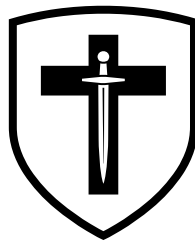


The First London Confession of Faith from 1644

Comprehensive Edition (2022)

including passages from the text variants
from 1644, 1646, 1651/53
and an additional article on the Lord's Supper



Text with Documentation of the editorial Decisions

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the middle of the 17th century, a number of independent Christian congregations in London issued a common confession of faith in which they expressed their Reformed and Credobaptist theological positions. Without exploring further the turbulent circumstances in English politics of that time, it should be noted that the original publication took place when the legal status and permissibility of the formation of free churches separately from the state church was at least in doubt.

This London confession went through four editions and its text was revised and corrected both for the second and third edition. The fourth edition was published without further changes.

About a quarter of a century after the fourth edition of the confession was published, the participating congregations, having grown in number, issued a new confession of faith. In contrast to the previous one this confession was largely based on the *Westminster Confession*, which had since been published and found wide acceptance among Reformed Christians of different movements or associations, though sometimes with textual changes.* The editors of this new confession mainly revised the statements on baptism and on the constitution of the church to reflect the position of those churches which adapted this new confession.

* The *Second London Confession of Faith* is based on such a changed version of the *Westminster Confession*, the *Congregationalist Savoy Declaration* from 1658.

There are different views on the relationship between these two confessions, the *First* and the *Second London Confession of Faith* (1LCF and 2LCF), concerning those areas where they do not clearly agree or where the *Second* treats additional topics not dealt with in the *First*. These views can be described as promoting either continuity or discontinuity. Some authors maintain that the *First Confession* must be understood in the light of the more detailed second one, since both come from the same group of congregations, and so they are clearly to be expected to reflect the same theological positions.

Others come to the conclusion that with regard to some topics, there are in fact differences in theological positions between the two, even if the difference should only lie in the lack of including statements on such matters.

Unsurprisingly, the supporters of the first view tend to be found mostly among the adherents of the 2LCF. The second group tend to be among those who affirm the 1LCF.

It is not the aim of this paper either to promote or to settle this disagreement, so only two aspects shall be mentioned briefly:

First, there are several theological differences (which could be considered developments) even between the various editions of the 1LCF on some issues. One particularly clear example is the topic of church offices, which changed* significantly and indubitably from the First Edition to subsequent ones. A change of positions in the much later 2LCF should therefore not be considered inconsistent or even unusual.

And secondly, WILLIAM LUMPKIN, who gives no reason to be suspect of being biased in this matter, writes about the 2LCF in his great collection *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969) on page 237:

“Essential agreement with the London Confession of 1644 was claimed in the introductory note, but scarcity of copies and general ignorance of that Confession, as well as the need for more full and distinct expression of views than that Confession offered, were given as reasons for preparing the new Confession. As a matter of fact, there are numerous and marked differences between this Confession and that of 1644. To be sure, certain phrases were taken from the former Confession, and there are evidences that other reminiscences from it were included, but, nevertheless, a number of significant and far-reaching changes were made. Among the innovations were the treatment of such subjects as the

* The *First Edition* in its version of Article 36 lists the church offices as pastors, teachers, elders and deacons and thus follows CALVIN, later editions here only mention deacons and elders.

Scriptures, the Sabbath, and marriage. Moreover, the views of the church and of the ordinances were altered.”

Both confessions certainly agree in the essentials and both are important documents for understanding the history of the stream of Christian thought which is calvinistic in its view of God’s plan of salvation while teaching believer’s baptism.

The different views regarding continuity and discontinuity between the two confessions seem to depend at least partially on the method applied. The position seeing largely continuity relies on studies in historical theology, analyzing contemporary literature and the development of the movement and by that method, comes to the conclusion that there was no intention to express a different theological view in 1677 than before. This necessitates the assumption that where the 1LCF is silent, the views held by the issuing congregations on topics not originally dealt with must have been virtually the same as those expressed later in the 2LCF.

Those considering the relationship as characterized by partial discontinuity mostly refer to the actual wording of the confessions, treating them as doctrinal documents that deserve to be judged by their own verbatim content. Whatever the belief of the original subscribers in several matters not dealt with may have been, the argument could be summarized that they did not consider it necessary to include binding statements on these. Proponents of this view also point out that there are enough documented differences between the issuing churches in other matters (e.g. the laying-on of hands after baptism, singing in the meetings) to prevent seeing the movement as a monolithic doctrinal block, so that in the 1LCF we have a document about the matters where they could and wanted to express a common theology, allowing for liberty in other areas, and that this self-imposed restriction is a defining element of the confession.

This would mean that modern churches which do not agree on the 2LCF’s view on the Sunday as a Christian Sabbath, on certain aspects of the Lord’s Table or on the identity of the Antichrist could well adopt the 1LCF, regardless of what the original subscribers (or a part of them) would have considered right doctrine, simply because they refrained from making binding statements on these matters.

Therefore, a considerable number of churches today which do not agree with certain statements of the 2LCF, but do hold to a reformed and credobaptist theological position, have adopted the 1LCF as an exposition of their doctrine.

Among those churches, the textual variant of the *Second Edition* from 1646 is used almost without exception.

In the version presented here, the 2022 *Comprehensive Edition* of the *First London Confession of Faith* from 1644, the aim is not to adhere to just one of the historical editions of the 1LCF, but instead to integrate textual variants from all three historical text versions. It is not comprehensive in the sense of including or documenting every variant from each of the three historical original London text versions of 1644, 1646 and 1651/1652. Although it is based on the text of the second edition from 1646, it does, however, aim to include variants from the earlier and the later version of the text in passages where they do most fully express biblical truths. This document originated in a 21st century reformed and credobaptist church: The *Reformierte Freikirche* (Reformed Free Church) in Germany, which holds a German translation of this text as the main expression of their faith under the authority of Scripture. The church did not want to formulate their own confession, but rather desired to use a tried and tested “*pattern of sound words*”. When the first congregation was founded in 2016, only the text of the 1646 edition was known to the founders, and a translation of that was used. From the beginning, the original text was amended* by an article on the Lord’s Supper, which was a selection from the *Second London Confession of Faith* from 1677† – again, following a desire to use a text that had been tried and tested over centuries and, in this case, one historically and theologically connected with the same movement which authored the 1LCF. This should not imply total agreement with every every position of the 2LCF’s, but simply full accord with the excerpt used.

Later, when photomechanical facsimiles of all four historical London editions of the confession could be studied, it was decided that some phrasings from other editions than the 1646 were more suitable in content or language for the church’s textual use. Thus this document came into being – still under the desire not to write a new confession, but rather with the intention of choosing passages from several variants of this “*pattern of sound words*” that most fully express biblical teaching as the church understood it, to better serve the glory of God and the benefit of the elect. Although this document has one author who

* The wish to express their biblical beliefs about both Christ’s ordinances, not baptism alone, meant a substantial addition to the confession. The reasoning behind this amendment is given in a separate part of this document, following a discussion of the other editorial decisions.

† It is often called the 1689 confession because that was the year a national General Assembly of the issuing congregations from “*London and the country*” in July openly recommended the use of the 2LCF (just after the *Toleration Act* had received royal assent in May). However, it was neither published nor even reprinted in that year.

takes responsibility for the final textual version, every single editorial decision was discussed and reviewed among brothers in leadership.

