6. That the ministers aforesaid being lawfully called by the church where they are to administer ought to continue in their functions according to

God's ordinance, and carefully to feed the flock of Christ committed unto them, being not enjoined or suffered to bear civil offices withal, neither burdened with the execution of civil affairs, as the celebration of marriage, burying the dead, etc., which things belong as well to those without as within the church.

7. That the due maintenance of the officers aforesaid should be of the free and voluntary contribution of the church, that according to Christ's ordinance, they which preach the gospel may live of the gospel: and not by popish lordships and livings, or Jewish tithes and offerings. And that therefore the lands and other like revenues of the prelates and clergy yet remaining (being still also baits to allure the Jesuits and seminaries into the land, and incitements unto them to plot and prosecute their wonted evil courses, hoping to enjoy them in time to come) may now by Your Highness be taken away, and converted to better use, as those of the abbeyes and nunneries have been heretofore by Your Majesty's worthy predecessors, to the honor of God and great good of the Realm.

8. That all particular churches ought to be so constituted, as having their own peculiar officers, the whole body of every church may meet together in one place, and jointly perform their duties to God and one towards another. And that the censures of admonition and excommunication may be in due manner executed for sin, convicted and obstinately stood in. This power is also to be in the body of the church whereof the parties so offending and persisting are members.

9. That the church is not governed by popish canons, courts, classes, customs, or any human inventions, but by the laws and rules which Christ has appointed in His Testament. That no apocryphal writings, but only the canonical Scriptures, are to be used in the church. And that the Lord is to be worshipped and called upon in Spirit and truth, according to that form of prayer given by the Lord Jesus (Matt. 6) and after the liturgy of His own Testament, not by any other framed or imposed by men, much less by one translated from the popish liturgy, as the Book of Common Prayer, etc.

10. That the sacraments, being seals of God's covenant, ought to be administered only to the faithful, and baptism to their seed or those under

their government. And that according to the simplicity of the gospel, without any popish or other abuses, in either sacrament.

11. That the church is not to be urged to the observation of days and times, Jewish or popish, save only to sanctify the Lord's Day. Neither to be laden in things indifferent, with rites and ceremonies whatsoever invented by men; but that Christian liberty may be retained, and what God has left free, none are to make bound.

12. That all monuments of idolatry in garments or any other things, all temples, altars, chapels, and other places, dedicated heretofore by the heathen or anti-Christians to their false worship, ought by lawful authority to be razed and abolished—not suffered to remain, for nourishing superstition, much less employed to the true worship of God.

13. That popish degrees in theology, enforcement to single life in colleges, abuse of the study of profane heathen writers, with other like corruptions in schools and academies, should be removed and redressed, that so they may be the wellsprings and nurseries of true learning and godliness.

14. Finally that all churches and people (without exception) are bound in religion only to receive and submit unto that constitution, ministry, worship, and order, which Christ as Lord and King has appointed unto His church, and not to any other devised by man whatsoever.




Waldensian Confession (1603)

The following document, while not a formal confession of faith, attests to the Reformed character of the Waldensian Church at the turn of the seventeenth century. Here the Vaudois align themselves emphatically with the Reformed churches of Europe.

The general context of the declaration is the ongoing persecution of the Waldensians in the region of Saluzzo/Salusse/Saluces (so-called Marquisate of Saluzzo), south of Turin, Italy. Emmanuel Philibert (1528–1580) had regained the Duchy of Savoy-Piedmont from the French in 1559 and made Turin his capital in 1562. He was succeeded in 1580 by Charles Emmanuel I (the Great [1580–1630]), who repeatedly attempted to conquer and suppress Calvinism in his domain and beyond (twice he failed to attack and conquer Geneva, in 1588 and in 1602). The Waldensians were classified along with other *banditti* as outlaws and heretics. They responded with an appeal to Charles Emmanuel at a conference in the spring of 1603. On April 9, he issued a decree of general amnesty (a copy is reproduced in Morland, 466–71). The Waldensians gained a few brief years of tranquility by this decree.

Our translation is based on the French text found in Leger, *Histoire générale des églises évangéliques des Vallées de Piémont* (1669), 1:111–12, as compared with the English version in Samuel Morland, *The History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piemont* (1658), 41–43.



**A Declaration of the Waldenses of the Valleys of Meane,
and of Maties and of the Marquisate of Saluzzo,
presented in the year 1603, to the Duke of Savoy.**

Whereas our predecessors from all time, and from father to son, have been instructed in the doctrine and religion which we have always openly professed from our childhood and in which we have instructed our families, as we have learned from our fathers, and which (while the king [of France] held the Marquisate of Saluzzo), we were permitted to profess without any disturbance no less than our brothers in the Valleys of Lucerne, who, by a treaty expressly made with their sovereign prince, have rejoiced with us in securing its continuation: and because His Highness, incited instead by persons of evil intentions than by his own will, has resolved to disturb us and to that end has brought forth an edict against us: that all the world may know that it is not for any crime which we have committed, either against the person of our prince, or to rebel against the laws, or that we have been guilty of murders, of thefts, etc.; that we have been tormented in that way, spoiled of our goods, and the possessions of our houses, etc. We declare that we are certain and persuaded that the doctrine and religion practiced by the Reformed Churches of France, Switzerland, Germany, England, Scotland, Geneva, Denmark, Sweden, Holland and other kingdoms, nations and dominions, of which we have before made open profession under the obedience of our princes and principal sovereigns, is the only doctrine and religion ordained of God, which alone is able to render us acceptable to God and to lead us to salvation. We have resolved to hold it at the peril of our lives, goods, and honor, and to continue in it up to the last breath of our life. And if anyone believes that we are in error, we very humbly beseech him that he show us our errors; we offer to renounce it without delay and to follow whatever would be shown to be more excellent, desiring nothing more than to render the obedience to God that we owe to Him, as poor creatures, and by this means obtain from Him true and eternal happiness. But if by violence, they wish to constrain us to abandon the way of salvation, to follow the errors and false doctrines invented by men, we choose rather to suffer the loss of our houses, goods, and lives, begging most humbly His Highness, whom we recognize as our lawful Prince and Sovereign, that he not permit us to be persecuted without cause, but rather that he allow us to continue all the rest of our

life, and our children and posterity after us, in the same obedience which we have before inviolably rendered as his true and faithful subjects.

Since we request nothing else of him except the rendering whatever we ought according to the express commandment of God, we may also be allowed to give to God the service which is due to Him and which is required of us by His Word. And meanwhile in the midst of our calamities and banishment, we pray the Reformed churches to recognize us as true members of theirs, always ready to seal with our own blood, if God calls us to, the confession of faith which has been published, which we hold in every way agreeing with the doctrine of the holy apostles, wishing to live and die in it. And if for so doing we are persecuted, we return thanks to God, who has granted us the honor of suffering for Him, committing the outcome of our affairs and the justice of our cause into the hands of the providence of God, who will deliver us when and by the means which shall please Him. Most humbly praying that as He holds the hearts of kings and princes in His hand, He will be pleased to bend the heart of His Highness to have pity on us, who have never offended him, and have resolved not ever to offend him, that he may acknowledge us, he may recognize us to be most faithful subjects, than those who persuade him to persecute us severely, and for ourselves, that He will be pleased to strengthen us amid these temptations and give us constancy and patience to persevere in the profession of the truth until the end of our life and that of our posterity after us. Amen.