

Baptist Faith and Message 2000

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. 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. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. 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. He honored 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. 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. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. 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. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's

creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. 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. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. 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. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39;

10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. 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. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, 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. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

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.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 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. 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. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

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.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. 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. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

X. Last Things

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

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

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. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort 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. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to 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.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. 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. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and

never absolute. 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.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. 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.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

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. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. 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. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. 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 the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

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. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men 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. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. 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. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men 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.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

XVII. 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. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should

be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. 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 men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XVIII. The Family

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

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. 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.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. 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. 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 helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. 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. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Pentecostal Statement of Faith (Church of God)

1. We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and new Testaments, in their original writing, as fully inspired of God and accept them as the supreme and final authority for faith and life.
2. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. We believe that Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary and is true God and true man.
4. We believe that God created man in His own image; that man sinned and thereby incurred the penalty of sin which is death physically and spiritually; that all human beings inherit a sinful nature which issues (in the case of those who reach moral responsibility) in actual transgression involving personal guilt.
5. With regards to sexual behaviour, we believe in heterosexual relationships between a natural man and a natural woman within the confines of lawful matrimony. Adherence to this stated principle of sexual behaviour is an inherent requirement with membership of the Pentecostal Protestant Church.
6. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins a substitutionary sacrifice according to the Scriptures and that all who believe in Him are justified on the grounds of His shed blood.
7. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus, His ascension into Heaven, and His present life as our High Priest and Advocate.
8. We believe in the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ.
9. We believe that all who repent of their sin and receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith are born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God.
10. We believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit, empowering and equipping believers for service, with the accompanying supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit; and in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. We believe in the divinely ordained ministries of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher.
11. With regards to submission to authority, we believe in the principle of being in authority because you are under authority. As such, it is understood that membership shall be subject to submission to authority in matters pertaining to church governance, doctrine and personal behaviour.
12. We believe in the resurrection of both the just and the unjust, the eternal blessedness of the redeemed, and the eternal banishment of those who have rejected the offer of salvation.
13. We believe that the one true church is the whole company of those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit; that the local church on earth should take its character from this concept of the Church spiritual and therefore, that the new birth and personal confession of Christ are essentials of church membership.
14. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ appointed two ordinances - Baptism in water and the Lord's Supper to be observed as acts of obedience and as perpetual witnesses to the cardinal facts of the Christian faith, that Baptism is the immersion of the believer in water as a confession of identification with Christ in burial and resurrection and that the Lord's

Supper is the partaking of the emblems symbolic of the Saviour's broken body and shed blood, in remembrance of His sacrificial death, until he comes.

15. We believe that divine healing was provided for in the Old and New Testament and is an integral part of the Gospel.
16. We believe that the Bible teaches that without holiness no man can see the Lord. We believe in the doctrine of sanctification as a definite, yet progressive work of grace, commencing at the time of the new birth and continuing until the consummation of salvation.

Wesley's Articles of Religion (UMC)

Article I — Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Article II — Of the Word, or Son of God, Who Was Made Very Man

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

Article III — Of the Resurrection of Christ

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.

Article IV — Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

Article V — Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the church. The names of the canonical books are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

Article VI — Of the Old Testament

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

Article VII — Of Original or Birth Sin

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

Article VIII — Of Free Will

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

Article IX — Of the Justification of Man

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

Article X — Of Good Works

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

Article XI — Of Works of Supererogation

Voluntary works—besides, over and above God's commandments—which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When you have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

Article XII — Of Sin After Justification

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

Article XIII — Of the Church

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

Article XIV — Of Purgatory

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping, and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

Article XV — Of Speaking in the Congregation in Such a Tongue as the People Understand

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.

4. For the contemporary interpretation of this and similar articles, (i.e. Articles XIV, XV, XVI, XVIII, XIX, XX, and XXI) in consonance with our best ecumenical insights and judgment, see "Resolution of Intent: With a View to Unity," *The Book of Resolutions*, 2008, p.292).

Article XVI — Of the Sacraments

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him.

There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.

The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith.

Article XVII — Of Baptism

Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

Article XVIII — Of the Lord's Supper

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

Article XIX — Of Both Kinds

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

Article XX — Of the One Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

Article XXI — Of the Marriage of Ministers

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

Article XXII — Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren.

Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

Article XXIII — Of the Rulers of the United States of America

The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

Article XXIV — Of Christian Men's Goods

The riches and goods of Christians are not common as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

Article XXV — Of a Christian Man's Oath

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

Apostles Creed (UMC)

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church*,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Nicene Creed (UMC)

We believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of the same essence as the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and was made human.
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried.
The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again with glory
to judge the living and the dead.
His kingdom will never end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life.
He proceeds from the Father and the Son,
and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.
He spoke through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead,
and to life in the world to come. Amen.

A Brief Introduction to the Book of Concord (Lutheran)

The Book of Concord contains documents which Christians from the fourth to the 16th century A.D. explained what they believed and taught on the basis of the Holy Scriptures. It includes, first, the three creeds which originated in the ancient church, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. It contains, secondly, the Reformation writings known as the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord.

The Catechisms and the Smalcald Articles came from the pen of Martin Luther; the Augsburg Confession, its Apology, and the Treatise were written by Luther's co-worker, the scholarly Phillip Melancthon; the Formula of Concord was given its final form chiefly by Jacob Andreae, Martin Chemnitz, and Nickolaus Selnecker.

I. The Creeds

The historical background of the documents in The Book of Concord is very interesting. The Apostles' Creed was not composed by the apostles but is a faithful confession of apostolic doctrine; it is a "daughter" of the creed used by early Christians in Rome. The wording of the creed, as we confess it today, can be traced to southern Gaul (France).

The Nicene Creed is spoken today in many Lutheran congregations on Communion Sundays or festive occasions but its history presents some problems. According to popular belief it was formulated by the Council of Nicea A.D. 325 and revised by the Council of Constantinople A.D. 381. But this theory has been challenged. Another theory is that the creed had its roots in the creed of Jerusalem adopted by Epiphanius of Cyprus, then came to the Council of Constantinople via Syedra in Pamphilia, was used in connection with the consecration of a new bishop, found its way into the council minutes, and was mistakenly believed by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 to have been prepared 70 years earlier at the council in whose minutes it appeared. (One addition to the original formula, namely that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father "and the Son" is Western in origin and appears as early as the Synod of Toledo in A.D. 589.)

The Athanasian Creed is the longest of the three. Though included in The Lutheran Hymnal, many congregations use it only on Trinity Sunday (or the First Sunday after Pentecost). It is named after Athanasius, the great fourth-century champion of Orthodoxy against heretics who denied the deity of Christ. The creed originated in southern Gaul, probably about the middle of the sixth century.

The inclusion of the three ancient creeds in The Book of Concord indicates that Lutherans are not a sect but that they embrace and confess the ancient and orthodox faith.

II. The Lutheran Confessions

Among the particular Lutheran Confessions the two catechisms of Dr. Martin Luther are the earliest. Luther published them in the spring of 1529 to help Pastors and parents give instruction in the chief parts of Christian doctrine.

The Augsburg Confession was written by Melancthon in 1530. Emperor Charles V had invited the Lutheran princes and theologians to attend a meeting of government leaders at Augsburg. He wanted to discuss how the religious controversy in his empire could be settled, so that German Lutheran princes would join the imperial forces to keep the Turks out of Europe. The Augsburg Confession is composed of several documents which already existed but which were combined by Melancthon to give a clear but conciliatory summary of the teachings and practices of the Lutheran pastors and congregations. It is to this day the basic Lutheran confession.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession was published in 1531. After the Augsburg Confession had been read to the emperor, a committee of Roman catholic theologians prepared a reply called the confutation. The Apology defends the Augsburg Confession against the accusations of the Confutation.

The Smalcald Articles were written by Luther in late 1536. On June 4, 1536, Pope Paul III announced that a council would be held in Mantua beginning May 8, 1537, to deal with the concerns of the Protestants. The elector (or prince) of Saxony requested Luther to prepare some articles for discussion at the council. Luther indicated on which points Lutherans would stand fast and on which points a compromise might be possible. These articles were never used for their intended purpose, but Lutherans at once recognized their value as a statement of pure evangelical doctrine, and they were therefore included in The Book of Concord.

The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope was prepared by Melancthon at the Protestant meeting at Smalcald in 1537 where Luther's articles were to be discussed but, partly because Luther became ill, were never publicly presented to the assembly. Instead Melancthon was requested to prepare a treatise which actually is an appendix to the Augsburg Confession.

The Formula of Concord was written a generation after Luther's death. Serious controversies had arisen among theologians of the Augsburg Confession which threatened the very life of the Reformation. The Formula of Concord deals with these dissensions and presents the sound Biblical doctrine on the disputed issues.