While the *Reformierte Freikirche* does use a German translation of this confession, the English version of the text is published in the hope that it may prove useful to other Christians. The confession has been carefully and respectfully edited, and mostly within the bounds of only choosing between text variations given by the diverse historical editions. Compiling this edition has led in some areas to improvements in clarity with regard to closeness to biblical expressions and, especially in the case of treating the Lord's Supper in its own article, in the inclusion of more precious and important truths for Christ's church at all times. The reason for the omission of a minor, rather allegorical, passage in Article 18 in the text of the confession is a lack of a clear biblical foundation for the very detailed claims in it. This change of course is also documented below.

In this particular document, the editorial decisions in composing the 2022 *Comprehensive Edition* are fully disclosed. It will especially be of use to those interested in the history of confessions, or to those who very wisely desire to examine more closely the claim that this document is essentially just a further edition of the *First London Confession of Faith*, first published in 1644 by Christians of reformed and credobaptist convictions, and not an entirely new document.

There is also a digital file available with this comprehensive text of the confession, but without the documentation of the changes, including an apparatus of biblical proof texts instead. Such version might be preferable for studying or teaching purposes.

Below, the text of this version of the confession's fifty-two articles is given, with an account about words changed, added or omitted. After that, an appendix is attached with a separate, more detailed discussion of the inclusion of the new article (Article 40) concerning the Lord's Supper and the subsequent changes in the neighbouring Articles 39 and 41 which follow on from this decision.

Methodologically, work on this version started with the text of the articles in the version of the second edition from 1646, the one most often reprinted today. This text, like those of the other editions used, has been taken directly from a photomechanical facsimile of an original, as modern reprints tend to have minor (and usually undocumented) changes.

A few general revisions have been made throughout the text:

- The numbering of the articles has been changed from Roman to Arabic numerals and headings were added.

- The occasional quite erratic punctuation has been changed to be closer to today's usage. These changes in punctuation have sometimes lead to the splitting of longer original sentences into two or more. The *Comprehensive Edition* does not use parentheses.
- The articles have been structured into shorter sections to facilitate a better understanding and allow for an easier way to identify text passages when quoting.
- The orthography has been modernized, including the changing of third person singular verbs ending in -th ("*hath*" is now "*has*", etc.).
- The two instances of "&c." (Articles 9 and 17) have been changed to "*etc.*"
- In the original text of the confession, the word "*that*" has inconsistently a few times been used to express what seems to be a *that-clause with verb*, but in fact lacking the verb, the implied meaning being "*We believe that...*". These instances of "*that*" have been omitted, since the whole confession was intended to reflect what its subscribers believed, rather than some passages more than others. These omissions did not necessitate further changes in the sentence structure and are documented below. (Article 49 Section 3 is an exception to this: The verb "*believe*" is actually present earlier in the text, and thus no adjustment has been made.)
- The reference apparatus of biblical texts (not included in this document, but printed together with the confession in another file freely available) has not been taken directly from the original, but has been largely rewritten.

These changes have been applied to the text throughout. All further and individual changes in articles are documented below.

The 2022 *Comprehensive Edition* only consists of the fifty-two articles* proper; the historical editions had additional texts printed with them. The second edition of 1646, e.g., contains, in addition to the articles, a dedication (to the members of the English Parliament), a preface (to the reader), a conclusion and three supplementary notes: after Article 16 (a collection of Christological passages from the Bible); after the original Article 40, now the second part of Article 39 (concerning mainly the preservation of propriety in the act of baptism) and after Article 48 (a description of the lawful authorities in England in 1646 and an appeal to them to act in a godly manner). The *Appendix to a Confession of Faith* however was never included in any of the historical editions, but rather was a personal addition by BENJAMIN COX, published separately.

For the editorial changes leading to differences between the new *Comprehensive Edition* and the text of the 1646 Second Edition (abbreviated “B”), sources will be given where appropriate. These sources will usually be either the First Edition of 1644 (“A”) or the Third Edition of 1651 (“C” – there also is a Fourth Edition of 1652 which is verbatim, albeit not in orthography, the same as the 1651, and thus does not result in an additional text variant. The confession also was embraced by a congregation gathering in Leith and Edinburgh in Scotland, which issued another edition in 1653 which has not been considered here.). In

* It is widely claimed that the first edition of the 1LCF has 53 articles. Although this is the prevailing opinion, the assumption is incorrect, as a look at the facsimiles of the editions will show. Following the 52 numbered articles of the first edition there is another passage which – like the previous one – is headed with the roman numeral LII. This is obviously a typesetting error which needs to be corrected – as there cannot be two Articles 52, the natural assumption is that the second passage is in fact meant to be a fifty-third article. Actually, the copy in the Angus Library at Oxford has been corrected by a previous owner accordingly, adding by hand the missing line to form LIII. The content of this passage, however, does not really deal with any theological statements about biblical beliefs to be confessed, but rather gives reasons and motivation for publishing a confession of faith.

With the publishing of the 1646 edition (“*The second impression corrected [!] and enlarged*”), however, the assumption that this was meant to be a further article can no longer be maintained. The passage in question, which in 1644 begins with the words “*And thus we desire to give unto God*” after the 1646 revision starts with “*And thus we desire to give unto Christ*”. It is clearly the revised equivalent. Rather than headed with an article number like LIII, it is titled “*The Conclusion*”.

Also, when a new Article 5 was included in 1646, the editors made sure to combine both former Articles 7 and 8, both dealing with Holy Scripture, under the number 8, showing an intention to – at that time – keep the number of articles at 52.

This means that the 1644 edition just has an error in the typesetting of the heading for the closing passage following Article 52, and while at first it may have seemed obvious to interpret this as a further article (LIII), the correction made by the editors themselves about fourteen months later forbids this interpretation as the 1644 edition also has 52 articles.

That the 1651 and 1652 editions have only 51 articles is undisputed; the previous Article 38 on the remuneration of pastors has been left out.

four cases, the *Second London Confession of Faith* from 1677 (“2LCF”) has been used in an auxiliary capacity – as source for the whole newly included Article 40, to support the omission of a passage in Article 18, as source for amending Article 36 about church officers and in deciding the choice of one single word in Article 38. In a similar way, at one point there is a reference to a predecessor of the *First London Confession of Faith* (“1LCF”), the *True Confession* of 1596 (“T”), a separatist, paedobaptist statement of faith, which had been used as a model for several articles when A was composed. Here it serves as the source for inserting a four-word explanatory phrase in Article 45. Though not used as an authoritative source, a work by BENJAMIN COX, *An Appendix to a Confession of Faith* (“P”), also published in 1646, is referred to in part III of this document, discussing the decision to include a new Article 40. COX was one of the sixteen signatories of B and an influential advocate of closed communion. His appendix to the confession was foremost an expression of his personal convictions on several theological matters and did not necessarily express the views of all the congregations holding the confession, but it does give a good insight into his interpretation and into the views he (and those congregations in agreement with him) held.

Finally, the new 2022 *Comprehensive Edition* of the *First London Confession of Faith* from 1644 (in other words, the text offered here) is abbreviated as “E”*. For ease of indicating a specific part of the text, changes are referred to by section, even though such sections originally did not exist in the historical editions. It is quite practical, though of course totally unhistorical to speak of e.g. “Section 15.2 in the version of 1644”; this is only done for ease of reference.

The result of these changes has not been a modernized or simplified version of the confession, other than the changes in spelling and grammar and five updates in vocabulary. Such changes were not made in every place where the confession seems archaic in expression, but only in those specific instances where the different meaning of words today (Article 15: “*doctor*”, Article 45: “*prophecy*”), closeness to the majority of bible translations (Article 15: “*angel*”) or context and grammar (Article 38: “*ministers*”, Article 41: “*considered*”) suggested a change, mainly to avoid misunderstandings for readers today.

