

The Doctrinal Statement of Faith
of
Word of Grace Bible Church

Battle Ground, Washington

Compiled on the basis of

"The Confession of Faith of Christian Baptists"
under the editing of I.V. Odintsov
yr. 1928



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I. Of the Word of God

We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament - namely the five books of Moses, the book of Joshua, the book of the Judges, the book of Ruth, the two books of Samuel, the two books of Kings, the two books of Chronicles, the book of Ezra, the book of Nehemiah, the book of Esther, the book of Job, the Psalms, the Proverbs of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, the books of the prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, - as well as the books of the New Testament - the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the Acts of the apostles, the epistle of James, two epistles of Peter, three epistles of John, the epistle of Jude, the epistles of apostle Paul to the Romans, two epistles to the Corinthians, the epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, two epistles to the Thessalonians, two epistles to Timothy, epistles to Titus and Philemon, the epistle to Hebrews, and the Revelations of John - to be true and inspired by the Holy Spirit, so that all of these books combined compose one true revelation to mankind and must be the only source to know God. The Bible in its original form is the inerrant and infallible Word of God. God breathed in all its parts. God spoke in the Holy Scripture by means of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so directed the authors that even though each had an individual character and a different style of writing, each word written by them is the Word of God as a whole and in its individual parts

We believe the Bible to be the only unchanging and infallible rule and standard of our faith and practice. Even though there may be more than one way to practically apply each text of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The Word of God is an object of revelation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit¹.

II. Of God

We believe that there is only one living true and eternal God², perfect in all His attributes, and one in essence. He is eternally existent in three persons - Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, each of whom equally deserves worship and obedience. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit³ in

1 "...So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Peter 1:19-21). "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105). "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them'...'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:29,31). "...sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:15-17). "Sanctify them with Your Truth; Your word is Truth" (John 17:17).

2 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" (Deuteronomy 6:4; also 1 Corinthians 8; 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5).

3 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19; also Genesis 1:26; 3:22; Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 3:16-17; John 14:26; 2 Corinthians 13:13; 1 John 5:7)

their essence and substance are perfect, eternally equal and inseparable⁴ in that the Father is the true eternal God⁵, the Son is the true eternal God⁶, and the Holy Spirit is the true and eternal God⁷.

God the Father

God the Father is the first person of the Godhead Trinity which rules over all things and events according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the creator of all visible and invisible things, movable and immovable (Gen. 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9) and is the only absolute ruler of the universe. He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Rom. 11:36). His fatherhood is determined by His position in the Trinity and in His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Corinthians 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither the author nor the approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own⁸ (Ephesians 1:4-6); He forgives and saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; and He becomes Father to His own, the forgiven (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

God the Son

We believe and teach that Jesus Christ is the second Person in the Godhead Trinity. He possesses all the divine excellences, and in these He is coequal, co-substantial, and co-eternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9). We teach and believe that God the Father created according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2)⁹.

4 "Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father..." (1 John 2:23). "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." (John 14:7-10; also John 16:13-14).

5 "One God and Father of all" (Ephesians 4:6; also Matthew 6:9)

6 "And from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen" (Romans 9:5). "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being...And the Word became flesh" (John 1:1-3, 14). "Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

7 "For who among men knows the {thoughts} of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the {thoughts} of God no one knows except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11). "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the {age} to come" (Matthew 12:32). "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...You have not lied to men but to God" (Acts 5:3-4). "Now the Lord is the Spirit...we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18; also Genesis 1:2; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Peter 4:14)

8 "{There is} one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 1:4-5).

9 "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:15-16; also John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2).

We teach and believe that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ voluntarily surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-Man. (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9). We teach and believe that our Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:709; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

We believe that Jesus Christ accomplished our salvation through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross, and that His death was voluntary, substitutional, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 1 Peter 2:24). On the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18). We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

We believe in the literal and physical resurrection of Jesus Christ according to Scripture¹⁰. In the resurrection from the dead God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

We believe, that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His Body, unto Himself at the rapture, and returning with His church again in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20). We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23). As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His Body, the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), he is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

God the Holy Spirit

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, without origin, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is equal and co-substantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).