No doubt much will - and should - be made of The Book of Concord as we observe its 400th anniversary. But the most worthy and God-pleasing way for Lutherans of the 20th century to commemorate the publication of The Book of Concord would be to engage in earnest study of the precious Confessions it contains and to commit themselves anew to the glorious truths of God's Word which they teach.

A professor a generation ago described the significance of the confessional writings perhaps best of all. Prof. William Arndt wrote in the Concordia Theological Monthly:

The Confessions are the brightest jewel in the crown of the Lutheran Church. In speaking of our Confessions we dwell on facts that should make the heart of every Lutheran swell with joy and thanksgiving. We look here on one of the brightest pages of our history as a church. It is true, I admit, that the laurels of our fathers must not become the soft bed of the children on which they repose in sweet indolence, and it may be that there is somebody who speaks about the achievements of his ancestors to such an extent that he entirely forgets about the plowing, harvesting, and threshing which he himself ought to do. But my plea is that we do not become so occupied with our daily tasks in the churches that we forget the magnificent treasures which are furnished us in our Confessions. To study them, to read them frequently, to ponder their content, is like traveling, in a mountain country where the air is pure, the brooks sparkle, the birds sing their most beautiful songs, and the clatter of the noisy streets cannot disturb and intrude.

Huth, Harry A. *The Story Of Our Confessions*. The Lutheran Witness Vol. 96 No. 2 (February 1977): pages 10, 11

Name	Date	Author	Summary
Apostles' Creed	2nd Century A.D.	Unknown	Baptismal Creed used in Rome.
Nicene Creed	325, 381 A.D.	Assembled church leaders at the Council of Nicea (325) and the Council of Constantinople.	This Creed intends to clearly state on the basis of Scripture that Jesus Christ is true God equal with the Father and that the Holy Spirit is also true God, equal with the Father and the Son.
Athanasian Creed	6th-8th Century A.D.	Unknown. Named after the great church father Athanasius, who was instrumental in	Confesses the teaching of the Trinity and the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

		the drafting of the Nicene Creed.	
Small Catechism	1529 A.D.	Martin Luther	A short work that was to educate the laity in the fundamentals of the Christian Faith.
Large Catechism	1529	Martin Luther	Though covering the same chief parts of Christian doctrine as the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism is really a series of re-edited sermons that Luther preached.
Augsburg Confession	June 25, 1530	Philip Melanchthon	Often viewed as the chief Lutheran Confession; it was presented by the Lutherans to Emperor Charles V at the imperial diet of Augsburg as a statement of the chief articles of the Christian faith as understood by Lutherans; also contained here is a listing of abuses that the Lutherans had corrected.
Apology of the Augsburg Confession	1531	Philip Melanchthon	After the Roman theologians had condemned many of the teachings of the Augsburg Confession (AC), Melanchthon authored this lengthy defense of AC. Rightly considered a Christian classic.
Smalcald Articles	1536	Martin Luther	Articles of faith intended by Luther to be an ecumenical platform for an upcoming ecumenical council. Stated what the Lutherans could not

			compromise and why.
Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope	1537	Philip Melanchthon	Was intended to serve as a supplement to the Augsburg Confession, giving the Lutheran position on the Pope.
Formula of Concord	1577	Jacob Andreae, Martin Chemnitz, David Chytraeus	A restatement of some teachings in the Augsburg Confession over which Lutherans had become divided. The <i>Solid Declaration</i> is the unabridged version. The <i>Epitome</i> is an abridged version intended for congregations to study. Over 8,100 pastors and theologians signed it, as well as over 50 government leaders.

The Confessions of 1967 (Presbyterian)

Preface

The church confesses its faith when it bears a present witness to God's grace in Jesus Christ.

In every age the church has expressed its witness in words and deeds as the need of the time required. The earliest examples of confession are found within the Scriptures. Confessional statements have taken such varied forms as hymns, liturgical formulas, doctrinal definitions, catechisms, theological systems in summary, and declarations of purpose against threatening evil.

Confessions and declarations are subordinate standards in the church, subject to the authority of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, as the Scriptures bear witness to him. No one type of confession is exclusively valid, no one statement is irreformable. Obedience to Jesus Christ alone identifies the one universal church and supplies the continuity of its tradition. This obedience is the ground of the church's duty and freedom to reform itself in life and doctrine as new occasions, in God's providence, may demand.

The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America acknowledges itself aided in understanding the gospel by the testimony of the church from earlier ages and from many lands. More especially it is guided by the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds from the time of the early church; the Scots Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Second Helvetic Confession from the era of the Reformation; the Westminster Confession and Shorter Catechism from the seventeenth century; and the Theological Declaration of Barmen from the twentieth century.

The purpose of the Confession of 1967 is to call the church to that unity in confession and mission which is required of disciples today. This Confession is not a "system of doctrine," nor does it include all the traditional topics of theology. For example, the Trinity and the Person of Christ are not redefined but are recognized and reaffirmed as forming the basis and determining the structure of the Christian faith.

God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ and the mission of reconciliation to which he has called his church are the heart of the gospel in any age. Our generation stands in peculiar need of reconciliation in Christ. Accordingly this Confession of 1967 is built upon that theme.

The Confession

In Jesus Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. Jesus Christ is God with man. He is the eternal Son of the Father, who became man and lived among us to fulfill the work of reconciliation. He is present in the church by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue and complete his mission. This work of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the foundation of all confessional statements about God, man, and the world. Therefore the church calls men to be reconciled to God and to one another.

I. God's Work of Reconciliation

A. The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ

1. Jesus Christ

In Jesus of Nazareth true humanity was realized once for all. Jesus, a Palestinian Jew, lived among his own people and shared their needs, temptations, joys, and sorrows. He expressed the love of God in word and deed and became a brother to all kinds of sinful men. But his complete obedience led him into conflict with his people. His life and teaching judged their goodness, religious aspirations, and national hopes. Many rejected him and demanded his death. In giving himself freely for them he took upon himself the judgment under which all men stand convicted. God raised him from the dead, vindicating him as Messiah and Lord. The victim of sin became victor, and won the victory over sin and death for all men.

God's reconciling act in Jesus Christ is a mystery which the Scriptures describe in various ways. It is called the sacrifice of a lamb, a shepherd's life given for his sheep, atonement by a priest; again it is ransom of a slave, payment of a debt, vicarious satisfaction of a legal penalty, and victory over the powers of evil. These are expressions of a truth which remains beyond the reach of all theory in the depths of God's love for man. They reveal the gravity, cost, and sure achievement of God's reconciling work.

The risen Christ is the savior for all men. Those joined to him by faith are set right with God and commissioned to serve as his reconciling community. Christ is head of this community, the church, which began with the apostles and continues through all generations.

The same Jesus Christ is the judge of all men. His judgment discloses the ultimate seriousness of life and gives promise of God's final victory over the power of sin and death. To receive life from the risen Lord is to have life eternal; to refuse life from him is to choose the death which is separation from God. All who put their trust in Christ face divine judgment without fear, for the judge is their redeemer.

2. The Sin of Man

The reconciling act of God in Jesus Christ exposes the evil in men as sin in the sight of God. In sin men claim mastery of their own lives, turn against God and their fellow men, and become exploiters and despoilers of the world. They lose their humanity in futile striving and are left in rebellion, despair, and isolation.

Wise and virtuous men through the ages have sought the highest good in devotion to freedom, justice, peace, truth, and beauty. Yet all human virtue, when seen in the light of God's love in Jesus Christ, is found to be infected by self-interest and hostility. All men, good and bad alike, are in the wrong before God and helpless without his forgiveness. Thus all men fall under God's judgment. No one is more subject to that judgment than the man who assumes that he is guiltless before God or morally superior to others.

God's love never changes. Against all who oppose him, God expresses his love in wrath. In the same love God took on himself judgment and shameful death in Jesus Christ, to bring men to repentance and new life.

B. The Love of God

God's sovereign love is a mystery beyond the reach of man's mind. Human thought ascribes to God superlatives of power, wisdom, and goodness. But God reveals his love in Jesus Christ by showing power in the form of a servant, wisdom in the folly of the cross, and goodness in receiving sinful men. The power of God's love in Christ to transform the world discloses that the Redeemer is the Lord and Creator who made all things to serve the purpose of his love.

God has created the world of space and time to be the sphere of his dealings with men. In its beauty and vastness, sublimity and awfulness, order and disorder, the world reflects to the eye of faith the majesty and mystery of its Creator.

God has created man in a personal relation with himself that man may respond to the love of the Creator. He has created male and female and given them a life which proceeds from birth to death in a succession of generations and in a wide complex of social relations. He has endowed man with capacities to make the world serve his needs and to enjoy its good things. Life is a gift to be received with gratitude and a task to be pursued with courage. Man is free to seek his life within the purpose of God: to develop and protect the resources of nature for the common welfare, to work for justice and peace in society, and in other ways to use his creative powers for the fulfillment of human life.