Not counting for adjustments in grammar, orthography and word order, thirty-one of the fifty-two articles have no changes at all done to them (as compared to B), so that they can be considered to essentially be the same as in the historical

* Considering the historical text variants of the London editions are abbreviated A, B, C; and the *Comprehensive Edition* as E, this allows for the Edinburgh/Leith 1653 variant to be abbreviated as D should the need arise in later publications.

second edition. These are Articles 1, 4 – 7, 9 – 14, 16, 19 – 23, 25 – 27, 30, 32, 37, 43 – 44, 46 – 48, 50 – 52. The Articles 17, 34 and 35 could well be included in this category (raising the number to thirty-four), since the text of these from B is still fully included in E, but partly transferred to other articles*.

In nine articles the text of E (again, as compared to B) is influenced by A (2, 24, 28, 31, 33, 38, 40 [i.e. the original Article 40, forming part of Article 39 in E], 41-42), twice by C (3, 29) and twice by A as well as by C (8, 39). This distribution also reflects the fact that the changes in the historical editions between B and A were considerably more extensive than between C and B.

The newly inserted Article 40 is a selected quote from 2LCF, as is part of Article 36. The omission of a passage in Article 18 also is paralleled in 2LCF.

All these and also the (very few) other changes, most often only concerning single words, are documented below, usually immediately after the article concerned.

Of course, while the fact that all modifications do only concern a small percentage of the text may well prove the desire to stay close to the historical editions of the confession, it is in no way a safeguard against heresy. A statement of faith could, in theory, lose its orthodoxy by inserting, omitting or changing a single word, in some cases only a letter or two. Therefore, everyone is invited to analyse the documentation of the changes below.

Altogether, in percentage of text as well as in the particular truths expressed, the differences between the historical 1646 edition (which has become the standard version for most churches which use the *First London Confession of Faith* today) and the comprehensive 2022 edition are considerably less than those, for example, between the 1644 and the 1646 editions. If indeed these are not to be considered different confessions, but only different editions of one confession as the authors claim in the title of the 1646 edition, then this 2022 version is also not a new confession, but only a new and revised edition of the same, one, historical confession.

* The text of Article 17 is fully included, but part of it has been moved to Article 18. Articles 34 and 35 together also give the whole, verbatim content of their counterparts in B, but follow A in the way the text is divided between the articles.

II. THE FIFTY-TWO ARTICLES

Abbreviations used in the apparatus:

1LCF – The *First London Confession of Faith*

2LCF – The *Second London Confession of Faith*

A – text version of the first edition of the 1LCF

B – text version of the second edition of the 1LCF

C – text version of the third edition as well as of the fourth edition of the 1LCF

E – The *Comprehensive Edition* of the 1LCF

P – *An Appendix to a Confession of Faith* by BENJAMIN COX

T – *A True Confession*

1. GOD AND HIS ATTRIBUTES

- ¹ The Lord our God is but one God, whose subsistence is in Himself;
- ² whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself;
- ³ who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto;
- ⁴ who is in Himself most holy;
- ⁵ every way infinite in greatness, wisdom, power, love;
- ⁶ merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth;
- ⁷ who gives being, moving and preservation to all creatures.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 1.

2. THE TRINITY

- ¹ In this divine and infinite being there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;
- ² each having the whole divine essence,
- ³ but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties,
- ⁴ yet the essence undivided, all infinite without any beginning, therefore but one God who is not to be divided in nature and being.

E follows B verbatim in the text of Article 2, with the exception of the word “*Son*” in 2.1. While in A the Trinity is described as “*the Father, the Son and the Spirit*”, B uses “*Word*” instead of “*Son*” and adds the word “*holy*” when referring to the Spirit.

Also, the order of the sections is changed in E compared to B, originally 2.4 came before 2.3.

3. GOD’S DECREE

- ¹ God has decreed in Himself, before the world was, concerning all things, to work, dispose, and bring them about according to the counsel of His own will, to His glory;

² yet without being the author of sin, or having fellowship with any therein,
³ in which appears His wisdom in disposing all things, unchangeableness,
power, and faithfulness in accomplishing His decree;
⁴ and God has, before the foundation of the world, foreordained some men to
eternal life, through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of His grace;
⁵ leaving the rest to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of
His justice.

In 3.1, E follows C verbatim, while B has “...all things, whether necessary, accidental or voluntary, with all the circumstances of them...” and also instead of “them” later in 3.3 has again “all things”. Also, in 3.5 instead of “leaving the rest to act in their sin” (from C) B has “leaving the rest in their sin”. The C variant with “to act” later found its way into the 2LCF (Chapter III Par. 3) as well.

4. CREATION AND FALL

¹ In the beginning God made all things very good;
² created man after His own image, filled with all meet perfection of nature,
and free from all sin;
³ but long he abode not in this honour;
⁴ Satan using the subtlety of the serpent to seduce first Eve, then by her
seducing Adam;
⁵ who without any compulsion, in eating the forbidden fruit, transgressed the
command of God, and fell;
⁶ whereby death came upon all his posterity, who now are conceived in sin, and
by nature the children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death and
other miseries in this world, and for ever;
⁷ unless the Lord Jesus Christ set them free.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 4.

5. GOD’S PROVIDENCE IN ALL THINGS

¹ God in His infinite power and wisdom does dispose all things to the end for
which they were created;
² that neither good nor evil befalls any by chance or without His providence;
³ and that whatsoever befalls the elect, is by His appointment;
⁴ for His glory and their good.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 5.

6. SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE

- ¹ All the elect, being loved of God with an everlasting love, are redeemed, quickened, and saved, not by themselves nor their own works, lest any man should boast;
- ² but only and wholly by God, of His own free grace and mercy;
- ³ through Jesus Christ, who is made unto us by God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and all in all, that he that rejoices might rejoice in the Lord.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 6.

7. ETERNAL LIFE OR GOD'S VENGEANCE

- ¹ And this is life eternal, that we might know Him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.
- ² And on the contrary, the Lord will render vengeance in flaming fire, to them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 7.

8. THE SCRIPTURES

- ¹ The rule of this knowledge, faith, and obedience concerning the worship of God, in which is contained the whole duty of man, is not men's laws or traditions,
- ² but only the word of God contained in the canonical Holy Scriptures;
- ³ in which is plainly recorded whatsoever is needful for us to know, believe, and practice;
- ⁴ which are the only rule of holiness and obedience for all saints, at all times, in all places to be observed.

B has in 8.1 "*...not men's laws or unwritten traditions...*", C omits the word "*unwritten*" and thus broadens the meaning. E follows C in this. E also includes the word "*canonical*" in 8.2 from A.

9. CHRIST, SON OF GOD AND SON OF MAN

- ¹ The Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Moses and the Prophets wrote, the Apostles preached, He is the Son of God, the brightness of His glory, etc.
- ² by whom He made the world;
- ³ who upholds and governs all things that He has made;
- ⁴ who also when the fullness of time was come, was made of a woman, of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David; to wit, of the virgin Mary, the

Holy Spirit coming down upon her, the power of the most High overshadowing her;

⁵ and He was also tempted as we are, yet without sin.

In 9.5 of the original printing of B, the sentence ends “*yet within sin*”. This is clearly a typesetting error, C has the expected “*without sin*”, and A has a slightly different phrase with the same meaning as C.

Those modern reprints of B that are known to the editor all have “*without*” here.

Considering that only an error has been corrected, there are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 9.

10. CHRIST, MEDIATOR OF THE NEW COVENANT

¹ Jesus Christ is made the mediator of the new and everlasting covenant of grace between God and man;

² ever to be perfectly and fully the prophet, priest, and king of the church of God for evermore.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 10.

