

ABTEN Confession of Faith (2020)

I. **Holy Scripture**

- A. We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men through divine inspiration to the extent that the Holy Spirit moved the human authors in the selection of each word. This process did not compromise the unique personalities or individual vocabularies of the human authors.¹ The Bible, therefore, is a perfect treasure of divine instruction to all humanity.² It has God for its author, salvation for its end,³ and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.⁴ As such, Scripture is the only sufficient, certain, and infallible rule of all saving knowledge, faith, and obedience.

Although creation and the evidence of nature display the existence as well as the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, leaving all human beings without excuse for their unbelief; yet the light of creation is not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will which is necessary for salvation. Therefore, God determined at different times and in different ways to reveal himself, and to declare his will to his church.⁵ Afterward, in order better to preserve and to make known the truth, and to protect and preserve the Church against the attacks of the world, the corrupting influence of the flesh, and the schemes of the Devil, to commit his revelation completely and entirely to writing.

This decision makes Holy Scripture to be essential in order to know the will of God since those former ways of God's revealing his will to his people have now ceased.⁶ It is therefore, the true center of Christian union and the standard by which all human behavior, creeds and confessions, and human philosophies and opinions should be evaluated.⁷

- B. Under the name of Holy Scripture, or the Word of God written, are all the books of the Old and New Testaments, which are these:

OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings, II Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

¹ 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:13

² 2 Peter 1:31; 2 Samuel 23:2; Acts 1:16; Acts 3:20-21; John 10:35; Luke 16:29-31; Psalm 119; Psalm 111; Romans 3:1-2.

³ 2 Timothy 3:15; I Peter 1:10-12; Acts 11:14; Romans 1:16; Mark 16:16; John 5:34-39

⁴ Proverbs 30:5-6; John 17:17; Revelation 22:18-19; Romans 3:4

⁵ Hebrews 1:1

⁶ Proverbs 22:19-21; Romans 15:4.

⁷ I John 4:1; Isaiah 8:20; Philippians 3:16.

OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, The Acts of the Apostles, Epistle to the Romans, I Corinthians, II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Thessalonians, II Thessalonians, I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, The Epistle to the Hebrews, Epistle of James, The first and second Epistles of Peter, The first, second, and third Epistles of John, The Epistle of Jude, Revelation

All of which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.⁸

- C. We reject the books known collectively as the Apocrypha as being of divine inspiration. As such, they and any other writings, texts, or proclamations besides the books of the Old and New Testaments are not of divine inspiration. Therefore, they have no part in the canon of Scripture, and therefore have no authority over the church of God. Nor are they approved or to be used as anything other than as human writings.⁹
- D. The authority of Holy Scripture, from which it ought to be believed and accepted as the Word of God, does not require the testimony or ratification by human beings nor the councils or declarations of any church by which it derives its authority. Rather, Scripture derives its authority entirely from God (who is truth itself), who is the divine author. Therefore, we are to receive it because it is God's self-revelation to all mankind.¹⁰
- E. The Holy Scriptures contain the entirety of what is necessary to extol the glory of God, for the salvation of humanity, and for faith and life. Nothing at any time should be added thereto, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or the traditions of men.¹¹

Nonetheless, we acknowledge the necessity for the inward illumination of the Spirit of God for the salvific understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word.¹² We also maintain that there are certain states of affairs concerning the worship of God and the ordering of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be governed by the light of nature and Christian good judgment, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.¹³

- F. Not every part of Scripture is equally easy to understand nor clear in the author's intended meaning.¹⁴ However, what is necessary to be understood, believed, and followed for salvation is clearly taught and expounded in one section of Scripture or another. As a result,

⁸ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

⁹ Luke 24:27, 44; Romans 3:1-2

¹⁰ 2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; I John 5:9

¹¹ 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Galatians 1:8-9

¹² John 6:45; I Corinthians 2:9-12,

¹³ I Corinthians 11:13-14; I Corinthians 14:26, 40

¹⁴ 2 Peter 3:16.

everyone, educated and non-educated, literate and nonliterate, may obtain an understanding of Scripture's content sufficient to grasp the essential message of what the Word of God teaches.¹⁵

- G. The people of God are expected to read the Scriptures for themselves and to search them to verify every word that is proclaimed as following the counsel of God.¹⁶ It is therefore incumbent upon the church, by means of those who are so trained and skilled, to make the Scriptures accessible to everyone in the local language spoken by the people.¹⁷

Since the Holy Spirit inspired the human authors in Hebrew and Aramaic in the Old Testament and in Greek in the New Testament, it is important for pastors and church leaders to search the Scriptures in these original languages when possible.¹⁸ Additionally, these pastors and church leaders must be equipped with sound tools for biblical interpretation. The Scriptures should be accessible to all within the church in their local language.