God expressed his love for all mankind through Israel, whom he chose to be his covenant people to serve him in love and faithfulness. When Israel was unfaithful, he disciplined the nation with his judgments and maintained his cause through the prophets, priests, teachers, and true believers. These witnesses called all Israelites to a destiny in which they would serve God faithfully and become a light to the nations. The same witnesses proclaimed the coming of a new age, and a true servant of God in whom God's purpose for Israel and for mankind would be realized.

Out of Israel God in due time raised up Jesus. His faith and obedience were the response of the perfect child of God. He was the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel, the beginning of the new creation, and the pioneer of the new humanity. He gave history its meaning and direction and called the church to be his servant for the reconciliation of the world.

C. The Communion of the Holy Spirit

God the Holy Spirit fulfills the work of reconciliation in man. The Holy Spirit creates and renews the church as the community in which men are reconciled to God and to one another. He enables them to receive forgiveness as they forgive one another and to enjoy the peace of God as they make peace among themselves. In spite of their sin, he gives them power to become representatives of Jesus Christ and his gospel of reconciliation to all men.

1. The New Life

The reconciling work of Jesus was the supreme crisis in the life of mankind. His cross and resurrection become personal crisis and present hope for men when the gospel is proclaimed and believed. In this experience the Spirit brings God's forgiveness to men, moves them to respond in faith, repentance, and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ.

The new life takes shape in a community in which men know that God loves and accepts them in spite of what they are. They therefore accept themselves and love others, knowing that no man has any ground on which to stand except God's grace.

The new life does not release a man from conflict with unbelief, pride, lust, fear. He still has to struggle with disheartening difficulties and problems. Nevertheless, as he matures in love and faithfulness in his life with Christ, he lives in freedom and good cheer, bearing witness on good days and evil days, confident that the new life is pleasing to God and helpful to others.

The new life finds its direction in the life of Jesus, his deeds and words, his struggles against temptation, his compassion, his anger, and his willingness to suffer death. The teaching of apostles and prophets guides men in living this life, and the Christian community nurtures and equips them for their ministries.

The members of the church are emissaries of peace and seek the good of man in cooperation with powers and authorities in politics, culture, and economics. But they have to fight against pretensions and injustices when these same powers endanger human welfare. Their strength is in their confidence that God's purpose rather than man's schemes will finally prevail.

Life in Christ is life eternal. The resurrection of Jesus is God's sign that he will consummate his work of creation and reconciliation beyond death and bring to fulfillment the new life begun in Christ.

2. The Bible

The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness through the Holy Scriptures, which are received and obeyed as the word of God written. The Scriptures are not a witness among others, but the witness without parallel. The church has received the books of the Old and New Testaments as prophetic and apostolic testimony in which it hears the word of God and by which its faith and obedience are nourished and regulated.

The New Testament is the recorded testimony of apostles to the coming of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and the sending of the Holy Spirit to the Church. The Old Testament bears witness to God's faithfulness in his covenant with Israel and points the way to the fulfillment of his purpose in Christ. The Old Testament is indispensable to understanding the New, and is not itself fully understood without the New.

The Bible is to be interpreted in the light of its witness to God's work of reconciliation in Christ. The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms, and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding. As God has spoken his word in diverse cultural situations, the church is confident that he will continue to speak through the Scriptures in a changing world and in every form of human culture.

God's word is spoken to his church today where the Scriptures are faithfully preached and attentively read in dependence on the illumination of the Holy Spirit and with readiness to receive their truth and direction.

II. The Ministry of Reconciliation

A. The Mission of the Church

1. Direction

To be reconciled to God is to be sent into the world as his reconciling community. This community, the church universal, is entrusted with God's message of reconciliation and shares his labor of healing the enmities which separate men from God and from each other. Christ has called the church to this mission and given it the gift of the Holy Spirit. The church maintains continuity with the apostles and with Israel by faithful obedience to his call.

The life, death, resurrection, and promised coming of Jesus Christ has set the pattern for the church's mission. His life as man involves the church in the common life of men. His service to men commits the church to work for every form of human well-being. His suffering makes the church sensitive to all the sufferings of mankind so that it sees the face of Christ in the faces of men in every kind of need. His crucifixion discloses to the church God's judgment on man's inhumanity to man and the awful consequences of its own complicity in injustice. In the power of the risen Christ and the hope of his coming the church sees the promise of God's renewal of man's life in society and of God's victory over all wrong.

The church follows this pattern in the form of its life and in the method of its action. So to live and serve is to confess Christ as Lord.

2. Forms and Order

The institutions of the people of God change and vary as their mission requires in different times and places. The unity of the church is compatible with a wide variety of forms, but it is hidden and distorted when variant forms are allowed to harden into sectarian divisions, exclusive denominations, and rival factions.

Wherever the church exists, its members are both gathered in corporate life and dispersed in society for the sake of mission in the world.

The church gathers to praise God, to hear his word for mankind, to baptize and to join in the Lord's Supper, to pray for and present the world to him in worship, to enjoy fellowship, to receive instruction, strength, and comfort, to order and organize its own corporate life, to be tested, renewed, and reformed, and to speak and act in the world's affairs as may be appropriate to the needs of the time.

The church disperses to serve God wherever its members are, at work or play, in private life or in the life of society. Their prayer and Bible Study are part of the church's worship and theological reflection. Their witness is the church's evangelism. Their daily action in the world is the church in mission to the world. The quality of their relation with other persons is the measure of the church's fidelity.

Each member is the church in the world, endowed by the Spirit with some gift of ministry and is responsible for the integrity of his witness in his own particular situation. He is entitled to the guidance and support of the Christian community and is subject to its advice and correction. He in turn, in his own competence, helps to guide the church.

In recognition of special gifts of the Spirit and for the ordering of its life as a community, the church calls, trains, and authorizes certain members for leadership and oversight. The persons qualified for these duties in accordance with the polity of the church are set apart by ordination or other appropriate act and thus made responsible for their special ministries.

The church thus orders its life as an institution with a constitution, government, officers, and administrative rules. These are instruments of mission, not ends in themselves. Different orders have served the gospel, and none can claim exclusive validity. A Presbyterian polity recognizes the responsibility of all members for ministry and maintains the organic relation of all congregations in the church. It seeks to protect the church from exploitation by ecclesiastical or secular power and ambition. Every church order must be open to such reformation as may be required to make it a more effective instrument of the mission of reconciliation.

3. Revelation and Religion

The church in its mission encounters the religions of men and in that encounter becomes conscious of its own human character as a religion. God's revelation to Israel, expressed within Semitic culture, gave rise to the religion of the Hebrew people. God's revelation in Jesus Christ called forth the response of Jews and Greeks and came to expression within Judaism and Hellenism as the Christian religion. The Christian religion, as distinct from God's revelation of himself, has been shaped throughout its history by the cultural forms of its environment.

The Christian finds parallels between other religions and his own and must approach all religions with openness and respect. Repeatedly God has used the insight of non-Christians to challenge the church to renewal. But the reconciling word of the gospel is God's judgment upon all forms of religion, including the Christian. The gift of God in Christ is for all men. The church, therefore, is commissioned to carry the gospel to all men whatever their religion may be and even when they profess none.

4. Reconciliation in Society

In each time and place there are particular problems and crises through which God calls the church to act. The church, guided by the Spirit, humbled by its own complicity and instructed by all attainable knowledge, seeks to discern the will of God and learn how to obey in these concrete situations. The following are particularly urgent at the present time.

a. God has created the peoples of the earth to be one universal family. In his reconciling love he overcomes the barriers between brothers and breaks down every form of discrimination based on racial or ethnic difference, real or imaginary. The church is called to bring all men to receive and uphold one another as persons in all relationships of life: in employment, housing, education, leisure, marriage, family, church, and the exercise of political rights. Therefore the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize their fellowmen, however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.

b. God's reconciliation in Jesus Christ is the ground of the peace, justice, and freedom among nations which all powers of government are called to serve and defend. The church, in its own life, is called to practice the forgiveness of enemies and to commend to the nations as practical politics the search for cooperation and peace. This search requires that the nations pursue fresh and responsible relations across every line of conflict, even at risk to national security, to reduce areas of strife and to broaden international understanding. Reconciliation among nations becomes peculiarly urgent as countries develop nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, diverting their manpower and resources from constructive uses and risking the annihilation of mankind. Although nations may serve God's purposes in history, the church which identifies the sovereignty of any one nation or any one way of life with the cause of God denies the Lordship of Christ and betrays its calling.