11. CHRIST, APPOINTED AND ANOINTED TO MEDIATORSHIP

¹ Unto this office He was appointed by God from everlasting;

² and in respect of His manhood, from the womb called, separated, and anointed most fully and abundantly with all gifts necessary, God having without measure poured out His Spirit upon Him.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 11.

12. CHRIST, ORDAINED AS MEDIATOR AND MADE A SACRIFICE FOR SIN

¹ 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;

² 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, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand;

³ all of mere free and absolute grace towards God’s elect, and without any condition foreseen in them to procure it.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 12.

13. NO OTHER MEDIATOR BUT CHRIST

- ¹ This office to be mediator, that is, to be prophet, priest, and king of the Church of God, is so proper to Christ,
² that neither in whole, or any part thereof, it cannot be transferred from Him to any other.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 13.

14. CHRIST'S THREEFOLD OFFICE

- ¹ This office to which Christ is called is threefold: a prophet, priest, and king. This number and order of offices is necessary,
² for in respect of our ignorance, we stand in need of His prophetic office;
³ in respect of our great alienation from God, we need His priestly office to reconcile us;
⁴ and in respect of our averseness and utter inability to return to God, we need His kingly office to convince, subdue, draw, uphold and preserve us to His heavenly kingdom.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 14.

15. CHRIST IS PROPHET

- ¹ 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;
² and therefore He is called not only a prophet and teacher, and the apostle of our profession, and the messenger of the covenant, but also the very wisdom of God,
³ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who forever continues revealing the same truth of the gospel to His people.

B reads in 15.2 "*He is called not only a prophet and doctor*". While today we often associate "*doctor*", other than of course being an academic degree, with the healing professions, we should consider the usage of the 17th century as well as confessional context: A (in its version of Article 36) lists the church offices as pastors, teachers, elders and deacons and thus follows CALVIN, who talks about the four offices of *pasteurs, docteurs, anciens* and *diacres*. *Docteur* here has the meaning of teacher and is the preferred reading for E as well.

Also, a comparison of Acts 5:34 in different translations supports this substitution: The *Geneva Bible* 1599 (which in its language is certainly closer to B than to today's English) calls Gamaliel "*a doctor of the law*", newer translations (NIV, ESV...) have "*teacher*".

In 15.2 "*messenger*" has been substituted for the original "*angel of the covenant*". The phrase is a quote from Maleachi 3:1, where most English translations have this choice of word.

16. AS PROPHET CHRIST HAD TO BE BOTH GOD AND MAN

¹ That He might be a prophet every way complete, it was necessary He should be God, and also that He should be man,

² For unless He had been God, He could never have perfectly understood the will of God;

³ and unless He had been man, He could not suitably have unfolded it in His own person to men.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 16.

17. CHRIST IS PRIEST

¹ Concerning His priesthood, Christ having sanctified Himself has appeared once to put away sin by that one offering of Himself a sacrifice for sin;

² by which He has fully finished and suffered all things God required for the salvation of His elect;

³ and removed all rites and shadows etc. and is now entered within the veil into the holy of holies, which is the presence of God.

While the whole content of Article 17 according to B is found in E, two former sections of it are now printed as part of Article 18, see below.

18. A PRIESTHOOD FOR EVERMORE

¹ This priesthood was not legal or temporary, but according to the order of Melchizedek,

² and is stable and perfect, not for a time, but forever, which is suitable to Jesus Christ, as to Him that ever lives.

³ He makes His people a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God through Him.

⁴ Neither does the Father accept, nor Christ offer to the Father, any other worship or worshippers.

A continues after the text of Sections 18.1 and 18.2: *“Christ himself was the priest, sacrifice, and altar: He was a priest according to both natures; He was a sacrifice most properly according to His human nature; whence in Scripture it is wont to be attributed to His body, to His blood, yet the chief force whereby this sacrifice was made effectual did depend upon his divine nature, namely that the Son of God did offer himself for us. He was the altar properly according to His divine nature, it belonging to the altar to sanctify that which is offered upon it, and so it ought to be of greater dignity than the sacrifice itself.”*

B has very similar words in that passage, the main difference being *“yet the effectualness of this sacrifice did depend upon His divine nature; therefore it is called the blood of God”* instead of the *“yet the chief force...”* of A. Here, B seems influenced by an unlikely reading of Acts 20:28 to arrive at the phrase *“blood of God”*, thus this exact wording is of dubious biblical warrant.

Both versions of this passage give rather an allegorical interpretation of the implications of

Christ's office as priest and lack a clear biblical foundation. While, if understood mainly as an allegory, the statements of this passage may well be true, the lack of biblical proof prevents an inclusion in E. In this E follows 2LCF, which affirms Christ's offices of prophet, priest and king (Chapter VIII Par. 1) without trying to attribute parts of the priestly office specifically to his two natures.

Sections 18.3 and 18.4, as they are now assigned in E, were in the original 1LCF part of Article 17, which also deals with the priesthood of Christ. They were moved to Article 18 for systematic reasons – as Christ's priesthood is without end, so is the worship by His people. At the same time, they give more substance to the previously shortened article, which is beneficial for the didactic use of the confession.

19. CHRIST IS KING

¹ Concerning His kingly office, Christ being risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and having all power in heaven and earth;

² He does spiritually govern His church

³ and does exercise His power over all, angels and men, good and bad, to the preservation and salvation of the elect, and to the overruling and destruction of His enemies.

⁴ By this kingly power He applies the benefits, virtue, and fruits of His prophecy and priesthood to His elect,

⁵ subduing their sins, preserving and strengthening them in all their conflicts against Satan, the world, and the flesh, keeping their hearts in faith and filial fear by His Spirit.

⁶ By this His mighty power He rules the vessels of wrath, using, limiting and restraining them, as it seems good to His infinite wisdom.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 19.

20. THIS KING SHALL COME IN GLORY

¹ This His kingly power shall be more fully manifested when He shall come in glory to reign among His saints;

² when He shall put down all rule and authority under His feet;

³ that the glory of the Father may be perfectly manifested in His Son,

⁴ and the glory of the Father and the Son in all His members.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 20.

21. SALVATION PURCHASED FOR THE ELECT BY CHRIST'S DEATH

¹ Jesus Christ by His death did purchase salvation for the elect that God gave unto Him:

² These only have interest in Him, and fellowship with Him, for whom He makes intercession to His Father in their behalf,

³ and to them alone does God by His Spirit apply this redemption;

⁴ as also the free gift of eternal life is given to them, and none else.

B has in 21.2 "*in the behalfe of*" which has been changed to "*in their behalf*", and in 21.3 "*unto*" as the last word instead of the word "*to*" as used in this section in E. Other than these grammatical adaptations (which can also be found in C), there are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 21.

A does not have an equivalent to 21.2 – 21.4, it begins with what is essentially 21.1 and continues by declaring that the gospel ought to be preached to all men, followed by a short description of its meaning. With the intention to keep these precious biblical truths in E, A's additional content from Article 21 is now included as 24.4. and 24.5.

22. FAITH LEADS TO THE TRUTH OF THE SCRIPTURES

¹ Faith is the gift of God, wrought in the hearts of the elect by the Spirit of God;

² by which faith they come to know and believe the truth of the Scriptures, and the excellency of them above all other writings, and all things in the world,

³ as they hold forth the glory of God in His attributes,

⁴ the excellency of Christ in His nature and offices,

⁵ and of the power and fulness of the Spirit in His workings and operations;

⁶ and so are enabled to cast their souls upon His truth thus believed.

B in 22.5 has "*in its workings...*". Other than this grammatical adjustment, there are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 22.