- H. The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.¹⁹
- I. Scripture is the supreme arbiter by which the church settles all matters and disputes of doctrine and practice, evaluates the decisions of church councils, the opinions of writers both ancient and contemporary, and the public proclamations of individuals claiming to speak by the unction of the Holy Spirit.²⁰
- J. Scripture is the Word of God written. When, in the course of making Scripture accessible to peoples and groups who do not have a written language, it is necessary to proclaim Scripture through various means comprehensible and accessible to them. Whatever manner employed, be it through oral proclamation, audio recordings, or through various and sundry devices, such disseminations of the content of Scripture are not the equivalent of the Word of God written. Rather, such disseminations are the proclamation of the written Word that is extolled. It should be the earnest expectation of the church to make Scripture as the written word of God available to all peoples, regardless of their attainment in literacy. Where literacy is lacking, the church should endeavor to make literacy available to the general population.

¹⁵Psalm 19:7; Psalm 119:30

¹⁶John 5:39; Acts 17:10-12

¹⁷ I Corinthians 14:6, 9, 11-12, 24

¹⁸ Isaiah 8:20

¹⁹ 2 Peter 1:20-21; Acts 15:15-16

²⁰ Matthew 22:29, 31-32

II. God

A. The Lord our God is the only true and living God.²¹ Apart from the God of the Bible, there is no other God; all other claims to God apart from the revelation of Scripture, be they from other traditions apart from the Bible or from the light of nature, are defective.

God is self-existent in that He subsists in and of Himself.²² God, in his essence, cannot be comprehended by any creaturely wisdom except by Himself.²³ God is Spirit,²⁴ invisible, without a body, parts, or passions, who alone possesses immortality in Himself, and dwells in unapproachable light.²⁵

God is immutable,²⁶ immense,²⁷ eternal,²⁸ almighty, infinite in every quality and attribute He possesses, including holiness,²⁹ wisdom, free, and absolute.

God works all things according to the counsel of His will for his own glory.³⁰ God is loving, gracious, merciful, longsuffering, full of goodness and truth, forgiving of sin and transgressions.³¹

B. God is, in himself, self-sufficient. All life,³² glory,³³ goodness, and blessedness³⁴ originate in Himself. The eternal God is not dependent upon any creature that he has made, nor does He derive glory from them.³⁵ Rather, God manifests His own glory in, by, unto, and upon His

²¹ I Corinthians 8:4, 6; Deuteronomy 6:4

²² Jeremiah 10:10; Isaiah 48:12

²³ Exodus 3:14

²⁴ John 4:24

²⁵ I Timothy 1:17; Deuteronomy 4:15-16

²⁶ Malachi 3:6

²⁷ I Kings 8:27; Jeremiah 23:23

²⁸ Psalm 90:2

²⁹ Isaiah 6:3

³⁰ Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 46:10

³¹ Exodus 34:6-7

³² John 5:26

³³ Psalm 148:13

³⁴ I Chronicles 29:10

creatures. He and he alone is the source of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things.³⁶ God alone possesses sovereign dominion over all creatures, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatever is according to His divine will and purpose.³⁷ God is all-knowing; His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His own creatures.³⁸ Angels and all humanity thereby owe Him whatever worship, service, and obedience that He requires of them as their Creator.³⁹

C. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,⁴⁰ with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. All infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God. He is not to be divided in nature and being but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations. From such relations, the doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God and our reliance on Him.

1. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace.⁴¹ He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise.⁴² God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.⁴³ He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.⁴⁴

2. God the Son

³⁵ Job 22:2-3

³⁶ Romans 11:34-36

³⁷ Daniel 4:25, 34-35

³⁸ Psalm 147:5; Psalm 139:1-4; Psalm 44:21; I Chronicles 28:9

³⁹ Psalm 75:1; I Chronicles 16:28; Ephesians 1:6

⁴⁰ Matthew 28:19

⁴¹ Genesis 1:1, 27; Genesis 2:7

⁴² Exodus 3:14; Psalm 147:5; Proverbs 3:19; Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16

⁴³ Romans 8:14-15; Galatians 4:6; I Peter 1:17

⁴⁴ Ephesians 4:6

Christ is the eternal Son of God.⁴⁵ At His incarnation, He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.⁴⁶ Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin.⁴⁷ He honoured the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin.⁴⁸ He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion.⁴⁹ He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God⁵⁰ where He is the One Mediator,⁵¹ fully God,⁵² fully man,⁵³ in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man.⁵⁴ He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission.⁵⁵ He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.⁵⁶

3. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine.⁵⁷ As the third person of the Trinity, He is not merely a power or force but possesses the attributes of personhood including personality, will, and emotion.

He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures.⁵⁸ While the Holy Spirit may prompt or impress believers to act today, He does not give new authoritative revelation – neither written, nor spoken, nor through dreams and visions that is equal to or supersedes the word of God as it is recorded in the closed canon of Scripture.

⁴⁵ Psalm 2:7-12; Psalm 110:1-7; John 1:1-18; John 20:28

⁴⁶ Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23

⁴⁷ I Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 4:14-15

⁴⁸ Romans 3:23-26; Romans 5:6-21; Romans 10:4

⁴⁹ John 20:1-20; Acts 1:9

⁵⁰ Ephesians 1:20

⁵¹ I Timothy 2:5-6

⁵² Colossians 2:9

⁵³ John 1:14; I Timothy 2:5; Philippians 2:7

⁵⁴ I Corinthians 15:1-8; Galatians 4:4-5

⁵⁵ Acts 1:9-11; I Thessalonians 4:14-18; I Corinthians 15:24-28

⁵⁶ Romans 8:1-3, 9-11

⁵⁷ Genesis 1:2; Acts 5:3-4

⁵⁸ 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21

Through illumination He enables all believers to understand the truth of Scripture.⁵⁹ He exalts Christ.⁶⁰ He convicts humankind of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.⁶¹ He calls people to the Savior, and effects regeneration.⁶²

At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ.⁶³ As such there is no subsequent act of grace variously known as a “second blessing” or “deeper life.”

He cultivates Christian character⁶⁴ and comforts believers.⁶⁵ He enlightens and empowers every believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

The Holy Spirit bestows the spiritual gifts by which believers serve God through the edification of His church.⁶⁶ The Holy Spirit is the giver of these gifts. These gifts cannot be given by the will of a person nor can they be taught or learned.

The Holy Spirit is free to give the gifts of healing, deliverance, prophecy, speaking in tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. However, the Spirit is not bound by anything outside His own free will.⁶⁷ The Spirit gives these gifts as He wills, but these gifts will always be practiced in a way that is consistent with Scripture and never practiced in the local church outside of the bounds of Scripture. Any practice related to these gifts that are against the standards in the Bible, like speaking in a language that is not a real human language or speaking in tongues without an interpreter, is a violation of the word of God and means that the “gift” is false. Such miraculous free acts of God cannot be planned, demanded, or anticipated. Additionally, these acts are for the glory of God and not for the glory of the one through whom God performs these miracles. Anyone seeking to take credit for the work of the Holy Spirit dishonours the Spirit through whom the gifts are given and is guilty of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸

⁵⁹ John 14:26;

⁶⁰ John 16:14

⁶¹ John 16:7-13

⁶² Ezekiel 36:26-27; Ezekiel 37:14; John 3:5-8; Romans 8:9-11; Titus 3:5-6

⁶³ I Corinthians 12:13; Matthew 3:11

⁶⁴ Galatians 5:22-23

⁶⁵ John 14:16-17; Romans 8:14-16

⁶⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:3-11

⁶⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:4

⁶⁸ Matthew 12:22-32; 1 John 5:6

God, in His sovereignty, may choose to heal through various means. These means include prayer, as well as medications and surgeries. Irrespective of all human efforts to bring about healing and achieve relief and comfort, it is God who heals. In all circumstances of sickness and when overwhelmed by health issues, God strengthens and builds up believers as they pray and hope, and even comforts them in the dark hour of sickness and death.