c. The reconciliation of man through Jesus Christ makes it plain that enslaving poverty in a world of abundance is an intolerable violation of God's good creation. Because Jesus identified himself with the needy and exploited, the cause of the world's poor is the cause of his disciples. The church cannot condone poverty, whether it is the product of unjust social structures, exploitation of the defenseless, lack of national resources, absence of technological understanding, or rapid expansion of populations. The church calls every man to use his abilities, his possessions, and the fruits of technology as gifts entrusted to him by God for the maintenance of his family and the advancement of the common welfare. It encourages those forces in human society that raise men's hopes for better conditions and provide them with the opportunity for a decent living. A church that is indifferent to poverty, or evades responsibility in economic affairs, or is open to one social class only, or expects gratitude for its beneficence makes a mockery of reconciliation and offers no acceptable worship to God.

d. The relationship between man and woman exemplifies in a basic way God's ordering of the interpersonal life for which he created mankind. Anarchy in sexual relationships is a symptom of man's alienation from God, his neighbor, and himself. Man's perennial confusion about the meaning of sex has been aggravated in our day by the availability of new means for birth control and the treatment of infection, by the pressures of urbanization, by the exploitation of sexual symbols in mass communication, and by world overpopulation. The church, as the household of God, is called to lead men out of this alienation into the responsible freedom of the new life in Christ. Reconciled to God, each person has joy in and respect for his own humanity and that of other persons; a man and woman are enabled to marry, to commit themselves to a mutually shared life, and to respond to each other in sensitive and lifelong concern; parents receive the grace to care for children in love and to nurture their individuality. The church comes under the judgment of God and invites rejection by man when it fails to lead men and women into the full meaning of life together, or withholds the compassion of Christ from those caught in the moral confusion of our time.

B. The Equipment of the Church

Jesus Christ has given the church preaching and teaching, praise and prayer, and Baptism and the Lord's Supper as means of fulfilling its service of God among men. These gifts remain, but the church is obliged to change the forms of its service in ways appropriate to different generations and cultures.

1. Preaching and Teaching

God instructs his church and equips it for mission through preaching and teaching. By these, when they are carried on in fidelity to the Scriptures and dependence upon the Holy Spirit, the people hear the word of God and accept and follow Christ. The message is addressed to men in particular situations. Therefore effective preaching, teaching, and personal witness require disciplined study of both the Bible and the contemporary world. All acts of public worship should be conducive to men's hearing of the gospel in a particular time and place and responding with fitting obedience.

2. Praise and Prayer

The church responds to the message of reconciliation in praise and prayer. In that response it commits itself afresh to its mission, experiences a deepening of faith and obedience, and bears open testimony to the gospel. Adoration of God is acknowledgment of the Creator by the creation. Confession of sin is admission of all men's guilt before God and of their need for his forgiveness. Thanksgiving is rejoicing in God's goodness to all men and in giving for the needs of others. Petitions and intercessions are addressed to God for the continuation of his goodness, the healing of men's ills, and their deliverance from every form of oppression. The arts, especially music and architecture, contribute to the praise and prayer of a Christian congregation when they help men to look beyond themselves to God and to the world which is the object of his love.

3. Baptism

By humble submission to John's baptism Christ joined himself to men in their need and entered upon his ministry of reconciliation in the power of the Spirit. Christian baptism marks the receiving of the same Spirit by all his people. Baptism with water represents not only cleansing from sin but a dying with Christ and a joyful rising with him to new life. It commits all Christians to die each day to sin and to live for righteousness. In baptism the church celebrates the renewal of the covenant with which God has bound his people to himself. By baptism individuals are publicly received into the church to share in its life and ministry, and the church becomes responsible for their training and support in Christian discipleship. When those baptized are infants the congregation, as well as the parents, has a special obligation to nurture them in the Christian life, leading them to make, by a public profession, a personal response to the love of God shown forth in their baptism.

4. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a celebration of the reconciliation of men with God and with one another, in which they joyfully eat and drink together at the table of their Savior. Jesus Christ gave his church this remembrance of his dying for sinful men so that by participation in it they have communion with him and with all who shall be gathered to him. Partaking in him as they eat the bread and drink the wine in accordance with Christ's appointment, they receive from the risen and living Lord the benefits of his death and resurrection. They rejoice in the foretaste of the kingdom which he will bring to consummation at his promised coming, and go out from the Lord's Table with courage and hope for the service to which he has called them.

III. The Fulfillment of Reconciliation

God's redeeming work in Jesus Christ embraces the whole of man's life; social and cultural, economic and political, scientific and technological, individual and corporate. It includes man's

natural environment as exploited and despoiled by sin. It is the will of God that his purpose for human life shall be fulfilled under the rule of Christ and all evil be banished from his creation.

Biblical visions and images of the rule of Christ such as a heavenly city, a father's house, a new heaven and earth, a marriage feast, and an unending day culminate in the image of the kingdom. The kingdom represents the triumph of God over all that resists his will and disrupts his creation. Already God's reign is present as a ferment in the world, stirring hope in men and preparing the world to receive its ultimate judgment and redemption.

With an urgency born of this hope the church applies itself to present tasks and strives for a better world. It does not identify limited progress with the kingdom of God on earth, nor does it despair in the face of disappointment and defeat. In steadfast hope the church looks beyond all partial achievement to the final triumph of God.

"Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

The Four Square Gospel (Pentecostal)

I. THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

We believe that the Holy Bible is the Word of the living God; true, immutable, steadfast, unchangeable, as its author, the Lord Jehovah; that it was written by holymen of old as they were moved upon and inspired by the Holy Spirit; that it is a lighted lamp to guide the feet of a lost world from the depths of sin and sorrow to the heights of righteousness and glory; an unclouded mirror that reveals the face of a crucified Savior; a plumb line to make straight the life of each individual and community; a sharp two-edged sword to convict of sin and evil doing; a strong cord of love and tenderness to draw the penitent to Christ Jesus; a balm of Gilead, inbreathed by the Holy Spirit, that can heal and quicken each drooping heart; the only true ground of Christian fellowship and unity; the loving call of an infinitely loving God; the solemn warning, the distant thunder of the storm of wrath and retribution that shall overtake the unheeding; a sign post that points to Heaven; a danger signal that warns from Hell; the divine, supreme and eternal tribunal by whose standards all men, nations, creeds, and motives shall be tried.

Scripture References

*"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."*¹

*(Mt. 24:35) "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven." (Ps. 119:89)*²

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for³ reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may become complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16,17) "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Ps. 119:105)

"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a⁴ light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:19-21)

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these⁵ are they which testify of Me." (Jn.5:39)

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to⁶ be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15) "...let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind." (Phil. 3:16) (Also, 1 Jn.4:1; Is.8:20; 1 Thess.5:21; Acts 17:11; 1 Jn.4:6; Jude 3; Eph. 6:17; Ps. 119:59,60; Phil. 1:9-11).

II. THE ETERNAL GODHEAD

We believe that there is ¹but one true and living God; maker of heaven and earth and all that is in them; the Alpha and Omega, who ever was, and is and shall be, time without end, Amen; that He is infinitely holy, mighty, tender, loving and glorious; worthy of all possible love and honor, confidence and obedience, majesty, dominion and might, both now and forever; and that in the unity of the Godhead there are three, equal in every divine perfection executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

The Father — Whose glory is so exceeding bright that mortal man cannot look ²upon His face and live, ³but whose heart was so filled with love and pity for His lost and sin-benighted children that He freely gave His only begotten Son to redeem and reconcile them unto Himself.

The Son — ⁴Co-existent and co-eternal with the Father, who, conceived by the Holy Spirit and ⁵born of the Virgin Mary took upon Himself the form of man, bore our sins, carried our sorrows, and by the shedding of His precious blood upon the cross of Calvary, purchased redemption for all that would believe upon Him: then, bursting the bonds of death and hell rose from the grave and ascended on high leading captivity captive, ⁶that as the great mediator between God and man, He might stand at the right hand of the Father making intercession for those whom He laid down His life.

The Holy Spirit — The ⁷third person of the Godhead, the Spirit of the Father shed abroad, omnipotent, omnipresent, performing an inexpressibly important mission upon earth, convicting of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, ⁸drawing sinners to the Savior, rebuking, pleading, searching, comforting, guiding, quickening, teaching, glorifying, baptizing and enduing with power from on high those who yield to His tender ministrations, preparing them for the great day of the Lord's appearing.

Scripture References

"...Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me." (Is. 43:10)¹. "Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one." (Is. 44:8)

"...You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." (Ex. 33:20)².