23. THE PRESERVATION OF ALL WHO RECEIVED THIS FAITH

¹ All those that have this precious faith wrought in them by the Spirit can never finally nor totally fall away, seeing the gifts of God are without repentance;

² so that He still begets and nourishes in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit unto immortality;

³ and though many storms and floods arise, and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock, which by faith they are fastened upon;

⁴ notwithstanding, through unbelief, and the temptations of Satan, the sensible sight of this light and love be clouded and overwhelmed for a time;

⁵ yet God is still the same, and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto salvation;

⁶ where they shall enjoy their purchased possession;
⁷ they being engraven upon the palms of His hands, and their names having been written in the book of life from all eternity.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 23.

24. FAITH COMES FROM PREACHING

¹ Faith is ordinarily begotten by the preaching of the gospel, or word of Christ;
² without respect to any power or agency in the creature; but it being wholly passive, and dead in trespasses and sins;
³ does believe and is converted by no less power than that which raised Christ from the dead.
⁴ This gospel, which is to be preached to all men as the ground of faith, is, that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the ever blessed God, filled with the perfection of all heavenly and spiritual excellencies;
⁵ and that salvation is only and alone to be had through the believing in His name.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Sections 24.1 to 24.3.
24.4 and 24.5 are taken from Article 21 in the version of A, changing the first word from the original “*The*” to “*This*”. Please refer to the documentation of Article 21 above.

25. SAVING FAITH WITHOUT QUALIFICATIONS

¹ The preaching of the gospel to the conversion of sinners is absolutely free, no way requiring as absolutely necessary any qualifications, preparations, or terrors of the law, or preceding ministry of the law;
² but only and alone the naked soul, a sinner and ungodly, to receive Christ crucified, dead and buried, and risen again;
³ who is made a prince and a saviour for such sinners as through the gospel shall be brought to believe on Him.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 25.

26. CARRIED BY GRACE

¹ The same power that converts to faith in Christ carries on the soul through all duties, temptations, conflicts, sufferings;
² and whatsoever a believer is, he is by grace;
³ and is carried on in all obedience and temptations by the same.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 26.

27. UNITED TO GOD

- ¹ All believers are by Christ united to God;
- ² by which union God is one with them, and they are one with Him;
- ³ and all believers are the sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ,
- ⁴ to whom belong all the promises of this life, and that which is to come.

B has “*that*” as the second word in 27.3, this has been omitted in E. Other than this grammatical adjustment, there are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 27.

28. JUSTIFIED FROM ALL SIN

- ¹ Those who have union with Christ are justified from all their sins, past, present, and to come, by the blood of Christ,
- ² which justification is a gracious and full acquittance of a guilty sinner from all sin, by God, through the satisfaction that Christ has made by His death,
- ³ and this applied through faith.

In 28.1 and 28.2, E follows B, inserting “*past, present, and to come*” in 28.1 from A and also shortening (like A does) 28.2 from repeating “*all their sins*” again at the end (B has “*for all their sins*” again after the word “*death*”).

In 28.3 E follows B, which has “*and this applied (in manifestation of it) through faith*”, but leaves out the text in brackets.

29. SANCTIFIED IN OBEDIENCE

- ¹ All believers are holy and sanctified people.
- ² Sanctification is a spiritual fruit of the new covenant, and an effect of the love of God manifested in the soul,
- ³ whereby the believer presses after a heavenly and evangelical obedience to all the commands, which Christ as head and king in His new covenant has prescribed to them.

B has in 29.1 “*a holy and sanctified people*”. The OED gives as one meaning of people “*multitude*” (until the 17th century), so we need not think of the (visible or invisible) church here, but rather as context suggests of the individual sanctification of all believers. To underline this, the “*a*” is left out in E.

B has in 29.2 “*and that sanctification is a spiritual grace...*”, C has “*is a special fruit*” instead. E, especially considering Rom 6:22, has “*is a spiritual fruit*”. Also, B has “*and that*” as the first words in 29.2, these have been omitted in E.

30. THE JOY OF THE BELIEVERS

¹ All believers, through the knowledge of that justification of life given by the Father and brought forth by the blood of Christ, have as their great privilege of that new covenant:

² peace with God, reconciliation, whereby they that were afar off are made nigh by that blood, and have peace passing all understanding; yea, joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 30.

31. THE SUFFERING OF THE BELIEVERS

¹ All believers in the time of this life are in a continual warfare and combat against sin, self, the world, and the devil;

² and are liable to all manner of afflictions, tribulations and persecutions,

³ being predestinated and appointed thereunto,

⁴ and whatsoever the saints possess or enjoy of God spiritually, is by faith.

B adds to 31.4 *“and outward and temporal things are lawfully enjoyed by a civil right by them who have no faith.”*. E follows A here in not including that phrase.*

32. VICTORIOUS THROUGH CHRIST’S FAITHFULNESS AND STRENGTH

¹ The only strength by which the saints are enabled to encounter with all oppositions and trials is only by Jesus Christ, who is the captain of their salvation, being made perfect through sufferings;

² who has engaged His faithfulness and strength to assist them in all their afflictions, and to uphold them in all their temptations, and to preserve them by His power to His everlasting kingdom.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 32.

33. THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH ON EARTH

¹ Jesus Christ has here on earth a spiritual kingdom, which is His church, whom he has purchased and redeemed to Himself as a peculiar inheritance;

* The issuing congregations had been accused of denying the existence of lawful private property or of wanting to abolish it, as it was claimed to be the case among the anabaptists on the continent, at least the more enthusiastic groups of them. The confusion or even polemical equation with these groups was a frequent and fundamental problem in the public perception of the issuing congregations. To defend against the insinuation concerning private property this addition to the original text was deemed necessary in 1646.

² which church as it is visible to us is a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world by the word and Spirit of God,
³ to the visible profession of the faith of the gospel,
⁴ being baptized into that faith, and joined to the Lord,
⁵ and to each other by mutual agreement in the practical enjoyment of the ordinances commanded by Christ their head and king.

In 33.2, "*as it is visible to us*" is an addition from A, which otherwise is verbatim the same for this article except having "*the Church*" instead of "*His Church*" in 33.1. In 33.5, the second word ("*to*") has been added as repeated from 33.4.

34. THE CHURCH IS A COMMUNITY OF BLESSINGS

¹ To this church He has made his promises, gives the signs of His covenant and presence, acceptation, love, blessing and protection; here are the fountains and springs of His heavenly grace continually flowing forth to refresh and strengthen them,
² thither ought all men to come, of all estates, that acknowledge Him to be their prophet, priest and king,
³ to be enrolled amongst His household servants, to be under His heavenly conduct and government, to lead their lives in his walled sheepfold and watered garden, to have communion here with the saints,
⁴ that they may be assured that they are made meet to be partakers of their inheritance in the kingdom of God.

In Article 34, E follows A, then adds these words from B: "*acceptation*" and "*to refresh and strengthen them*" (34.1), "*assured that they are*" and "*meet*" (thus making 34.4 identical to its counterpart in B).

Please refer to the documentation of Article 35 below for more detailed information concerning the editing of Articles 34 and 35.

35. THE CHURCH IS A COMMUNITY OF SERVICE

¹ And all His servants are called thither, to present their bodies and souls, and to bring their gifts God has given them,
² so being come, they are here by himself to be bestowed in their several order, peculiar place, due use,
³ being fitly compact and knit together, according to the effectual working of every part, to the edification of itself in love.
⁴ And they are to supply each others wants, inward and outward;
⁵ and although each person has a propriety in his own estate, yet they are to supply each others wants, according as their necessities shall require,

⁶ that the name of Jesus Christ may not be blasphemed through the necessity of any in the church.