We believe that the work of the Holy Spirit is first and foremost expressed in the revelation of

¹⁰ "And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:4).

God's will to mankind. The Holy Spirit was sovereign in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7). We teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost, when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, or righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5, 2:4, Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

We teach and believe that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13). We believe that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth and they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible (2 Peter 1:19-21). Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We believe that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. Spiritual gifts serve for the glorification of Jesus Christ, the redemption of the lost, the edification and strengthening of the believers in the faith and truth, and the perfection of believers unto the work of the ministry for the edification of the body of Christ (John. 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 4:7-12). We believe that the gifts of speaking in foreign tongues, as well as the working of sign miracles, were given to the apostles and prophets in the beginning days of the church and were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and who never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers. In accordance to the formation and collection of the books of the New Testament, the necessity in these gifts decreased to nothing. Speaking in tongues and the working of miracles never have been the sign of witnessing the presence of the Holy Spirit in man (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

III. Of Man

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility before God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

IV. Of Sin

We believe that the sin of disobedience of Adam was his rebellion against the absolute authority of God. Man sinned through the craftiness of Satan and as a result fell away from

God and in that same moment fell with body and soul into a state of death¹¹. Having yielded to the temptation to attempt to become God¹², man denied the Lord, his Creator and by that became guilty before God, incurred the penalty of God's wrath and made himself an eternal slave of sin, utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace (Romans 3:9-23). Because all people came from the seed of Adam, they made themselves participants of that fallen and completely corrupt substance¹³ so that they are conceived and born in sin¹⁴ as, in essence, children of wrath¹⁵, completely unable and not in the least inclined to anything good, but are able and are inclined to all that is evil¹⁶.

V. Of Salvation

We teach and believe that salvation is wholly of God, by grace, on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Regeneration (New Birth)

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the work of the Word of God (John 5:24) when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16, 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's second coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

11 "...for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). "For the mind set on the flesh is death..." (Romans 8:6; also Romans 6:23; Colossians 2:13).

12 "The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5)

13 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh..." (John 3:6). "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men" (Romans 5:12-18).

14 "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5).

15 "Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (Ephesians 2:3)

16 "because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able {to do so,}" (Romans 8:7). "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting {and} wickedness, {as well} {as} deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride {and} foolishness" (Mark 7:21-22). "...all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one..." (Romans 3:10-18).

Election

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those who will believe in and accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2). We believe that from eternity past God's determination and benevolence¹⁷ to redeem sinners was free and governed by nothing outside itself¹⁸. Therefore, just as by the unsearchable and gracious love of God before the creation of the world it was decided in God's council that God with His incarnation and His death would become the Redeemer¹⁹, to those individuals from the fallen race of man, which in the course of time truly must have adopted redemption, chosen by the Father²⁰, their names being written in Heaven ²¹, are given into the hands of the Redeemer²² as His people²³, as the sheep of His pasture, for whom he gave His life²⁴ as His inheritance²⁵ and as His bride. To these persons is given life eternal in Christ Jesus²⁶ and at the same time all means are determined which should bring them to a faith in Christ, to

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- 17 "also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11; also Romans 11:34).
- 18 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).
- 19 "this {Man,} delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put {Him} to death" (Acts 2:23). "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled" (Acts 3:18; also Ephesians 3:10-11).
- 20 "When the Gentiles heard this, they {began} rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). "...but for the sake of the elect, whom He chose, He shortened the days" (Mark 13:20). "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me" (John 6:37). "no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father" (John 6:65). "For you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you...(John 15:16). "And the Lord said to Paul...'Do not be afraid...but go on speaking and do not be silent...for I have many people in this city'" (Acts 18:9-10). "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" (Romans 8:33). "for though {the twins} were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to {His} choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it {does} not {depend} on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy" (Romans 9:11-16). "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" (Romans 9:20). "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity" (2 Timothy 1:9). "How blessed is the one whom You choose and bring near {to You} To dwell in Your courts" (Psalm 65:4; also Matthew 20:16; Luke 18:7; 1 Corinthians 1:26-29; Ephesians 2:8, 10; Colossians 3:12; Psalm 33:12).
- 21 "...And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder..." (Revelation 17:8). "...and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued" (Daniel 12:1; also Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 20:12, 15).
- 22 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word...I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours...Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am..." (John 17:6, 9, 24).
- 23 "...He will save His people from their sin" (Matthew 1:21; also Acts 18:10; Isaiah 53:8).
- 24 "I lay down My life for the sheep...I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice" (John 10:15-16; 26, 27).
- 25 "...so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Ephesians 1:18; also Psalm 29:9).
- 26 "...that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life" (John 17:2; also John 10:28; 1 John 5:11).

