

SEPARATIST PRINCIPLES

1. We believe and confess the Trinity of God, in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
2. The fall of Adam and of all mankind, with the loss thereby of the likeness of God in them.
3. The return through Christ to God, our proper and lawful Father.
4. The Holy Scriptures as the rule of our lives, and the touchstone of truth and falsehood. All our other principles derive from these, and govern our conduct in the religious, spiritual and natural life.
5. All ceremonies are banished from among us, and are declared to be useless and harmful, and this is the chief cause our separation.
6. We render to no mortal honors due only to God, such as uncovering the head, bending the knees, and the like. We address everyone as Ehou ("du").
7. We separate ourselves from all ecclesiastical constitutions and ties, because the life of a Christian never requires sectarianism, while set forms create sectarian divisions.
8. Our marriages are contracted by mutual consent before witnesses. They are then notified to the civil authorities; therefore, entirely without priestly union or ceremony.
9. All intercourse of the sexes, except that which is necessary for the perpetuation of the race, we hold to be sinful and contrary to the command of God; entire abstinence, or complete chastity, is however, still better.
10. Therefore, we cannot send our children into our schools of Babylon, because these oppose our principles. Lacking in morality and religion, the village schools breed crowds of idlers, who, given good opportunity in their meetings, teach their fellow students wickedness and debauchery.
11. We cannot serve the state as soldiers, because a Christian cannot murder his enemy, much less his friend.
12. We recognize the temporal authority as absolutely necessary to maintain order, to protect the good and honest and to punish the wrongdoers; no one can prove us to be unfaithful to the state, but rather the contrary.

These, therefore, are the principles which for ten years have brought upon us so many and varied persecutions. We have, indeed, called out loudly for justice, but our situation has been little

bettered, because our powerful enemies still possess those decrees which were issued against us, and by means of which they have deprived many families of their property and liberty because of the hatred and envy they bear toward us.

No one can imagine the nature of the situation in which the Separatist is placed. How can a man who has for his goal merely the salvation of his soul, and the welfare of his fellow believers, how can he be so cruelly misunderstood, so barbarously handled -- and this his only crime, that he has followed the dictates of his conscience. It is not murder, thievery, adultery, whoring or like vices which have set the Separatist apart; neither the civil nor the criminal courts have proofs of the things of which our enemies accuse us. Our enemies made it difficult for us, and raised obstacles to prevent us from appealing to the higher courts, and when we did, our Low German dialect was pronounced too strange, and therefore the court costs were so great that we can hardly afford to risk a similar experience. But we now complain of the injuries we have endured; they have tormented us because we have clung to the truth in speech and act. Are subjects not of greater service to the state, when they, for the sake of God and their conscience, serve the state faithfully and honestly, rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's, rather than when they are false, adulterous, and untrue, and when they honor their superiors slavishly like the heathen? We can testify before God and conscience, that our purposes were never other than these: to forsake the godless life of the world, to fulfill faithfully our duties toward God and man, to live in an inner circle of love and friendship, and in so doing, find compensation for the tribulations of the pilgrim life.

The priests, as the creators of the ceremonies, were the first to sound the alarm because we recognized their spurious wares, and we, therefore, no longer permitted them to give us absolution, thus exposing their tottering reputation. They invented the most ridiculous and absurd tales to make us suspect before the orthodox, and in this they were successful, for not only the masses, but also the authorities, were won over by them, to the end that our liberty, women and children, homes and possessions, for the greater part have been taken from us.

We can testify to this end to many other things as the most holy truth by our affirmation, which in every case is as valid as an oath.

Note: The above was written in Germany some time before 1816. It has been taken from Nixon, pp. 13-15.