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever³. believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (Jn. 3:16)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was⁴. God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." (Jn. 1:1-3) (Also Job 38:4-7)

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His⁵. name Immanuel..." (Mt. 1:23)³

"I, even I, am the LORD, and besides Me there is no savior." (Is. 43:11) "For⁶. there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all..." (1 Tim.:2:5, 6a) "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." (Eph. 2:18)

"For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the⁷. Holy Spirit, and these three are one." (1 Jn. 5:7)

"But when the Helper comes whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit⁸. of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me." (Jn. 15:26) (Also, 2 Cor. 13:14; Mt. 28:19; Rom. 8:11; Jn. 16:7-14)

III. THE FALL OF MAN

We believe that man was ¹created in the image of God, before whom he walked in holiness and purity, but that by voluntary disobedience and transgression, he fell from the Eden of purity and innocence to the depths of sin and iniquity, and ²that in consequence of this, all mankind are sinners sold unto Satan, ³sinners not by constraint but by choice, shapen in iniquity and ⁴utterly void by nature of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil, ⁵guilty and without excuse, justly deserving the condemnation of a just and holy God.

Scripture References

"So God created man in His own image." (Gn. 1:27)¹.

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through². sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12) "...by one man's disobedience many were made sinners..." (Rom. 5:19) Also, Jn.3:6; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:15-19;8:7)

"We have turned, every one, to his own way;" (Is. 53:6) (Also, Gen. 6:12; 3:9-19)³.

"among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling⁴. the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." (Eph. 2:3) (See Rom. 1:18,32; 2:1-16; Mt. 20:15; Gal. 3:10; Ez. 18:19,20)

"...so that they are without excuse." (Rom. 1:20) "...that every mouth may be⁵. stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." (Rom. 3:19) (Also, Gal. 3:22)⁴

IV. THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

We believe that ¹while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, the Just for the unjust; ²freely, and by divine appointment of the Father, taking the sinner's place, bearing his sins, receiving his condemnation, dying his death, ³fully paying his penalty, and signing with His life's blood, the pardon of every one who should believe upon Him; ⁴that upon simple faith and acceptance of the atonement purchased on Mount Calvary, ⁵the vilest sinner may be cleansed of his iniquities and made whiter than driven snow.

Scripture References

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; ¹The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed." (Is. 53:5)

"who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and ²purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." (Titus 2:14)

"Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him ³return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon." (Is. 55:7)

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God ⁴through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:25)

"'Come now, and let us reason together,' Says the LORD, 'Though your sins are ⁵like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.'" (Is. 1:18)

V. SALVATION THROUGH GRACE

We believe that ¹the salvation of sinners is wholly through grace; ²that we have no righteousness or ³goodness of our own ⁴wherewith to seek divine favor, and must come, therefore, throwing ourselves upon the ⁵unfailing mercy and love of Him who bought us and washed us in His own blood, ⁶pleading the merits and the righteousness of Christ the Savior, standing upon His word and accepting the ⁷free gift of love and pardon.

Scripture References

"For by grace you have been saved..." (Eph. 2:8) ¹

"There is none righteous, no, not one:" (Rom. 3:10) ²

"...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) ³

"But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy ⁴rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away." (Is. 64:6)

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life." (Jn. 6:47) ⁵

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the ⁶blood of Christ." (Eph. 2:13)

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus ⁷our Lord." (Rom. 6:23) ⁵

VI. REPENTANCE AND ACCEPTANCE

We believe that upon sincere repentance, godly sorrow for sin, and a whole-hearted acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ, they who call upon Him may be justified by faith, through His precious blood and that in place of condemnation they may have the most blessed peace, assurance and favor with God; that with open arms of mercy and pardon the Savior waits to receive each penitent who will in unfeigned contrition and supplication for mercy, open the door of his heart and accept Him as Lord and King.

Scripture References

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn. 1:9)

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:1,2)

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Rom. 8:1)

"To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace." (Lk. 1:77-79)

"...the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." (Jn. 6:37)5.

VII. THE NEW BIRTH

We believe that the change which takes place in the heart and life at conversion is a very real one; that the sinner is then born again in such a glorious and transforming manner that the old things are passed away and all things are become new; insomuch that the things once most desired are now abhorred, while the things once abhorred are now held most sacred and dear; and that now having imputed to him the righteousness of the Redeemer and having received of the Spirit of Christ, new desires, new aspirations, new interests, and a new perspective on life, time and eternity, fills the blood-washed heart so that his desire is now to openly confess and serve the Master, seeking ever those things which are above.

Scripture References

"...unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (Jn. 3:3)1.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Cor. 5:17)

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation6

by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.” (Rom. 3:24,25)

“Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.” (Ps. 1:1,2)

VIII. DAILY CHRISTIAN LIFE

We believe that having been cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ and having received the witness of the Holy Spirit at conversion, it is the will of God that we be sanctified daily and become partakers of His holiness; growing constantly stronger in faith, power, prayer, love and service, first as babies desiring the sincere milk of the Word; then as dear children walking humbly, seeking diligently the hidden life, where self decreases and Christ increases; then as strong men having on the whole armor of God, marching forth to new conquests in His name beneath His blood-stained banner, ever living a patient, sober, unselfish, godly life that will be a true reflection of the Christ within.

Scripture References

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification...” (1 Thess. 4:3) “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess. 5:23)

“Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (2 Cor. 7:1)

“But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.” (Prov. 4:18)

“Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection...” (Heb. 6:1)

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:5)

“A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, But it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, Shall not go astray.” (Is. 35:8) (Also, 1 Peter 2:2)

IX. WATER BAPTISM AND THE LORD’S SUPPER

We believe that water baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, according to the command of our Lord, is a blessed outward sign of an inward work; a beautiful and solemn emblem reminding us that even as our Lord died upon the cross of Calvary so we reckon ourselves now dead indeed unto sin, and the old nature nailed to the tree with Him; and that even as He was taken down from the tree and buried, so we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.⁷

We believe in the commemoration and observing of the Lord's supper by the sacred use of the broken bread, a precious type of the Bread of Life, even Jesus Christ, whose body was broken for us; and by the juice of the vine, a blessed type which should ever remind the participant of the shed blood of the Savior who is the true vine of which His children are the branches; that this ordinance is a glorious rainbow that spans the gulf of years between Calvary and the coming of the Lord, when in the Father's kingdom, He will partake anew with His children; and that the serving and receiving of this blessed sacrament should be ever preceded by the most solemn heart-searching, self-examination, forgiveness and love toward all men, that none partake unworthily and drink condemnation to his own soul.

Scripture References

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name¹. of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Mt. 28:19) (Also, Acts 2:37,38; Gal. 3:27,28)

"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as². Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4) (Also, Col. 2:12; 1 Peter 3:20,21; Acts 22:16)

"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about³. three thousand souls were added to them." (Acts 2:41) (Also, Mt. 28:19,20)

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's⁴. death till He comes." (1 Cor. 11:26) "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup." (1 Cor. 11:28)

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves." (2 Cor. 13:5) ⁵.

X. THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the incoming of the promised Comforter in mighty and glorious fullness to endue the believer with power from on high; to glorify and exalt the Lord Jesus; to give inspired utterance in witnessing of Him; to foster the spirit of prayer, holiness, sobriety; to equip the individual and the Church for practical, efficient, joyous, Spirit-filled soul-winning in the fields of life; and that this being still the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, the believer may have every reason to expect His incoming to be after the same manner as that in which He came upon Jew and Gentile alike in Bible days, and as recorded in the Word, that it may be truly said of us as of the house of Cornelius: the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning.

Scripture References

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may¹. abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." (Jn. 14:16,17) ⁸

"for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit². not many days from now. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:5,8)

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other³ tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:4)

"Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:17)⁴.

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those⁵. who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." (Acts 10:44-46)

"And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and⁶. they spoke with tongues and prophesied." (Acts 19:6) "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16)

XI. THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

We believe that while the Holy Spirit is as a mighty rushing wind and as tongues of living flame that can shake and set ablaze whole communities for God, He is also as a gentle dove, easily grieved and wounded by impiety, coldness, idle conversation, boastfulness, a judging or criticizing spirit and ²by thoughts and actions dishonoring to the Lord Jesus; that it is therefore, the will of God that we ³live and walk in the Spirit, moment by moment, under the precious blood of the Lamb; ⁴treading softly as with unshod feet in the presence of the King; being patient, ⁵loving, truthful, sincere, prayerful, not murmuring, instant in season and out of season, serving the Lord.

Scripture References

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day¹. of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." (Eph. 4:30-32) "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--" (Eph. 6:18)

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your². bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:1,2)

"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (1 Jn. 2:6)³.