holiness, and finally to eternal bliss²⁷. This determination of God is unchangeable and is established forever²⁸ so that those whom it regards – the chosen – cannot be stolen or snatched away from the hands of Christ²⁹, but by the power of God are maintained in faith and love to Jesus until they are made inheritors of His glory³⁰.

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32, 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17).

We believe that should not be looked upon as an authoritative act of God apart from the general character of His Godhead Person. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love³¹. This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally

27 "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined {to become} conformed to the image of His Son...and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified (Romans 8:29-30). "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered...who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood...Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again..." (1 Peter 1:1-3; also Ephesians 1:19; Isaiah 43:5-7).

28 "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). "{For I am} confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6) "For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, And My covenant of peace will not be shaken," Says the LORD who has compassion on you." (Isaiah 54:10). ""If his sons forsake My law And do not walk in My judgments, If they violate My statutes And do not keep My commandments, Then I will punish their transgression with the rod And their iniquity with stripes. But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips" (Psalm 89:30-34; also Isaiah 65:17, 19; Psalm 90:29-33)

29 "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect" (Matthew 24:24). "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day" (John 6:39). "...they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given {them} to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch {them} out of the Father's hand.

30 "who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:8-9). "Blessed be the God...who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to {obtain} an inheritance {which is} imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

31 "for though {the twins} were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to {His} choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER." Just as it is written, "JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED." What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." So then it {does} not {depend} on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? What if God, although willing

consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Redemption and Justification

We believe that God could not have otherwise redeemed man from the terrible consequences of his fall than by the complete satisfaction of His justice³²; thus from eternity past has determined, as a sin offering, His only Son, Jesus Christ³³, to die for us. Following this plan, Christ, the Son of the living God³⁴, in a time determined by God, came to earth in the likeness of sinful flesh³⁵ for the redemption of mankind. He expressed complete obedience; having fulfilled for us all the law of God³⁶, and gave His body and soul as a sacrifice³⁷. He became a curse for us³⁸, took the wrath and punishment of God upon Himself for our sins³⁹.

We believe that the eternal and full salvation⁴⁰ is accomplished by the Son of God – this is the only reason for our salvation⁴¹, and that through Him to us is communicating the forgiveness of all our sin⁴², justification⁴³, eternal righteousness⁴⁴, deliverance from sin, Satan, and Hell⁴⁵, life eternal⁴⁶, and also through this redemption we receive the power to hate sin, die to

to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And {He did so} to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory" (Romans 9:11-23).

32 "...and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22).

33 "For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you" (1 Peter 1:20).

34 "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law" (Galatians 4:4).

35 "...God {did:} sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh..." (Romans 8:3).

36 "...I did not come to abolish [the law] but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). "For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous" (Romans 5:19)

37 "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried..." (Isaiah 53:4). "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). "so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many..." (Hebrews 9:28; also Hebrews 9:14, 26; 10:12, 14).

38 "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us--for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE'" (Galatians 3:13).

39 "He made Him who knew no sin {to be} sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities...the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him" (Isaiah 53:5-6).

40 "...but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12).

41 "And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9)

42 "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). "...blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7; also Colossians 1:14; Matthew 26:28; Acts 20:28).

43 "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

44 "...so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21; also Acts 9:24).

45 "The last enemy that will be abolished is death...then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?"