The presence of demonic forces and principalities is real. The response of the Church to those under the dominion of evil spirits is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Spirit-filled believers should have no fear of demonic possession or oppression.

While prophecy is not primarily foretelling but forthtelling, prophecy and all proclamation is subject to evaluation and acceptance or rejection by the members of the local congregation with Scripture as supreme authority.

Speaking in and interpreting tongues, like all spiritual gifts, are for the building up of the church and not for the elevation of the individual recipient of that gift. Additionally, the manifestation of tongues is not necessarily an indication of the Holy Spirit's work or indwelling.

He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ.⁶⁹ The personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not primarily now manifested by the ability to accomplish miraculous feats such as hearing heavenly voices, receiving direct revelation, or speaking in tongues. Rather, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is manifested through the fruit of the Spirit.

He enlightens and empowers every believer and the church in worship,⁷⁰ evangelism,⁷¹ and service.⁷²

III. Humankind

A. God created mankind as male and female, in His own image.⁷³ As God's image bearers, human beings possess both souls and bodies,⁷⁴ and exhibiting knowledge,

⁶⁹ Ephesians 1:13-14

⁷⁰ John 4:23-24; Philippians 4:3

⁷¹ Luke 12:11-12

⁷² Romans 12:1

⁷³ Genesis 1:27

⁷⁴ Genesis 2:7; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Matthew 10:28

righteousness, and holiness.⁷⁵ Human beings have the law of God written in their hearts,⁷⁶ and possessed the power to fulfill it in his original and uncorrupted state, and yet under a possibility of sinning, according to the freedom of their will, which was subject to change.⁷⁷

The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man;⁷⁸ therefore, every person of every race and gender possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.⁷⁹

- B. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin.⁸⁰ Therefore, all humankind are born transgressors and are under God's just condemnation.⁸¹ The reality of this condemnation is manifest as soon as humankind exhibits the intellectual, emotional, and physical capacities for moral action. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God.⁸²

⁷⁵ Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 1:26

⁷⁶ Romans 2:14

⁷⁷ Genesis 3:6

⁷⁸ I Corinthians 15:3-4

⁷⁹ Genesis 9:6; Genesis 2:18"

⁸⁰ Genesis 3:1-24; Ephesians 2:1-3

⁸¹ Psalm 51:5; Romans 1:18-32

⁸² Ephesians 2:4-10; Titus 3:5-6

IV. Salvation

Salvation, deliverance by God's grace from the wrath of God justly deserved by sinful humanity,⁸³ is the activity of God that involves the redemption of the whole person.⁸⁴ Jesus Christ, by his own blood, obtained eternal redemption for the believer.⁸⁵ Neither "the name of Jesus" nor "the blood of Jesus" should be treated like a talisman or fetish. They do not operate in a magical way but instead by God's grace through faith.

The free offer of salvation is to be proclaimed to all people.⁸⁶ Those who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in repentance and faith shall receive salvation as the gift of God.⁸⁷ Those who receive salvation are united to Christ through the bond of the Holy Spirit.

This spiritual union with Christ involves regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.⁸⁸

A. Union with Christ All who express faith and repentance in Jesus Christ are united to Him.⁸⁹ This union is a profound mystery, and, for this reason, is often described as a mystical union.⁹⁰ The spiritual bonds between Christ and believers in this union are two-fold: the Holy Spirit from Christ and faith on the part of believers.⁹¹ Christ renews believers through the Spirit and believers respond in repentance and faith.⁹² Scripture describes this union with many expressions, including a vine and the branches,⁹³ a building and the foundation,⁹⁴ the

⁸³ John 3:36; Romans 5:9; I Thessalonians 1:10; I Thessalonians 5:9

⁸⁴ Romans 6:5-6; I Corinthians 6:19-20; Revelation 20:6

⁸⁵ Genesis 3:15; Matthew 1:21; Romans 3:23-25; Romans 5:8-10; Romans 8:1-18; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 2:8-22; Hebrews 5:8-9

⁸⁶ Genesis 12:1-3; Matthew 24:14; Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 1:68-69; Luke 2:28-32; Acts 2:21; Acts 15:11; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 1:16-18; Romans 4:3-25; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 6:15; Romans 10:13; Hebrews 5:8-9; Revelation 7:9