"...Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. If we live in the⁴. Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Gal. 5:16,25)

"If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of⁵. God is holy, which temple you are." (1 Cor. 3:17)⁹

XII. THE GIFTS AND FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

We believe that the Holy Spirit has the following ¹gifts to bestow upon the believing church of the Lord Jesus Christ: ²wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, tongues, interpretation; that according to the degree of grace and faith possessed by the recipient, these gifts are divided to every man severally, as He, the Holy Spirit, wills; that they are to be most earnestly desired and coveted, ³in the order and proportion wherein they prove most edifying and beneficial to the church; and ⁴that the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, should be put forth, ⁵cultivated, and diligently guarded as the resultant adornment, the constant, eloquent, and irrefutable evidence of a Spirit-filled life.

Scripture References

"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:...But 1. earnestly desire the best gifts..." (1 Cor. 12:1,31) "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." (1 Cor. 12:11)

"Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification². of the church that you seek to excel." (1 Cor. 14:12) "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." (Rom. 11:29)

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use³. them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness." (Rom. 12:6-8)

"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be my disciples." (Jn. 15:8)⁴.

"And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which⁵. does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Lk. 3:9)

XIII. MODERATION

We believe that ¹the moderation of the believer should be known of all men; that his experience and daily walk should never lead him ²into extremes, fanaticism, ³unseemly manifestations, back-bitings, murmurings; but that his sober, thoughtful, balanced, ⁴mellow, forgiving, and zealous Christian experience should be one of steadfast uprightness, equilibrium, humility, self-sacrifice and Christ-likeness.

Scripture References

"Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand." (Phil. 4:5)¹.

*"that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with². every wind of doctrine...but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—"
-" (Eph. 4:14,15)*

"[Love] does not behave rudely..." (1 Cor. 13:5)³. ¹⁰

"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do." (Col. 3:12,13)

XIV. DIVINE HEALING

We believe that divine healing is the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to heal the sick and the afflicted in answer to believing prayer; that He who is the same yesterday, today and forever has never changed but is still an all-sufficient help in the time of trouble, able to meet the needs of, and quicken the body into newness of life, as well as the soul and spirit in answer to the faith of them who ever pray with submission to His divine and sovereign will.

Scripture References

"He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses." (Mt. 8:17)1.

"For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?" (Mt. 9:5)2.

"And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." (Mk. 16:17,18)

"Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." (Acts 4:29,30)

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed..." (James 5:14-16)11

XV. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

We believe that the second coming of Christ is personal and imminent; that He will descend from Heaven in the clouds of glory with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God; and that at this hour, which no man knoweth beforehand, the dead in Christ shall rise, then the ²redeemed that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and that so shall they ever be with the Lord; that also seeing that a thousand years is as a day with the Lord, and ³that no man knoweth the hour of His appearance, which we believe to be near at hand, each day should be lived as though He were ⁴expected to appear at even, yet that in obedience to His explicit command, ⁵"Occupy till I come," the work of spreading the gospel, the sending forth of missionaries, and the general duties for the upbuilding of the church ⁶should be carried on as diligently, and thoroughly, as though neither ours nor the next generation should live in the flesh to see the glorious day.

Scripture References

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of ¹. an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:16,17)

"...denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, ². and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." (Titus 2:12,13)

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My ³. Father only. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Mt. 24:36,42,44)

"...so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly ⁴. wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." (Heb. 9:28)

"... 'Do business till I come.'" (Lk. 19:13) ⁵.

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like ⁶. men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them." (Lk. 12:35-37) ¹²

XVI. CHURCH RELATIONSHIP

We believe that having accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior and King, and having thus been born into the family and invisible body or church of the Lord, it is the sacred duty of the believer, whenever this lies within his power, ¹to identify himself with, and ²labor most earnestly for the upbuilding of God's kingdom with the ³visible church of Christ upon the earth; and that such visible church is a congregation of believers, who have associated themselves together in Christian fellowship and in the ⁴unity of the Spirit, observing the ordinances of Christ, worshipping Him in the beauty of holiness, ⁵speaking to each other in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, reading and proclaiming His Word, laboring for the salvation of souls, giving their temporal means to carry on His work, edifying, encouraging, establishing one another in the most holy faith, and working harmoniously together as dear children who are many members but one body of which Christ is head.

Scripture References

"I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, In the assembly of the upright and¹. in the congregation."
(Ps. 111:1)

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not². forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."(Heb. 10:24,25)

"...And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 3. 2:47) *"So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily."* (Acts. 16:5)

"so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one⁴. another." (Rom. 12:5)
(Also, Rom. 12:6-8)

"Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened⁵. and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name. 'They shall be Mine,' says the LORD of hosts, 'On the day that I make them my jewels, And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him.'" (Mal. 3:16,17)¹³

XVII. CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We believe that the civil government is of divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society; and that governors and rulers should be prayed for, obeyed, and upheld, at all times except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the ruler of the conscience of His people, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords.

Scripture References

"...the authorities that exist are appointed by God...For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil..." (Rom. 13:1,3) (Also, Deut. 16:18; 2 Sam. 23:3; Ex.18:21-23; Jer. 30:21)

"...We ought to obey God rather than men..." (Acts 5:29) "...do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul." (Mt. 10:28) (Also Dan. 3:15-18;6:7-10;Acts 4:18-20)

*"...One is your Teacher, the Christ..." (Mt. 23:10)*³

"And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS 4. AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev. 19:16) (Also, Ps. 72:11, Rom. 14:9-13)

XVIII. JUDGEMENT

We believe that the dead both small and great shall be raised up and stand with the living before the judgement seat of God; and that then a solemn and awful separation shall take place wherein the wicked shall be adjudged to everlasting punishment and the righteous to life eternal; and that this judgement will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or in hell on principles of righteousness as set forth in His holy Word.

Scripture References

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (2 Cor. 5:10)

*"The son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Mt. 13:41-43)*¹⁴

XIX. HEAVEN

We believe that Heaven is the indescribably glorious habitation of the living God; and that thither the Lord has gone to prepare a place for His children; that unto this four-square city, whose builder and maker is God, the earnest believers who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and have overcome by the word of their testimony will be carried; that the Lord Jesus Christ will present them to the Father without spot or wrinkle; and that there is unutterable joy when they will ever behold His wonderful face, in an everlasting kingdom where unto comes no darkness nor night, neither sorrow, tears, pain, nor death, and wherein hosts of attending angels sweep their harps, sing the praises of our King, and bowing down before the throne, cry: "Holy, holy, holy."

Scripture References

"...as it is written, 'eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'" (1 Cor. 2:9)

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." (Jn. 14:2)

"There shall be no night there. They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever." (Rev. 22:5)

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21:4)

"Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Rev. 7:15-17)

XX. HELL

We believe that hell is a place of outer darkness and deepest sorrow, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched; a place prepared for the devil and his angels, where there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, a place of grief and eternal regret on the part of them who have rejected the mercy, love and tenderness of the crucified Savior, choosing death rather than life; and that there into a lake that burns with fire and brimstone shall be cast the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, sorcerers, idolaters, all liars, and they who have rejected and spurned the love and sacrifice of a bleeding Redeemer, — passing the cross to their doom, in spite of every entreaty and warning of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

Scripture References

"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His¹ kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Mt. 13:41,42)

"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where² the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20:10,15)

"he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out³ full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever..." (Rev. 14:10,11)

"Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed,⁴ into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (Mt. 25:41) "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where 'Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.'" (Mk. 9:43,44)

"... 'As I live,' says the LORD God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the⁵ wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'" (Ezekiel 33:11)

XXI. EVANGELISM

We believe that seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, and that the end of all things is at hand, the redeemed children of the Lord Jehovah should rise and shine forth as a light that cannot be hid, a city set upon a hill, ²speeding forth the gospel to the ends of the earth, girding the globe with the message of salvation, declaring with burning zeal and earnestness the whole counsel of God that when the Lord of Glory shall appear, they shall be found standing, with their loins girded about with truth, their activities and ministry laden down with the wealth of jewels they have won and guarded for Him, the precious ³souls, whom, by their faithful testimony they have been instrumental in leading from ⁴darkness into light; that soul winning is ⁵the one big business of the Church upon earth; and that therefore every weight and hindrance which would tend to quench the flame or hamper the efficiency of ⁶world-wide evangelism should be cut off and cast away as unworthy of the Church, ⁷detrimental to the most sacred cause of Christ and contrary to ⁸th great commission by our Lord.

Scripture References

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the¹ living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching." (2 Tim. 4:1,2)¹⁶

"redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph. 5:16)2.

"...And he who wins souls is wise." (Prov. 11:30)3.

"let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a4. soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:20)

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear5. a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand." (Ezekiel 3:17,18)

"...lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!6. And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.'" (Jn. 4:35-37)

"Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." 7. (Mt. 9:38)

"...'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'" (Mk. 16:15)8.