46 "...God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life" (1 John 5:11-12; also John 11:25-26; John 3:36; 10:28; 2 Timothy

it⁴⁷, desire good and do good⁴⁸. Christ, having fulfilled redemption by His death⁴⁹, arose on the third day from the dead⁵⁰, ascended into heaven⁵¹, sat at the right hand of God⁵², and sent His Holy Spirit to us who leads⁵³ us to accept the Father by faith, who intercedes for us before the Father⁵⁴, who abides with us all our days till the end of time⁵⁵, and finally, the One who will take us to paradise where He prepared a place for us⁵⁶.

We believe that justification before God is His work (Romans 8:33) under which He declares righteous all those who through faith in Jesus Christ repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38, 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and have accepted Him as their personal Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By these means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26)⁵⁷.

Sanctification

We believe that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is declared a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2). We believe that there is also by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the positional standing the believer enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God,

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- 1:10).
- 47 "who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14).
- 48 "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). "for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for {His} good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).
- 49 "...Jesus said...'It is finished!'...He bowed His head and gave up His spirit" (John 19:30).
- 50 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses" (Acts 2:32; also Matthew 28; Matthew 16; Luke 24; John 20).
- 51 "So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).
- 52 "...He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3; 8:1).
- 53 "...and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:14). "and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5).
- 54 "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Hebrews 4:14; also Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1).
- 55 "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).
- 56 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, {there} you may be also" (John 14:3). "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24).
- 57 "for the demonstration, {I say,} of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ 58 (John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23).

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict – the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh – but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin 59 (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-34; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Assurance of Salvation

We believe that the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power⁶⁰ and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1; 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24). We believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14). Those who live this way are Christians only by title, but have never experienced new birth ⁶¹ (Romans 6:15-22; Galatians 5:13; 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

VI. Of the Church

We believe that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride ⁶² of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

We believe that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The church is a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

58 "...who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood" (1 Peter 1:1-2).

59 "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

60 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given {them} to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch {them} out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27-30).

61 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would [no doubt] have continued with us" (1 John 2:19). "the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:8-9).

62 "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

We believe that the establishment and continuity of local churches, created by Jesus Christ, is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25). The church will be edified on earth till the moment of its rapture by Jesus Christ, after which it will abide with Him forever (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We believe that the New Testament clearly teaches and determines the establishment and priority of the local churches (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:27, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that fellowship is a necessity to have for members of one spiritual Body in churches (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25). By the command of Jesus Christ and his apostles⁶³, as well as by the example of the apostolic period and the fulfillment of all establishments of the New Testament⁶⁴, the responsibility of anyone converted to Christ consists in that he must not be left alone, but must attach himself to other disciples of Christ as with members of one body⁶⁵, as with living stones of one house of God⁶⁶, for the mutual edification, comfort, and help on the path of salvation⁶⁷, to abide in the teachings of the apostles, in fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in prayer (Acts 2:42). Such a unification of true disciples of Jesus Christ is founded on the Word of God and is the Church of Jesus Christ. The unchanging rule and governing authority of the Church is the Word of God – the Bible⁶⁸.

Ministers of the Church

We believe that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor-teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

We believe that the Bible, as it speaks of elders, deacons, pastors, teachers, and evangelists,

63 "but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all {aspects} into Him who is the head, {even} Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15-16).

64 For example, the command of church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17).

65 "Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27).

66 "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner {stone,} in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19-22; also 1 Peter 2:5).

67 "Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing...We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone" (1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14).

68 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, {then} you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31).

teaches us not about the different degrees of church authority, but about the different functions of the servants in the church. The Scripture lays the responsibility of spiritual care for the members of the church, first and foremost, through the preaching of the Word of God and prayer⁶⁹. Besides that, the elders participate in the performance of communion, baptism, prayer over the sick⁷⁰, marriage, as well as prayers of blessing with the laying of hands.

Deacons must also possess the qualities outlined in the Holy Scriptures⁷¹. The primary task of a deacon is to render the elder any necessary help in the fulfillment of their ministry; in turn their ministry is in that they are given responsibility over the material side of service of the church.