In Article 35, E follows A, then adds the words “to be” (35.2) from B; also, the full Sections 35.4 to 35.6 are an addition from B.

Concerning Articles 34 and 35: A and B are very similar in wording here, apart from the fact that B adds an appeal for mutual assistance (Sections 35.4 – 35.6).

There are, however, considerable differences in the division of the text between the two articles, and the sequence of the individual statements also shows significant dissimilarities:

A, in Article 34, affirms the church as a place of blessing, calls on all believers to join a local congregation in order to share in this blessing there, and in Article 35 urges those thus gathered to consider themselves as called to service.

B, on the other hand, does more or less reduce Article 34 to a description of the church as a place of blessing, the full article is rather short and consists only of what is 34.1 in E. In Article 35 then, B combines the blessing that comes by belonging to the congregation on the one hand with the obligation to serve on the other, and specifies the latter in an exemplary way in the newly added statement “and [they are] to supply each other’s wants...”, thus giving all the rest of E’s Article 34 and E’s complete Article 35 in one single article that is very rich in content.

The older division is much more helpful from a teaching point of view, because Article 35 in B is downright overloaded. E therefore mainly follows the division and wording of A in both articles and then adds from B in Article 35 the call to mutual assistance, as well as minor word adjustments as documented above.

36. THE CHOOSING OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

¹ Being thus joined, every church has power given them from Christ, for their wellbeing, to choose to themselves meet persons for elders and deacons, being qualified according to the word;

² for the execution of power, or duty, which Christ entrusts them with, or calls them to;

³ to be continued to the end of the world.

B has in 36.2 “among themselves”, C has “amongst themselves”, “to themselves” is from A. in 36.2, B has the words “as those which Christ has appointed in His testament for the feeding, governing, serving, and building up of His Church” which are an editorial remnant of A. A followed, instead of viewing the church offices as being elder and deacon, the fourfold structure of “pastors, teachers, elders, deacons” to which these four areas of stewardship nicely correspond. To avoid the misunderstanding of deacons being necessarily called to govern, which was not the case in the issuing congregations, E in 36.2 follows 2LCF (Chapter XXVI Par. 8).

Also, 36.3. from B, which reaffirms that the authority to choose officers rests with the local church (as stated in 36.1) with the words “none have any power to impose on them either these or any other” has been substituted with the statement concerning the permanency of the church offices from the same paragraph in 2LCF.

37. THE CHARGE TO THE ELDERS AND DEACONS

¹ The ministers lawfully called, as aforesaid, ought to continue in their calling and place according to God's ordinance, and carefully to feed the flock of God committed to them,

² not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.

B begins 37.1 with the word "*That*" which has been omitted in E. Other than this grammatical adjustment, there are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 37.

38. THE REMUNERATION OF PASTORS

¹ The due maintenance of pastors should be upheld freely by the church,

² that according to Christ's ordinance they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel by the law of Christ.

B has 38.1 "*The ministers of Christ ought to have whatsoever they shall need, supplied freely by the church*", A has "*The due maintenance of the officers aforesaid should be the free and voluntary communication of the church*". 2LCF (Chapter XXVI Par. 10) calls those officers who are to be remunerated "*pastors*". These usually are those among the presbyters, or elders, whose professional occupation it is to work for the church. There are other definitions for pastor, and other words to describe full-time ministers, but still "*pastor*" seems a reasonable choice of vocabulary today, understood by most churches to mean what it means in this article. E uses the terms "*due maintenance*" from A and "*pastors*" from 2LCF within the general sentence structure from B.

39. BAPTISM

¹ Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, given by Christ, to be dispensed upon persons professing faith, or that are made disciples;

² who upon profession of faith, and desiring of it, ought to be baptized.

³ The way and manner of the dispensing of this ordinance the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water;

⁴ it being a sign, must answer the things signified, which are the washing of the whole soul in the blood of Christ and that interest the saints have in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ;

⁵ and as certainly as the body is buried under water, and risen again, so certainly shall the bodies of the saints be raised by the power of Christ, in the day of the resurrection, to reign with Christ.

E combines the original Articles 39 and 40 of B, both concerning baptism, as its version of Article 39 and adds a new Article 40, see below. Article 41 is also affected by this additions. About these changes in general, see below, *On the Inclusion of an Article on the Lord's Supper*. In 39.2, the words "*and desiring of it*" were not in B, but come from C. B has "*...who upon profession of faith ought to be baptized, and after to partake of the Lord's Supper.*" The last part of that sentence was not present in A, and E follows A in leaving it out. For the reasoning behind this decision please also refer to *On the Inclusion of an Article on the Lord's Supper* below.

In 39.3, E follows A verbatim, this way including the statement that Scripture itself, in the way it describes actual baptisms as well in what it says about its meaning, does point to full immersion as the New Testament method. B instead only states “*The way and manner of dispensing this ordinance is dipping or plunging the body under water*”. Also, in 39.4 the words “*the washing [of] the whole soul in the blood of Christ*” are included from A, whereas B does not refer to the biblical topic of baptism as a symbol for a washing.

40. THE LORD’S SUPPER

¹ The Supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by him the same night wherein he was betrayed, to be observed in his church unto the end of the world;

² for the perpetual remembrance and shewing forth the sacrifice of himself in his death; confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits thereof; their spiritual nourishment and growth in him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him and with each other.

³ In this ordinance Christ is not offered up to his father, nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sin of the quick or dead;

⁴ but only a memorial of that one offering up of himself by himself upon the cross, once for all;

⁵ and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same.

The new Article 40 is a quote from 2LCF, which is altogether much more extensive and detailed – Chapter XXX on the Lord’s Supper alone has eight paragraphs. From these, the shortened Paragraph 1 and the beginning of Paragraph 2 have been inserted here verbatim, with the exception of the word “*churches*”, which is given in the singular instead (40.1), since this is the preferred usage of the *First London Confession* elsewhere. For more information on this addition, please refer to *On the Inclusion of an Article on the Lord’s Supper* below.

41. WHO SHOULD ADMINISTER BAPTISM AND GUIDE THE ACTION OF THE CHURCH IN THE USE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

¹ The persons designed by Christ to dispense these ordinances, the Scriptures hold forth to be preaching disciples,

² it being nowhere tied to a particular church-officer, or person extraordinarily sent, the commission to administer baptism and to guide the action of the church in the use of the Lord’s Supper is being given to them under no other consideration, but as proven disciples.

E does mostly follow the wording of A in Article 41. In 41.1, “*this ordinance*” is changed to the plural, since E writes about both ordinances, not only baptism. Also, the original “*to be a preaching disciple*” is changed to “*to be preaching disciples*” to grammatically correspond to the plural in “*persons*”.

In 41.2, “*a particular church-officer*” was originally printed in A as “*a particular church, officer*” – this seems to be a typesetting error, B and C have “*church-officer*”. For reasons of clarification, in “*the commission enjoining the administration*”, the words “*enjoining the administration*” have been substituted with a phrase referring to baptism and “*to guide the action of the church in the use of the Lord’s Supper*” These words are a quote from P (Article XIX there).

In the original, 41.2 ends with the words “*but as considered disciples*”. Since the use of “*considered*” as an adjective is rather unusual today and hence here could mistakenly be parsed as a verb form, it has been substituted by “*proven*”, since both in this context transport the meaning of being respected for being well-grounded in the faith.

For more information on the reasons for referring to the Lord’s Supper as well as to baptism in this article, please refer to *On the Inclusion of an Article on the Lord’s Supper* below.

42. THE POWER TO RECEIVE AND TO CAST OUT

¹ Christ has likewise given power to His Church to receive in, and cast out, any member that deserves it;

² and this power is given to every particular congregation, and not to one particular person, either member or officer, but in relation to the whole body, in reference to their faith and fellowship.

