

ARTICLES OF RELIGION

GENERAL STATEMENT

We believe in the fundamental doctrines of the orthodox Christian Protestant denominations. We preach sound, wholesome doctrine, and contend for the Faith once delivered to the Saints (Jude 3). We emphasize the necessity of vital Christian experience and a transformed life. We believe Doctrine is important, and neither the Church nor the Ministry will be effective without it. The Apostles were careful about their doctrine. Saint Paul said to Timothy, "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16 NKJV).

I. OF FAITH IN THE HOLY TRINITY

1. There is but one living and true God, everlasting, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, 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 Spirit.

II. OF JESUS CHRIST, OR SON OF GOD, AND HIS INCARNATION

2. 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 came to save us, having truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile us to His Father, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for the actual sins of man.

III. OF THE RESURRECTION AND IMMORTALITY

3. We believe in the Immortality of the Soul and the Resurrection of the Body. Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again His body (making provision for the perfection of man's nature), wherewith He ascended into heaven. The Scriptures teach that there are to be at least two resurrections. There is to be a resurrection of life for the redeemed; and, the unrepentant shall suffer eternally in hell (John 5:29). At Christ's coming the dead in Christ and the living saints are to be caught up to meet Him in the air (1 Cor. 15:22-23; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). Paul speaks of "the resurrection out of the dead ones." It must be this "better resurrection" that he wished to obtain (Phil.3:11; Heb.11:35; Rev. 20:5-6).

IV. OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

4. The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God. The Holy Spirit is the administrator of the salvation planned by the Father and provided by the Son's Death, Resurrection, and Ascension. He is the effective agent in our conviction, regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. He is our Lord's ever-present Self, indwelling, assuring, and enabling the believer. The

Holy Spirit is poured out upon the Church by the Father and the Son. He is the Church's life and witnessing power. He bestows the love of God and makes real the lordship of Jesus Christ in the believer so that both His gifts of words and service may achieve the common good, and build and increase the Church. In relation to the world, He is the Spirit of truth; and His instrument is the Word of God.

V. THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES FOR SALVATION

5. The Holy Scriptures contain 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 for salvation. We believe that all Scripture is the infallible Word of God, fully inerrant in the original manuscripts.

The Holy Scriptures, we understand, are those sixty-six canonical books of the Old and the New Testament whose authority is recognized by the Church.

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and the New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites does 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 to the commandments which are called moral. We believe the Scriptures are both the judge and authority of the Church and the final authority for all mankind.

VI. OF ORIGINAL, OR BIRTH SIN

6. Original Sin is the corruption of the nature of every man, that is engendered in the offspring of Adam because of his rebellion, whereby man is far from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil.

VII. OF FREE WILL

7. 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 giving us a heart to do God's will. Through Jesus Christ the prevenient grace of God makes possible what man cannot do for himself. But God's grace is not coercive.

VIII. OF REPENTANCE

8. We believe in "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance is giving up a wrong way and taking up a right way; that is, a ceasing from sin—made possible by the grace of God. As the pain of a physical malady leads a patient to an earthly physician, so repentance leads a person to the Great Physician.

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, said, "Repent," and this implies renunciation of all sin (Matt. 3 : 2).

(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. OF THE SALVATION OF MAN

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. We believe in Justification by Faith. Faith is the one condition; for by the deeds of the law shall no man be justified. 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. We believe that adoption is that gracious act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer is constituted a child of God. A justified person seeks to live without knowingly committing sin. He may ignorantly transgress the law, but in this case sin is not imputed. "Whoever has been born of God does not sin" (1 John 3:9a). "Whoever abides in Him does not sin" (1 John 3:6a). We do not infer here that one cannot sin after one is justified. One may do so and fall. However, not every sin willfully committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Spirit, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the gift of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Spirit, we may depart from grace given, and except in case of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12: 31), we may by the grace of God rise again and amend our lives.

(Luke 18:14; John 1:12-13; 3:3-8 ; 5:24 ; Acts 13:39; Romans 1:17; 3:21-28; 4:5-9 , 17-25; 5:1, 16-19; 6:4, 7; 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. OF SANCTIFICATION

10. We believe that the grace of entire sanctification includes the impulse to grow in grace. However, this impulse must be consciously nurtured and careful attention given to the requisites and processes of spiritual development and improvement in "Christ-like-ness" of character and personality. Without such purposeful endeavor one's witness may be impaired and the grace itself frustrated and ultimately lost. Sanctification is preceded by entire consecration. It is an act of faith, and usually follows salvation (Acts 26:18; 1 Thess. 5:23). We do not teach sinless perfection (in the sense that one is free from mistakes and infirmities), but Christian Perfection, defined as purity of heart and life. This is the fundamental doctrine of the New Testament. It is the "holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). John Wesley,

the founder of Methodism, when asked what he meant by Christian perfection, used the words of Jesus: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength... You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31 NKJV).

This experience is also known by various terms, such as: "Christian perfection," "perfect love," "heart purity," "the baptism with the Holy Spirit," "the fullness of the blessing," and "Christian holiness."

(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; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 4:17-5:20; Philippians 1:9-11; 3:12; 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. OF GOOD WORKS

11. 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 judgments; yet they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of love combined with a true and lively faith.

XII. OF THE CHURCH

12. The visible Church of Christ is created by God as a congregation of faithful believers in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance. It is both an organism and organization. The New Testament Church is built on Christ, and against it the gates of hell cannot prevail. It is a regenerated Church, a Spirit-baptized Church, a joyful, witnessing Church, carrying a burden for the salvation of a lost world upon its heart, and looking forward to that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). The mission of the Church in the world is to promote the redemptive work of Christ in the power of the Spirit through holy living, evangelism, discipleship and service.