The ordination of ministers (pastors, teachers, and deacons) is fulfilled by experienced ministers of the local church or ministers invited from other churches after being chosen by the church and having gone through the appropriate examination⁷². All ministers in the church first and foremost carry a direct responsibility before Christ, before each other, before the council of ministers and before the whole church. We believe that with the presence of Biblical qualification and the election by the church the present ministers have God-established authority to proclaim the gospel, to govern and direct the local church as the ministers of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22). The, board of elders, or pastors of the church, are those carrying a special responsibility for the function and development of the church. The members of the church, in turn, submit to the leaders and ministers⁷³.

We believe that God ordained the local church as the building block in the process of the function of the Body of Christ – the universal Church. The local church has no sort of external, man-driven authority to oversee and rule it. The board of the elected, and biblically qualified ministers and the general church congregation possess all the necessary authority for the solving of any matter concerning the life and the practice of the church⁷⁴. The involvement of some foreign ministers or organizations in the matters of the church is only permissible as recommendations given by the request of the church. At the same time, among the different local churches which correspond to each other according to biblical standards, there ought to be upheld a fellowship and an opportunity for mutual aid and mutual joint projects in the work of spreading the preaching of the gospel and the establishment of the church. Each local church itself, through their own elders, determines the degree and form of cooperation and interaction with other churches (Acts 15:19-31, 20, 28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

69 "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

70 "Is anyone among you sick? {Then} he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14).

71 "Deacons likewise {must be} men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, {but} holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience" (1 Timothy 3:8-9).

72 "These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach" (1 Timothy 3:10).

73 "Obey your leaders and submit {to them,} for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).

74 "The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter" (Acts 15:6). "Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas--Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren" (Acts 15:22).

Church Discipline

We believe that spiritual growth of believers in a church occurs by means of their spiritual nourishment in the Word of God⁷⁵ and the interaction with each other, which is presented in Scripture as discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2). Life in the church assumes an interaction of believers with each other as well as their mutual responsibility to each other (Matthew 18:5-14). The church must take measures to reprimand (warn and excommunicate) church members who sin, do not repent, and do not leave their sin. This church discipline is applied on the basis of biblical standards (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16). The church's first and foremost goal is to help the one in sin repent and be restored from that sin⁷⁶.

Spiritual Gifts

We believe that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15, 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8, 2:42).

We believe that for the edification of the church, service to one another, and the giving of glory to God, each born-again Christian receives from God certain spiritual gifts (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11). These gifts are distributed to each Christian by the Holy Spirit by His sovereign will⁷⁷. One of the primary tasks of the church elders is to equip believers for the work of the ministry, helping them correctly identify their gifts for the mutual edification of the church⁷⁸.

We believe that the gifts of miracles, speaking in tongues, direct divine revelation and healing were temporary gifts given to the early church for a specific time span during the period of the formation of the New Testament. These gifts were given to the apostles and prophets of the New Testament with the purpose of establishing the Divine authority of the revelations spoken by them⁷⁹ (2 Corinthians 12:12). With the progression of the collection into one the books of the New Testament, the need for such gifts ceased⁸⁰. Today, the only standard by which any kind of preaching can be examined is the Bible, and there is no further need to authenticate it with some miracle or supernatural action (Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Moreover,

75 "like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation" (1 Peter 2:2).

76 "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and [of] a good conscience, and [of] faith unfeigned" (1 Timothy 1:5).

77 "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills" (1 Corinthians 12:11)

78 "And He gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11).

79 "For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will" (Hebrews 2:2-4).

80 "Love never fails; but if {there are gifts of} prophecy, they will be done away; if {there are} tongues, they will cease; if {there is} knowledge, it will be done away" (1 Corinthians 13:8).

the Bible tells us that in the last days miracles will be used by Satan for the seduction of the world⁸¹ (Revelation 13:1-14). The goal of all spiritual gifts, active today, is to edify and build up the church (1 Corinthians 14:12; Romans 12:6-8).