XXII. TITHING AND OFFERINGS

We believe that the method ordained of God to sustain His ministry and the spread of the gospel after His command is "Tithing" and is generally accepted throughout all Foursquare churches, not only as God's method to take care of the material and financial needs of His Church, but to raise the spiritual morale of His people to the extent that God must bless them. We are commanded in Malachi 3:10, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this', Says the LORD of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.'" In the matter of "giving" and "free will offerings," they are ordered of the Lord and practiced in all Foursquare churches as part of God's plan for the church's material needs and the spirituality of His people. We are admonished in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Being "joint heirs" with Him we know that giving unto His kingdom which is also ours is an enjoyable thing, it being more blessed to give than to receive, for we are commanded in II Corinthians 9:7, "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."

Scripture Reference

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I

come." (1 Cor. 16:1,2)

Nazarene Articles of Faith

PREAMBLE

In order that we may preserve our God-given heritage, the faith once delivered to the saints, especially the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification as a second work of grace, and also that we may cooperate effectually with other branches of the Church of Jesus Christ in advancing God's kingdom, we, the ministers and lay members of the Church of the Nazarene, in accordance with the principles of constitutional legislation established among us, do hereby ordain, adopt, and set forth as the fundamental law or Constitution of the Church of the Nazarene the Articles of Faith, the Covenant of Christian Character, and the Articles of Organization and Government here following, to wit:

ARTICLES OF FAITH ¹

I. The Triune God

1. We believe in one eternally existent, infinite God, Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe; that He only is God, holy in nature, attributes, and purpose. The God who is holy love and light is Triune in essential being, revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

(Genesis 1; Leviticus 19:2; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Isaiah 5:16; 6:1-7; 40:18-31; Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19-20; John 14:6-27; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 4:4-6; Ephesians 2:13-18; 1 John 1:5; 4:8)

II. Jesus Christ

2. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Triune Godhead; that He was eternally one with the Father; that He became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary, so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say the Godhead and manhood, are thus united in one Person very God and very man, the God-man.

We believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and that He truly arose from the dead and took again His body, together with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven and is there engaged in intercession for us.

(Matthew 1:20-25; 16:15-16; Luke 1:26-35; John 1:1-18; Acts 2:22-36; Romans 8:3, 32-34; Galatians 4:4-5; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:12-22; 1 Timothy 6:14-16; Hebrews 1:1-5; 7:22-28; 9:24-28; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:2-3, 15)

III. The Holy Spirit

3. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Triune Godhead, that He is ever present and efficiently active in and with the Church of Christ, convincing the world of sin, regenerating those who repent and believe, sanctifying believers, and guiding into all truth as it is in Jesus.

(John 7:39; 14:15-18, 26; 16:7-15; Acts 2:33; 15:8-9; Romans 8:1-27; Galatians 3:1-14; 4:6; Ephesians 3:14-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 3:24; 4:13)

IV. The Holy Scriptures

4. We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, by which we understand the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation, so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.

(Luke 24:44-47; John 10:35; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

V. Sin, Original and Personal

5. We believe that sin came into the world through the disobedience of our first parents, and death by sin. We believe that sin is of two kinds: original sin or depravity, and actual or personal sin.

5.1. We believe that original sin, or depravity, is that corruption of the nature of all the offspring of Adam by reason of which everyone is very far gone from original righteousness or the pure state of our first parents at the time of their creation, is averse to God, is without spiritual life, and inclined to evil, and that continually. We further believe that original sin continues to exist with the new life of the regenerate, until the heart is fully cleansed by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

5.2. We believe that original sin differs from actual sin in that it constitutes an inherited propensity to actual sin for which no one is accountable until its divinely provided remedy is neglected or rejected.

5.3. We believe that actual or personal sin is a voluntary violation of a known law of God by a morally responsible person. It is therefore not to be confused with involuntary and inescapable shortcomings, infirmities, faults, mistakes, failures, or other deviations from a standard of perfect conduct that are the residual effects of the Fall. However, such innocent effects do not include attitudes or responses contrary to the spirit of Christ, which may properly be called sins of the spirit. We believe that personal sin is primarily and essentially a violation of the law of love; and that in relation to Christ sin may be defined as unbelief.

(Original sin: Genesis 3; 6:5; Job 15:14; Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Mark 7:21-23; Romans 1:18-25; 5:12-14; 7:1-8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4; Galatians 5:16-25; 1 John 1:7-8

Personal sin: Matthew 22:36-40 {with 1 John 3:4}; John 8:34-36; 16:8-9; Romans 3:23; 6:15-23; 8:18-24; 14:23; 1 John 1:9-2:4; 3:7-10)

VI. Atonement

6. We believe that Jesus Christ, by His sufferings, by the shedding of His own blood, and by His death on the Cross, made a full atonement for all human sin, and that this Atonement is the only ground of salvation, and that it is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. The Atonement is graciously efficacious for the salvation of those incapable of moral responsibility and for the children in innocency but is efficacious for the salvation of those who reach the age of responsibility only when they repent and believe.

(Isaiah 53:5-6, 11; Mark 10:45; Luke 24:46-48; John 1:29; 3:14-17; Acts 4:10-12; Romans 3:21-26; 4:17-25; 5:6-21; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Galatians 1:3-4; 3:13-14; Colossians 1:19-23; 1 Timothy 2:3-6; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:9; 9:11-14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:18-21; 2:19-25; 1 John 2:1-2)

VII. Prevenient Grace

7. We believe that the human race's creation in Godlikeness included ability to choose between right and wrong, and that thus human beings were made morally responsible; that through the fall of Adam

they became depraved so that they cannot now turn and prepare themselves by their own natural strength and works to faith and calling upon God. But we also believe that the grace of God through Jesus Christ is freely bestowed upon all people, enabling all who will to turn from sin to righteousness, believe on Jesus Christ for pardon and cleansing from sin, and follow good works pleasing and acceptable in His sight.

We believe that all persons, though in the possession of the experience of regeneration and entire sanctification, may fall from grace and apostatize and, unless they repent of their sins, be hopelessly and eternally lost.

(Godlikeness and moral responsibility: Genesis 1:26-27; 2:16-17; Deuteronomy 28:1-2; 30:19; Joshua 24:15; Psalm 8:3-5; Isaiah 1:8-10; Jeremiah 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18:1-4; Micah 6:8; Romans 1:19-20; 2:1-16; 14:7-12; Galatians 6:7-8

Natural inability: Job 14:4; 15:14; Psalms 14:1-4; 51:5; John 3:6a; Romans 3:10-12; 5:12-14, 20a; 7:14-25

Free grace and works of faith: Ezekiel 18:25-26; John 1:12-13; 3:6b; Acts 5:31; Romans 5:6-8, 18; 6:15-16, 23; 10:6-8; 11:22; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14; 10:1-12; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 4:10a; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:12-15; 6:4-6; 10:26-31; James 2:18-22; 2 Peter 1:10-11; 2:20-22)

VIII. Repentance

8. We believe that repentance, which is a sincere and thorough change of the mind in regard to sin, involving a sense of personal guilt and a voluntary turning away from sin, is demanded of all who have by act or purpose become sinners against God. The Spirit of God gives to all who will repent the gracious help of penitence of heart and hope of mercy, that they may believe unto pardon and spiritual life.

(2 Chronicles 7:14; Psalms 32:5-6; 51:1-17; Isaiah 55:6-7; Jeremiah 3:12-14; Ezekiel 18:30-32; 33:14-16; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 3:1-14; 13:1-5; 18:9-14; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 17:30-31; 26:16-18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 3:9)

IX. Justification, Regeneration, and Adoption

9. We believe that justification is the gracious and judicial act of God by which He grants full pardon of all guilt and complete release from the penalty of sins committed, and acceptance as righteous, to all who believe on Jesus Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior.

9.1. We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that gracious work of God whereby the moral nature of the repentant believer is spiritually quickened and given a distinctively spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience.

9.2. We believe that adoption is that gracious act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer is constituted a son of God.

9.3. We believe that justification, regeneration, and adoption are simultaneous in the experience of seekers after God and are obtained upon the condition of faith, preceded by repentance; and that to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

(Luke 18:14; John 1:12-13; 3:3-8; 5:24; Acts 13:39; Romans 1:17; 3:21-26, 28; 4:5-9, 17-25; 5:1, 16-19; 6:4; 7:6; 8:1, 15-17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 6:11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 2:16-21; 3:1-14, 26; 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:6-7; 2:1, 4-5; Philippians 3:3-9; Colossians 2:13; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 1:9; 3:1-2, 9; 4:7; 5:1, 9-13, 18)

X. Christian Holiness and Entire Sanctification

10. We believe that sanctification is the work of God which transforms believers into the likeness of Christ. It is wrought by God's grace through the Holy Spirit in initial sanctification, or regeneration (simultaneous with justification), entire sanctification, and the continued perfecting work of the Holy Spirit culminating in glorification. In glorification we are fully conformed to the image of the Son.