E follows B in the text of Article 42, inserting the first instance of the word “*particular*” in 42.2. from A.

43. ALL MEMBERS SUBJECT TO DISCIPLINE

¹ And every particular member of each church, how excellent, great, or learned soever, is subject to this censure and judgment;

² and the church ought not without great care and tenderness, and due advice, but by the rule of faith, to proceed against her members.

B has “*that*” as the second word in 43.2, this has been omitted in E. Other than this grammatical adjustment, there are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 43.

44. THE CHARGE TO THE LEADERSHIP AND THE GUARDIANSHIP OF ALL MEMBERS

¹ Christ for the keeping of this church in holy and orderly communion places some special men over the church, who by their office are to govern, oversee, visit, watch;

² so likewise for the better keeping thereof in all places by the members, He has given authority, and laid duty upon all, to watch over one another.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 44.

45. THE CHARGE TO PREACH

- ¹ Also such in the church to whom God has given gifts to interpret the Scriptures, may and ought to preach in accordance with the faith,
² and so to teach publicly the word of God, for the edification, exhortation, and comfort of the church.

B has in 45.1 “Also such to whom God has given gifts in the church, may and ought to prophecy according to the proportion of faith”. E makes three changes to this:

“Prophecy” back in the mid-17th century was also used for what we today call preaching, cf. for example the book *The Art of Prophesying with The Calling of the Ministry* by WILLIAM PERKINS (1558-1602), which is in fact a treatise on preaching. The word has been changed accordingly to avoid misunderstandings.

T in its Article 34 wisely specifies what particular kind of gifts are referred to here: “That such as God has given gifts to interpret the Scriptures...”. E does the same.

“according to the proportion of faith” is of course a quote from Rom 12:6. The Greek there would be better rendered as “in agreement with the faith” or similar – the meaning is not so much about a certain measure, but first and foremost about conforming to the faith in terms of content.

Hence, instead of “according to the proportion of faith”, E has “in accordance with the faith”.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Section 45.2.

46. NO UNTHINKING SEPARATION FROM THE CHURCH

- ¹ Thus being rightly gathered, and continuing in the obedience of the gospel of Christ, none are to separate for faults and corruptions,
² until they have in due order, and tenderness, sought redress thereof;
³ for as long as the church consists of men subject to failings, there will be difference in the true constituted church.

The original sequence of the sentence elements in Article 46 in B was different, 46.3 was (in brackets) put before 46.2. This order has been changed while keeping the passages verbatim the same. Other than this change of sequence there are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 46.

47. RELATIONS WITH OTHER CONGREGATIONS IN THE COMMON FAITH

- ¹ Although the particular congregations be distinct and several bodies, every one as a compact and knit city within itself;
² yet they are all to walk by the same rule of truth;
³ so also they by all means convenient are to have the counsel and help one of another, if necessity require it,
⁴ as members of one body, in the common faith, under Christ their head.

B begins 47.1 with the word “And” which has been omitted in E. Other than this grammatical adjustment, there are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 47.

48. CIVIL GOVERNMENT

¹ A civil magistracy is an ordinance of God, set up by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well;
² and in all lawful things commanded by them, subjection ought to be given by us in the Lord;
³ not only for wrath, but for conscience sake;
⁴ and we are to make supplications and prayers for kings and all that are in authority, that under them we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.

B has “*that*” as the second word in 48.2 as well as in 48.4, these have been omitted in E. Other than these grammatical adjustments, there are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 48.

49. OBEYING GOD RATHER THAN MEN

¹ But in case we find not the magistrate to favour us herein; yet we dare not suspend our practice, because we believe we ought to go in obedience to Christ,
² in professing the faith which was once delivered to the saints, which faith is declared in the Holy Scriptures and affirmed in this our confession,
³ and that we are to witness to the truth of the Old and New Testament unto the death, if necessity require,
⁴ in the midst of all trials and afflictions, as His saints of old have done;
⁵ not accounting our goods, lands, wives, children, fathers, mothers, brethren, sisters; yea, and our own lives dear unto us, so we may finish our course with joy;
⁶ remembering always that we ought to obey God rather than men;
⁷ who will when we have finished our course, and kept the faith, give us the crown of righteousness;
⁸ to whom we must give an account of all our actions, and no man being able to discharge us of the same.

49.2 contains a potentially misleading wording in B:

“which faith is declared in the Holy Scriptures, and this our confession of faith a part of them...”

At first glance, and without considering the context, a reader might assume that these words are intended to say that the confession is part of what is considered Holy Scripture, taking the intended meaning to be *“...and this our confession of faith **is** a part of them...”*.

Within the 1LCF, this would be utterly absurd and also mean a massive internal contradiction to the unambiguous statement of Article 8. We have no reason to believe that the editors would have regarded the confession as equivalent to Scripture, or actually would have considered it a new part of Scripture.

However, “*a part*” can be, and here is, just an archaic spelling of “*apart*” – the faith is declared in Scripture, and apart from that in the confession.

But this “*apart*” – at least today – does carry the connotation of separately, independently, individually. The confession however does not contain its statements about the Christian faith independently from Scripture: It follows Scripture, is to be judged by Scripture, and if necessary, it is to be corrected by Scripture.

E, showing this relation between Scripture and confession, thus writes “*which faith is declared in the Holy Scriptures and affirmed in this our confession*”.

50. CHRISTIANS IN CIVIL SOCIETY

- ¹ It is lawful for a Christian to be a magistrate or civil officer;
- ² and also it is lawful to take an oath, so it be in truth, and in judgment, and in righteousness, for confirmation of truth, and ending of all strife;
- ³ and by rash and vain oaths the Lord is provoked and this land mourns.

B has “*that*” as the second word in 50.3, this has been omitted in E. Other than this grammatical adjustment, there are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 50.*

51. DUTIES TOWARDS OTHERS

- ¹ We are to give unto all men whatsoever is their due, as their place, age, estate, requires;
- ² and that we defraud no man of anything, but to do unto all men, as we would they should do unto us.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 51.

52. RESURRECTION AND JUDGEMENT

- ¹ There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust,
- ² and everyone shall give an account of himself to God,
- ³ that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.

There are no differences between B and E in the text of Article 52.

* Several modern reprints have a copy error in 50.3 and write “*wrath*” instead of the original “*rash*”.

III. ON THE INCLUSION OF AN ARTICLE ON THE LORD'S SUPPER AND SUBSEQUENT MINOR AMENDMENTS

It is widely accepted (and sometimes lamented) that the *First London Confession* did not originally contain any teaching on the Lord's Supper in A and only mentions it briefly in B and C (Article 39). While it could be argued that the phrase from Article 33 about the "*mutual agreement in the practical enjoyment of the ordinances commanded by Christ*" refers to the Supper and that an original proof text attached to the words "*the signs of His covenant*" in Article 34 points to 1 Cor 11:24 and thus to the Supper, there certainly is not a lot of specific teaching about this topic in the historical editions of the 1LCF.

In this comprehensive edition however, it seemed reasonable to add an extra article on the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This was taken as an excerpt from the *Second London Confession* of 1677 which was issued by the same group of congregations, and to some extent, by the same people, as the *First*. The part of the text used, however, does not give the full dogmatic content of the 1677 confession.