We believe that, although there are no people in the church today gifted with special miraculous gifts, this does not mean that God does not perform miracles in our day. God is all-powerful and continues to heal the sick and perform miracles in our time in accordance to His will as He answers the prayers of His children (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

Water Baptism

We believe that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer demonstrating his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ, the Church (Acts 2:41-42). In addition to that the water baptism is a demonstration of personal faith of the baptized person and is accepted in an age of consciousness through full emersion, which demonstrates unity with Christ in death to sin and resurrection unto new life in obedience to God (Romans 6:1-11). Baptism is also a visible sign of recognition of one who belongs to the Body of Christ – the Church (Acts 2:41-42).

The Lord's Supper

We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by serious self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). We also teach that, whereas the elements of Communion are only representations of the flesh and blood of Christ, participation in the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ, who indwells every believer, and so is present, fellowshiping with His people. The right to participate in the Lord's Supper is given to those who are born again, who are saved, and who have demonstrated it through water baptism, abiding in peace with God and other members of the local church (1 Corinthians 10:16).

VII. Of Marriage

We believe that marriage is established by God for fellowship, mutual assistance between a man and a woman⁸², and for the multiplication and reproduction of humanity⁸³. We also believe that a man must have only one wife, and a wife only one husband - so long as both are

81 "the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11).

82 "Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18).

83 "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it..." (Genesis 1:27-28).

alive⁸⁴. We acknowledge that Christians can enter into wedlock only with those, who are in the Lord with other believers⁸⁵.

Marriage presents with itself a mutual devotion of the man and woman to each other before God and His church. This commitment is made only once to last a lifetime⁸⁶. All problems arising between the husband and the wife must be resolved in the spirit of Christian love and humility on the basis of the Holy Scriptures. The Bible forbids divorce⁸⁷ no matter the circumstance, except in the case of adultery⁸⁸ or in the case where an unbelieving husband or wife leaves a believing wife or husband⁸⁹.

Wedlock, being a divine and legal establishment, besides being committed before God and the church, must be documented in accordance with the laws of the country.

VIII. Of Citizenry Order

We believe that God established the institution of earthly authority for the purpose of checking sinful humanity from complete corruption⁹⁰. Earthly government has authority from God to defend those doing good and punish the evil⁹¹. It is our belief that Christians are responsible to fully and unconditionally submit to and obey the laws of the country they live in⁹² if these laws do not oppose the principles of Scripture⁹³. Christians are also responsible, by the command of God, to pray for the government⁹⁴ so that it would, by His will and under his

84 And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created {them} from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matthew 19:4-6).

85 "A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39).

86 "and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matthew 19:5-6).

87 "But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband" (1 Corinthians 7:10).

88 "but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for {the} reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 5:32).

89 "Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such {cases,} but God has called us to peace" (1 Corinthians 7:15).

90 "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God" (Romans 13:1).

91 "for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil" (Romans 13:4)

92 "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities...Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for {rulers} are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax {is due;} custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Romans 13:1, 5-7; also Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13, 14, 17).

93 "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21; also Acts 4:19, 19; 5:29, 42).

94 "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties {and} prayers, petitions {and} thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all

merciful protection, use the entrusted authority to preserve peace and justice.

We believe that the government, which, according to Scripture, does not bear the sword in vain, has the right and obligation, according to God's law, punish those who commit evil⁹⁵ and to use the sword in protection of the citizens. Along with this we acknowledge that in the end evil is never defeated by evil⁹⁶. In connection with this we believe that the participation in military service is a matter undertaken by the personal conscience of every Christian. No one can judge those who are in military duty, as well as force those to participate in military service who out of deep conviction ask to be freed from carrying arms.

IX. Of the Spiritual World

Holy Angels

We believe that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9)

Fallen Angels

We believe that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1-15).

We believe that Satan is the direct and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 4:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10); that he is the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Rev 20:10).

Death

We believe that physical death is a moment when the spirit of a person separates from the body⁹⁷. The soul of a person is immortal. The souls of the persons who are dead are now in full consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11). Besides this, the souls of saved people are now in the presence of Jesus Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8), but the souls of unbelievers are in expectancy of great judgment and punishment⁹⁸. For saved people this separation will continue to take place until the moment of rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), when our souls and body will be again reunited and glorified through our Lord (Philippians

men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

95 "for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil" (Romans 13:4).