We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect.

It is wrought by the baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service. Entire sanctification is provided by the blood

of Jesus, is wrought instantaneously by grace through faith, preceded by entire consecration; and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

This experience is also known by various terms representing its different phases, such as “Christian perfection,” “perfect love,” “heart purity,” “the baptism with or infilling of the Holy Spirit,” “the fullness of the blessing,” and “Christian holiness.”

10.1. We believe that there is a marked distinction between a pure heart and a mature character. The former is obtained in an instant, the result of entire sanctification; the latter is the result of growth in grace.

We believe that the grace of entire sanctification includes the divine impulse to grow in grace as a Christlike disciple. However, this impulse must be consciously nurtured, and careful attention given to the requisites and processes of spiritual development and improvement in Christlikeness of character and personality. Without such purposeful endeavor, one’s witness may be impaired and the grace itself frustrated and ultimately lost.

Participating in the means of grace, especially the fellowship, disciplines, and sacraments of the Church, believers grow in grace and in wholehearted love to God and neighbor.

(Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; John 7:37-39; 14:15-23; 17:6-20; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9; Romans 6:11-13, 19; 8:1-4, 8-14; 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:14-21; 5:17-18, 25-27; Philippians 3:10-15; Colossians 3:1-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Hebrews 4:9-11; 10:10-17; 12:1-2; 13:12; 1 John 1:7, 9)

(“Christian perfection,” “perfect love”: Deuteronomy 30:6; Matthew 5:43-48; 22:37-40; Romans 12:9-21; 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 13; Philippians 3:10-15; Hebrews 6:1; 1 John 4:17-18)

“Heart purity”: Matthew 5:8; Acts 15:8-9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:3

“Baptism with the Holy Spirit”: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Malachi 3:2-3; Matthew 3:11-12; Luke 3:16-17; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4; 15:8-9

“Fullness of the blessing”: Romans 15:29 “Christian holiness”: Matthew 5:1-7:29; John 15:1-11; Romans 12:1-15:3; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:17-5:20; Philippians 1:9-11; 3:12-15;

Colossians 2:20-3:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:7-8; 5:23; 2 Timothy 2:19-22; Hebrews 10:19-25; 12:14; 13:20-21; 1 Peter 1:15-16; 2 Peter 1:1-11; 3:18; Jude 20-21)

XI. The Church

11. We believe in the Church, the community that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord, the covenant people of God made new in Christ, the Body of Christ called together by the Holy Spirit through the Word.

God calls the Church to express its life in the unity and fellowship of the Spirit; in worship through the preaching of the Word, observance of the sacraments, and ministry in His name; by obedience to Christ, holy living, and mutual accountability.

The mission of the Church in the world is to share in the redemptive and reconciling ministry of Christ in the power of the Spirit. The Church fulfills its mission by making disciples through evangelism, education, showing compassion, working for justice, and bearing witness to the kingdom of God.

The Church is a historical reality that organizes itself in culturally conditioned forms, exists both as local congregations and as a universal body, and also sets apart persons called of God for specific ministries. God calls the Church to live under His rule in anticipation of the consummation at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Exodus 19:3; Jeremiah 31:33; Matthew 8:11; 10:7; 16:13-19, 24; 18:15-20; 28:19-20; John 17:14-26; 20:21-23; Acts 1:7-8; 2:32-47; 6:1-2; 13:1; 14:23; Romans 2:28-29; 4:16; 10:9-15; 11:13-32; 12:1-8; 15:1-3; 1 Corinthians 3:5-9; 7:17; 11:1, 17-33; 12:3, 12-31; 14:26-40; 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:1; Galatians 5:6, 13-14; 6:1-5, 15; Ephesians 4:1-17; 5:25-27; Philippians 2:1-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 10:19-25; 1 Peter 1:1-2, 13; 2:4-12, 21; 4:1-2, 10-11; 1 John 4:17; Jude 24; Revelation 5:9-10)

XII. Baptism

12. We believe that Christian baptism, commanded by our Lord, is a sacrament signifying acceptance of the benefits of the atonement of Jesus Christ, to be administered to believers and declarative of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, and full purpose of obedience in holiness and righteousness.

Baptism being a symbol of the new covenant, young children may be baptized, upon request of parents or guardians who shall give assurance for them of necessary Christian training.

Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, according to the choice of the applicant.

(Matthew 3:1-7; 28:16-20; Acts 2:37-41; 8:35-39; 10:44-48; 16:29-34; 19:1-6; Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-28; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:18-22)

XIII. The Lord's Supper

13. We believe that the Memorial and Communion Supper instituted by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is essentially a New Testament sacrament, declarative of His sacrificial death, through the merits of which believers have life and salvation and promise of all spiritual blessings in Christ. It is distinctively for those who are prepared for reverent appreciation of its significance, and by it they show forth the Lord's death till He come again. It being the Communion feast, only those who have faith in Christ and love for the saints should be called to participate therein.

(Exodus 12:1-14; Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; John 6:28-58; 1 Corinthians 10:14-21; 11:23-32)

XIV. Divine Healing

14. We believe in the Bible doctrine of divine healing and urge our people to offer the prayer of faith for the healing of the sick. We also believe God heals through the means of medical science.

(2 Kings 5:1-19; Psalm 103:1-5; Matthew 4:23-24; 9:18-35; John 4:46-54; Acts 5:12-16; 9:32-42; 14:8-15; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; James 5:13-16)

XV. Second Coming of Christ

15. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again; that we who are alive at His coming shall not precede them that are asleep in Christ Jesus; but that, if we are abiding in Him, we

shall be caught up with the risen saints to meet the Lord in the air, so that we shall ever be with the Lord.

(Matthew 25:31-46; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 9:26-28; 2 Peter 3:3-15; Revelation 1:7-8; 22:7-20)

XVI. Resurrection, Judgment, and Destiny

16. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, that the bodies both of the just and of the unjust shall be raised to life and united with their spirits — “they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

16.1. We believe in future judgment in which every person shall appear before God to be judged according to his or her deeds in this life.

16.2. We believe that glorious and everlasting life is assured to all who savingly believe in, and obediently follow, Jesus Christ our Lord; and that the finally impenitent shall suffer eternally in hell.

(Genesis 18:25; 1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 50:6; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2-3; Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-31; 20:27-38; John 3:16-18; 5:25-29; 11:21-27; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:1-16; 14:7-12; 1 Corinthians 15:12-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Revelation 20:11-15; 22:1-15)

(1) Scripture references are supportive of the Articles of Faith and were placed here by action of the 1976 General Assembly but are not to be considered part of the Constitutional text.

(2) Constitutional changes adopted by the 2013 General Assembly are in the process of ratification by the district assemblies at the time of printing. Where changes are being made, words in italics are new words and words in brackets [] are words being deleted.

7 Sacraments of Catholicism

The Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments:

- Baptism
- Eucharist
- Confirmation
- Reconciliation
- Anointing of the sick
- Marriage
- Holy orders

We will take a brief look at each of these. Please note that each definition expresses orthodox Catholic doctrine.

In **baptism**, God's saving grace, His very presence, enters into the human soul. The essential rite of baptism is very simple. The person celebrating the sacrament (usually a priest) says 'I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit' while pouring water over the head of the person receiving the sacrament or dipping the person in water. For Catholics, baptism is the sacrament of salvation and the door to all other sacraments.

Those who partake in the **Eucharist** receive the real Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ in what appears to be bread and wine. During Mass, regular bread and wine are consecrated by the priest, through God's power, when he repeats Jesus's words, 'This is My Body' and 'This is the chalice of My Blood.'

Confirmation provides a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which helps the confirmed Catholic witness to Christ and lead a mature Christian life. The rite of confirmation, usually performed by a bishop, involves the anointing with *chrism* (holy oil), the laying on of hands, and the words 'Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.'

In **reconciliation**, which is also called 'confession' or 'penance,' a Catholic confesses his or her sins to a priest in the spirit of true repentance and receives forgiveness. The priest acts as a visible representative of Christ, who forgives sins through Him, when he says the words of absolution: 'I absolve you of your sins in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.'

Anointing of the sick offers the comfort of God's grace to those who are ill. The sacrament provides spiritual and sometimes physical healing, according to God's will, but also allows the sick person to join his or her sufferings to Christ and prepare for death. The essential rite of this sacrament involves anointing with the oil of the sick and prayer.

Marriage, or matrimony, joins a man and a woman together in a life-long covenant of self-giving love. The two spouses give their consent to join together in marriage as the Church defines it. God gives special grace to the couple that they may live out their vow.

In **holy orders**, men are ordained as bishops, priests, and deacons through a bishop's laying on of hands and prayer. These men are given the grace to live out their lives in service to the Church and to God's people.