The article adopted was inserted as a new Article 40. The text of the original Article 40 could easily be included in Article 39, since both deal with baptism. Thus, despite the editorial inclusion of an additional article, the number assignment of the other articles and the total number of articles could be kept in sync with B. Actually, such a procedure has a precedent in the historical editions: when the confession was revised for the second edition in 1646, the new Article 5 was added. The former Articles 7 and 8, both dealing with Holy Scripture, were combined under the number 8, so that from Article 9 onwards the counting in both editions remains the same in terms of content (except in the case of Articles 34 and 35 as well as 49 through 51 due to other editorial decisions of the time).

The inclusion of an additional article is the most severe textual change in the compilation of the 2022 edition and reflects the desire to give some biblical teaching on the Lord's Supper which the historical *First London Confession* did not. All editorial decisions concerning this revision in the combined Article 39, the new Article 40, and in having Article 41 refer not only to baptism but to the Lord's Supper as well are documented below.

CHANGES IN ARTICLE 39

As already mentioned, Article 39 of E combines Articles 39 and 40 from B, both on baptism. The original Article 40 began where the new Article 39 says “*The way and manner...*”.

The reason for combining the two is the insertion of a new Article 40 in E, taken from 2LCF (see explanations below) while retaining the numbering of the other articles.

In the first part of Article 39, i.e. in what was also the original Article 39 of B, significant textual variations of the various editions of 1LCF are to be considered in two places.

On the one hand, C has “*...who upon profession of faith, and desiring of it, ought to be baptized...*”.

The words “*and desiring of it*” are not yet present in B’s version; E includes them.

Secondly, A does not yet include a clause which is added in B and also in the subsequent editions:

“*...ought to be baptized, and after to partake of the Lord’s Supper.*”

E follows A in leaving this out. The motives for this adherence to the textual version of A require further explanation, taking into account the historical situation; especially since they are connected with the insertion of the new Article 40.

In the movement (not, or not yet, an association or denomination) of the initial seven congregations that issued the original confession, there was great unanimity on the question of an exclusive practice of credobaptism and on a Reformed understanding of salvation. This was also shared by other congregations that joined the movement later.

On other issues, such as the use of singing in worship and the practice and meaning of the laying on of hands, there were different views. Further (and more relevant here) points on which the congregations differed were the questions of whether believers who had undergone a baptism ceremony as infants but had not been baptized following their own conversion could be members of the congregation (open/closed membership), as well as whether they were allowed to participate as guests in the Lord’s Supper at the congregation (open/closed communion).

Differing views on these matters did not, however, call into question the bond between the congregations and their use of a common confession. The appendix to the 2LCF (Chapter 5) states in 1677 that “*diverse of us [...] cannot hold Church-communion, with any other than Baptized-believers, and Churches*

constituted of such” while others of the signatories testified to “*a greater liberty and freedom in our spirits*”, so no deliberate binding statement on this was included in that confession. The decision on admission to the Lord’s Table was thus left to each individual congregation.

It is therefore astonishing that, since A in 1644 made no statement on this and at the time of 2LCF both positions coexisted peacefully together, B and also C contain the aforementioned addition “*and after [to be understood as: after credobaptism] shall partake of the Lord’s Supper.*” This addition, if it had been considered as a restriction and consistently implemented, would have radically challenged the fellowship of the congregations and their leadership. While other theological disagreements did find their echo in the books and pamphlets of the time, there is no record of this happening. A more likely scenario is that it had been noticed that the confession was lacking in so far that the Lord’s Supper was not explicitly mentioned at all in A and therefore it was editorially decided that, in the sense of only a minimal intervention in the structure of the confession, it should at least find mention and a place with the added words. However, it certainly did not follow for the associated congregations that the meaning of the statement was now understood as a binding exclusion for all congregations of those baptized only as infants from participation in the celebration of the Supper. In view of the quoted statements from the appendix to 2LCF, a discussion of this would certainly not have been conducted without leaving traces in the literature.

It can be confidently assumed that the intention here was rather to point out that, as a matter of principle, the faithful celebrate the Lord’s Supper (and thus to remedy a considerable deficit of A, in which the Supper was not explicitly mentioned at all), but not to demand that all congregations only permit this after a believer’s baptism. The statement quoted above from the appendix to 2LCF remains the essential testimony on which this view is based.

Even P, which strongly holds a closed-communion viewpoint, states in Article XX that the right to participate in the celebration of the Supper is granted to every believer “*immediately*” by Jesus Christ, but that all things should be done “*in order*”, and this order demands that credobaptism precedes participation in the celebration of the Supper, and that therefore “*we*”, (that is, the congregations agreeing with the author on this issue) “*do not admit anyone to the celebration of the Supper beforehand*”. It is also clear from these formulations that the responsibility for this decision was seen in the congregations themselves.

The representative of an open-communion position in 17th century Britain most prominent today was certainly JOHN BUNYAN, the author of the famous *Pilgrim's Progress*. In his essay *Differences in Judgment About Water Baptism no Bar to Communion* of 1673, although BUNYAN was active later than B and at the time of its publication probably only was about 18 years old and not yet a Christian.

Leaving this decision to the respective congregations themselves thus corresponds to the actual practice of the movement, according to the above quotation from the appendix to 2LCF, until at least 1677, but probably far beyond.

Even today, among the congregations which advocate both believer's baptism and a Reformed understanding of salvation, there are those which are closed and those which are open concerning membership, as well as the admission to the Lord's table, whereby the latter hold in particular to the responsibility for self-examination according to 1 Cor 11:28.

As in A, E also comes without the addition made in B in this article and leaves the responsibility for the practice of the Lord's Supper with the local congregation, which under this confession can adopt either an open or a closed position. Thus, E is neither *open-communion* nor *closed-communion*, but *congregational-responsibility-communion*, thus allowing, as was the case in the 17th century, for churches of both convictions to have unity with each other as far as the use of one confession.

CHANGES IN ARTICLE 40

The text of the new Article 40 is taken from Chapter XXX of the *Second London Confession*, which in turn is formulated and structured closely along the lines of the *Westminster Confession*.

2LCF is altogether much more extensive and detailed than 1LCF. The chapter on the celebration of the Supper alone has eight paragraphs. In orientation to the scope of the statements on baptism, the celebration of the Lord's Supper should be given a roughly corresponding space in E while at the same time including the main and (for reformed believers) non-controversial statements. This has been done by reproducing the beginning of Chapter XXX from 2LCF, specifically a shortened Paragraph 1 and the first sentence of Paragraph 2 as the new Article 40. In doing so, the word "*churches*" contained in 2LCF has been rendered in the singular, i.e. as "*church*", following the preferred usage in 1LCF.

CHANGES IN ARTICLE 41

Referring to the Lord's Supper in Article 41, which originally only was concerned with the question for whom it is appropriate to baptize, is the effect of the insertion of the new Article 40 explained above, through which the celebration of the Lord's Supper in E, in contrast to B, is dealt with comprehensively. It is only consistent for the confession to name the persons already described by the original 1LCF as being allowed to perform the act of baptism in E also as responsible for the Lord's Supper as well, since both are likewise ordinances of Christ for which the same prerequisites, mentioned here in Article 41, ought to be present.

P also sees this connection, although a stronger reference to being an elder is made there in the choice of words. In this regard, Article XIX of P states:

“And such preachers of the gospel may not only lawfully administer baptism unto believers, and guide the action of the church in the use of the supper, but may also call upon the churches, and advise them...”

(COX, in the further course of his Article XIX, goes into aspects of the investiture of elders that are not directly relevant to the question under consideration here. However, this shows that the group around him at least wanted to prevent a possible misunderstanding of arbitrariness in the administration of Christ's ordinances, and presumably even saw a tendential link to the office of elder).

The version of Article 41 in E, mostly following A, emphasizes the responsibility of congregations to examine for themselves in their practice and circumstances and according to scripture who is a *“proven disciple”*.

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