96 "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

97 "But I am hard-pressed from both {directions,} having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for {that} is very much better" (Philippians 1:23).

98 "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one {of them} according to their deeds" (Revelation 20:13).

3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54).

We believe in a bodily resurrection of all, believers and unbelievers. Believers will be resurrected unto eternal life with Christ (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), but unbelievers - unto judgment and eternal punishment⁹⁹ (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15).

We believe that salvation is possible only during the earthly life of people. After death a man has no opportunity to change his place of eternal residence¹⁰⁰. The souls of the unsaved after death will be under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:29-26; Revelation 0:13-15), when the soul and body in the moment of resurrection will be united (John 5:28-29), after which they will stand before the great white throne to be judged (Revelation 20:11-15) and thrown into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41-46), where they will abide in torment, eternally separated from life with God (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

X. Of the Last Things

We believe that one day the Church of Jesus Christ will be taken from the earth. Herewith the bodies of believers, that are left alive until that time, will be transformed. Believers who are going to be in eternity before that day will receive new bodies, will unite with Christ, and the remaining brothers and sisters in the Lord to be with Him for all eternity¹⁰¹.

We believe in the literal bodily return of Jesus Christ to earth in might and in glory to judge the unrighteous, and to establish the kingdom of God forever¹⁰². We believe that preceding the Second coming will be seven years of the Great Tribulation in the time of which God's wrath will be poured out on the living of the earth (Revelation chap. 6-19).

We believe that with His Second coming Jesus Christ will establish the Kingdom of the Messiah for 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-7). At that time all the resurrected holy ones will reign with Him over Israel and other nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Revelation 19, 11-6). Immediately before the thousand-year reign, the kingdom of Antichrist, the false teacher and prophet¹⁰³, will be defeated and thrown into the lake of fire while Satan will be chained and imprisoned for a thousand years (Daniel 7:17-27; Revelation 20:1-7). We believe that the thousand-year reign will be a fulfillment of a promise given to Israel in the Old

⁹⁹ "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace {and} everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

¹⁰⁰ "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and {that} none may cross over from there to us" (Luke 16:26).

¹⁰¹ "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of {the} archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

¹⁰² "then {comes} the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:24).

¹⁰³ "And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone" (Revelation 19:20).

Testament where God promised to reestablish them to the earth that they lost because of their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 36:21-28; Zachariah 8:1-17). The result of disobedience was that God works with the Gentiles for many years (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1-26). The great tribulation and the thousand year reign will be the fulfillment of God's word that Israel again will be awakened through repentance to enter the Promised Land (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Zachariah 12:10-14; Romans 11:25-29).

We believe that after the thousand-year reign of the Messiah, Satan will be freed for a short period of time (Revelation 20:7). During this period Satan will seduce the people of the earth and gather them to wage battle against the holy ones and against Jerusalem. In this moment a fire from heaven will devour Satan and his whole army (Revelation 20:9). After this Satan will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

We believe that all those who have not received salvation will be literally and physically resurrected unto judgment before the great white throne. They will be judged by God in accordance with the works that they have done on earth¹⁰⁴ and will be thrown into the lake of fire unto eternal punishment because their names are not written in the book of life¹⁰⁵.

Eternity

We believe that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be burned up and dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth, wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15, 21-22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21-22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up to the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).

We firmly hold to the accurate and clear sayings of the Holy Scripture which tells us that just as blessedness, the torment of a person after this life will be unchangeable, and believe that both of these conditions are eternal¹⁰⁶. Consequently any transfer from one condition into another and any salvation after death is impossible¹⁰⁷. We then, as we remember the words of our Lord "Behold, I am coming soon" together with the Spirit and the bride, the Church, of which we consider ourselves to be members, exclaim "Amen. Come ye, Lord Jesus!"

¹⁰⁴ "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is {the book} of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds" (Revelation 20:12).

¹⁰⁵ "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).

¹⁰⁶ "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46).

¹⁰⁷ "And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this {comes} judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).