⁸⁷ Isaiah 30:15; Matthew 3:8; Matthew 21:32; Luke 5:31-32; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 5:31; Acts 20:21; Romans 2:4; Romans 10:9-10; 2 Corinthians 7:9; Revelation 3:3

⁸⁸ Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5

⁸⁹ Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 1:3-14

⁹⁰ Ephesians 5:32

⁹¹ Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 6:17; 2 Corinthians 13:5

⁹² John 3:5-8; Titus 3:5-8

⁹³ John 15:1-11

⁹⁴ Ephesians 2:19-22

union between a husband and a wife,⁹⁵ and the union between the head and the parts of the body.⁹⁶

Believers participate with Christ in his suffering, death, and resurrection.⁹⁷ Believers also experience Christ's victories through their union with him, being blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.⁹⁸ Believers thus share in Christ's victories over the principalities and powers, over the world, the grave, and the flesh.⁹⁹ Union with Christ is what confers all other aspects of redemption, including regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification.¹⁰⁰

- B. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creations in Christ Jesus.¹⁰¹ It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰² Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.¹⁰³ Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God.¹⁰⁴ Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.¹⁰⁵
- C. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ.¹⁰⁶ Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁵ Ephesians 5:25-32

⁹⁶ Romans 12:4-8; I Corinthians 12:27-31; Ephesians 4:15-16

⁹⁷ Romans 6:1-8

⁹⁸ Ephesians 1:3

⁹⁹ Romans 8:35-39

¹⁰⁰ Ephesians 1:7-8a

¹⁰¹ John 3:3-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁰² John 16:7-8; 2 Corinthians 3:15-18

¹⁰³ Psalm 7:12-13; Matthew 21:32; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 15:1-7; Luke 18:9-14; Acts 20:21

¹⁰⁴ Jeremiah 31:19; Luke 17:3-4; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10

¹⁰⁵ John 5:24; John 3:16; John 6:47; Romans 10:17; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 11:1, 6

¹⁰⁶ Romans 3:23-30; Romans 4:5; Galatians 2:16; Galatians 3:24; Romans 5:15-17

¹⁰⁷ Romans 5:1

- D. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes. All believers are enabled to progress toward holiness, which results in moral and spiritual maturity, through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.¹⁰⁸ By the grace of God, growth in holiness should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.¹⁰⁹
- E. Glorification is the end goal of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.¹¹⁰

V. Election

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners.¹¹¹ Election is consistent with the free agency of man and comprehends all the means in connection with the end.¹¹² It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable.¹¹³ Since election is a demonstration of God's grace, it excludes boasting and promotes humility among believers.¹¹⁴

All true believers endure to the end.¹¹⁵ Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end.¹¹⁶ Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation,¹¹⁷ whereby they grieve the Spirit,¹¹⁸ impair their graces and comforts,¹¹⁹ and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal

¹⁰⁸ I Corinthians 1:2; I Corinthians 1:30; Hebrews 10:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; I Peter 1:2

¹⁰⁹ Leviticus 20:7; Romans 6:1-23; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Philippians 2:12; 2 Peter 3:18.

¹¹⁰ Romans 8:29-30; I Corinthians 15:51-57; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Colossians 3:4; I Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 2 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 9:27-28; I Peter 1:4-5; I John 3:2

¹¹¹ Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:3-5; Ephesians 2:1-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9; John 15:16; John 17:6

¹¹² 2 Peter 1:10; Romans 10:13-15; Philippians 2:12-13; Proverbs 16:9

¹¹³ Exodus 33:19; Romans 9:15-24; Romans 11:1-7; Ephesians 3:1-11

¹¹⁴ Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Deuteronomy 9:4-6; I Corinthians 1:26-31

¹¹⁵ John 10:28-29; Romans 8:28-30; Philippians 1:6; I Peter 1:5

¹¹⁶ I Corinthians 1:6-9; I John 3:9

¹¹⁷ Matthew 26:70, 72, 74

¹¹⁸ Ephesians 4:30

¹¹⁹ Psalm 51:8, 10, 12

judgments on themselves;¹²⁰ yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.¹²¹

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers,¹²² associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel;¹²³ observing the two ordinances of Christ,¹²⁴ governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.¹²⁵ Each church operates under the Lordship of Christ through congregational processes.¹²⁶ In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord through the local church membership exercising accountability that is both preventative and restorative.¹²⁷

Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.¹²⁸ While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to biblically qualified men. These qualifications include Christian maturity and integrity as well as the ability to faithfully teach the Bible, lead your family well, refute false teaching, and lead the Church of God.¹²⁹

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.¹³⁰

¹²⁰ 2 Peter 2:2

¹²¹ 2 Timothy 1:12-14

¹²² Acts 2:41-42, 47; Acts 5:11-14; Revelation 2-3

¹²³ Acts 2:42; Philippians 1:3-5; Philemon 6

¹²⁴ Acts 16:30-33; I Corinthians 11:26

¹²⁵ Psalm 67:1-7; Matthew 28:19-20

¹²⁶ Acts 6:3-6

¹²⁷ Galatians 6:1; Titus 2:15; Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5:13; Titus 1:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; Revelation 2:2

¹²⁸ Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:1-13

¹²⁹ I Timothy 2:9-14; I Timothy 3:1-7; I Corinthians 14:34-35

¹³⁰ Ephesians 1:10, 22-23; Ephesians 5:23, 27, 32; Colossians 1:18; Psalm 2:8; Romans 15:9-12; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Revelation 7:9; Revelation 21:2-3

VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.¹³¹ It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus.¹³² It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead.¹³³ Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.¹³⁴

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.¹³⁵

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day.¹³⁶ It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private.¹³⁷ Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.¹³⁸

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over all creation and His particular kingship over all people who willfully acknowledge Him as their King.¹³⁹ Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁰ Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will

¹³¹ Matthew 3:13-17; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; Acts 8:35-39; Acts 16:30-33

¹³² Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12

¹³³ Romans 6:8; 2 Timothy 2:11

¹³⁴ Acts 2:38-42; 1 Corinthians 12:13

¹³⁵ Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 21; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Revelation 19:6-9

¹³⁶ Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-2; Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 2:27-28; Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3, 34-36; John 4:21-24; John 20:1, 19-28; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Revelation 1:10

¹³⁷ Colossians 3:16; Revelation 1:10

¹³⁸ Romans 14:5-10; Colossians 2:16

¹³⁹ Genesis 1:1; 1 Chronicles 29:11; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:14-15; John 18:36; 1 Timothy 1:17.

¹⁴⁰ Matthew 19:42; Luke 24:42; John 3:3; Acts 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; Colossians 1:13

be done on earth.¹⁴¹ The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.¹⁴²

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end.¹⁴³ According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth;¹⁴⁴ the dead will be raised;¹⁴⁵ and Christ will judge all men in righteousness.¹⁴⁶ The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment.¹⁴⁷ The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.¹⁴⁸

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations.¹⁴⁹ The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others.¹⁵⁰

Missionary efforts on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ.¹⁵¹ The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations.¹⁵² It is the duty of every child of God to

¹⁴¹ Zechariah 14:9; Matthew 6:9-10; Acts 1:6-7; 1 Peter 2:4-10

¹⁴² Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Hebrews 11:10, 16; Hebrews 12:28

¹⁴³ Isaiah 2:4; Isaiah 11:9; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, 35-58; 2 Peter 3:7-18; Jude 14; Revelation 20:1-22:13

¹⁴⁴ Matthew 16:27; Matthew 24:27; Matthew 26:64; Luke 17:22-37; Luke 21:27-28; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; 1 Timothy 6:14; Titus 2:13; James 5:8

¹⁴⁵ Isaiah 26:19; Revelation 1:18

¹⁴⁶ Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁴⁷ Matthew 18:8-9; Mark 8:38; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 12:40, 47-48; Luke 16:19-26; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-12

¹⁴⁸ Matthew 19:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; Hebrews 9:27-28; 1 John 2:28; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 3:11

¹⁴⁹ Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-53; John 20:21; Acts 1:8, 13: 2-3; 1 Peter 2:4-10

¹⁵⁰ Acts 2; Ephesians 3:1-11

¹⁵¹ Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 22:9-10; John 14:11-12; John 15:7-8, 16; Hebrews 11:39-12:2

¹⁵² Matthew 24:14; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:8

seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.¹⁵³

XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence.¹⁵⁴ In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.¹⁵⁵ All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage.¹⁵⁶ The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches.¹⁵⁷ An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people. Authentic Christian education should impact the learner intellectually, spiritually, and in practice.¹⁵⁸

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility.¹⁵⁹ Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute.¹⁶⁰ The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.¹⁶¹

XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual.¹⁶² We owe all that we are and have to Him.¹⁶³ Christians have a spiritual debt to the whole world, a sacred trust in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions.¹⁶⁴ They are therefore under obligation to serve Him

¹⁵³Acts 8:26-40; Romans 10: 13-15; 2 Timothy 4:5

¹⁵⁴Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalm 19:7ff; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff, 4:1-10; 8:1-7, 11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19

¹⁵⁵Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff; Luke 2:40; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3, 8-9; James 1:5

¹⁵⁶Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalm 19:7ff; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff, 4:1-10; 8:1-7, 11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19

¹⁵⁷Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁵⁸Ephesians 4:11-16; James 3:17

¹⁵⁹1 Corinthians 1:18-31

¹⁶⁰Hebrews 5:12-6:3

¹⁶¹1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2:15; 3:14-17

¹⁶²Deuteronomy 8:18; Acts 17:24-25

¹⁶³Genesis 14:20; Luke 12:13-21

¹⁶⁴Matthew 6:19-21; Acts 2:44-47; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 12:15

with their time, talents, and material possessions¹⁶⁵; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others.¹⁶⁶ According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.¹⁶⁷

XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God.¹⁶⁸ Such organizations have no governing authority over one another or over the churches.

All such organizations are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to promote, combine, and direct the energies of our people and local autonomous churches in the most effective manner.¹⁶⁹

Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom.¹⁷⁰

Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people.¹⁷¹

Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in Scripture.¹⁷²

XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society.¹⁷³ Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among people can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁵Leviticus 27:30-32; Malachi 3:8-12; Romans 6:6-22; 1 Peter 1:18-19

¹⁶⁶Matthew 23:23; 25:14-29; Acts 5:1-11; 20:35; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁶⁷Matthew 6:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Philippians 4:10-19

¹⁶⁸Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthews 10:5-15; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff

¹⁶⁹Acts 4:4:31-37; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; Ephesians 4:1-6

¹⁷⁰Acts 13:2-3; 15:1-35

¹⁷¹2 Corinthians 8-9; Philippians 1:15-18

¹⁷²Galatians 1:6-10

¹⁷³Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16

¹⁷⁴Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; John 15:12; 17:15; 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, premarital and extramarital sex, homosexuality, transgenderism, pedophilia, and pornography.¹⁷⁵

We should work to provide for the widowed, orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick.¹⁷⁶ We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.

Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love.¹⁷⁷ In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all people of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.¹⁷⁸

XVI. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it.¹⁷⁹ Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends.¹⁸⁰ In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others.

Since civil government is ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience to them in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God.¹⁸¹ The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all people, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

¹⁷⁵Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 1:18—32; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; Galatians 3:26-28

¹⁷⁶Matthew 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; James 1:27; 2:8

¹⁷⁷Romans 12-14; Philemon

¹⁷⁸Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12

¹⁷⁹John 8:36; Romans 6:1-2; Galatians 5:1,13; James 4:12

¹⁸⁰Romans 13:1-7

¹⁸¹Matthew 22:21; Acts 4:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:1-2; 1 Peter 2:12-17

XVII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society.¹⁸² It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

There are only two genders – male and female. Gender is a gift from God and is determined by Him and revealed at birth. Marriage is the union of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime.¹⁸³ It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.¹⁸⁴

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image.¹⁸⁵ The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people.¹⁸⁶ A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church.¹⁸⁷ He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family.¹⁸⁸ A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.¹⁸⁹ She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helpmate in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.¹⁹⁰

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord.¹⁹¹ Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth.¹⁹² Children are to honor and obey their parents.¹⁹³

¹⁸²Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20

¹⁸³Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12

¹⁸⁴Proverbs 5:15-20; Ecclesiastes 9:9; 1 Corinthians 7:1-6; Hebrews 13:4

¹⁸⁵Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20

¹⁸⁶Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

¹⁸⁷Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Peter 3:1-7

¹⁸⁸1 Timothy 5:8,14

¹⁸⁹Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-21; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7

¹⁹⁰Genesis 1:27; Proverbs 12:4; 18:22; 31:10-31

¹⁹¹1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 6:20-22; 17:6

¹⁹²Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:1-8; Proverbs 13:24; 22:6, 15; Matthew 18:2-5; 2 Timothy 1:3-5;

¹⁹³Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-4

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