XIII. OF DIVINE HEALING

13. We believe in Divine Healing for the body, as clearly taught in the Scriptures. There are those who testify to divine healing in answer to prayer (James 5:14-16). We believe God also heals through the means of Medical Science.

XIV. OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, AND THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS

14. We believe in the Pre-Millennial Coming of the Lord, the rapture of the Church and the Restoration of the Jews. More than three hundred times Christ's coming is mentioned in the New Testament. It is the polar star of the Church and the hope of every believer. We mean by Christ's return, His visible appearing on the earth to reign a thousand years following the great tribulation. We believe we are now nearing the time of the end, when a remnant of Israel will be spiritually restored, and the end of the Gentile dominion is to take place.

XV. OF FINAL JUDGMENT

15. We believe in the Judgments as taught in the Scriptures. The time is coming when all the wrongs of earth will be righted, the uneven scales of Justice will find their balance, and man will be dealt with according to the deeds done in the body. Christ paid the debt on Calvary for all who will accept Him (John 19:17-18). Those who repent and continue to the end, do not come into judgment, except to receive their reward (John 5:24). The Judgment of the Church, or Bride of Christ, takes place when she is caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord. This may be called a Judgment of Works. Paul says, "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Rom. 14:10b). When Christ shall come again, faithful Christians will be rewarded according to their works (Luke 14:14; Rev. 22:12). The next is the Judgment of Nations which takes place when Christ returns with His Bride. This will be at Jerusalem (Matt. 25). The Last Judgment is that of the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:12-15). The saints will be associated with Christ in this Judgment, and therefore will not be a part of it. It will be for the dead, small and great, who will be raised after the Millennium, and will be brought before the Judge to receive their final sentence, prior to being cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15). That will be a momentous hour when the secrets of all ages will be unfolded before men, angels and devils.

XVI. OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

16. We believe the unsaved will go away into everlasting punishment and the righteous into Life Everlasting (Matt. 25:46). Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). There is to be a place of punishment for the unrepentant somewhere in the universe. God calls it the place of outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Between the holy and the unholy in the other world there is an impassable gulf (Luke 16:26).

XVII. OF THE SACRAMENTS

17. Water Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the sacraments of the Church commanded by Christ. They are means of Grace through faith, tokens of our profession of Christian faith, and signs of God's gracious ministry toward us. By them, He works within us to quicken, strengthen, and confirm our faith.

XVIII. OF BAPTISM

18. We believe in water Baptism, not that it is essential to salvation, but that it is an outward sign of regeneration, or of divine life that is imparted to the soul in the new birth. We believe that either pouring, sprinkling, or immersion is Scriptural and give the candidate his or her preference as to the mode.

XIV. OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

19. The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but also 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 represents the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing represents the blood of Christ. The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only in a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means is faith, whereby the body of Christ at the Supper is received and eaten. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper should to be administered to all Christians alike.

XX. OF THE ONE OBLATION OF CHRIST, FINISHED UPON THE CROSS

20. 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.

XXI. OF MARRIAGE

21. We believe that Marriage is a divine institution and should not be entered into indiscreetly. At creation God instituted marriage for the well-being of humanity (Genesis 2:20-24; Mark 10:6-9). Marriage is the joining of one man and one woman into a lifelong relationship which the Scriptures call "one flesh." In this union the two retain their individual identities, but subordinate them to the larger relationship of marriage. Marriage is the only proper setting for sexual intimacy. Scripture requires purity before and faithfulness within marriage. It condemns all unnatural sexual behavior such as incestuous abuse, child molestation, homosexual activity, and prostitution (I Corinthians 6:9; Romans 1:26-27). Marriage therefore, should be safe-guarded and supported by both church and society. This calls for public vows. It is not enough for a couple to live together in private commitment; they are to covenant before God and State.

XXII. OF THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

22. We do not hold to any special form in the general conduct of our church service. It is not necessary that the order of conducting divine worship should be the same at all times and places. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17b). But there is also order, for, as the Scripture says, "God

is not the author of confusion" (1 Cor. 14:33a); and while we hold it evil to quench the Holy Spirit, we are no less careful that "all things be done unto edifying" (1 Cor. 14:26b), and "in the beauty of holiness" (1 Chron. 16:29 and Psalm 29:2) KJV.

XXIII. OF EARTHLY POSSESSIONS

(SEE ALSO SPECIAL ADVICES V)

23. We believe that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, and that, according to our Lord's command, we should not lay up for ourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break in and steal (Matt. 6:19). Our treasures are to be laid up in heaven that we may be rich toward God (Luke 12:21). For where our treasure is there will our heart be also (Matt. 6:21). Our Lord further says, that "Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33). "You cannot serve God and mammon [money]" (Matt. 6:24b). This fact St. Paul had in mind when he said, "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:4). It is evident, therefore, that the true follower of Christ must consecrate all that he has, as well as himself, to his Master to be available for service or sacrifice.

XXIV. OF A CHRISTIAN MAN'S OATH

24. Vain and rash swearing is forbidden in Scripture by our Lord Jesus Christ and James, His Apostle. On the other hand, we judge that Scripture does not prohibit taking an oath when required by a magistrate under the law.

XXV. OF THE RULERS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

25. Christians are citizens of the kingdom of God and also of this world. They receive benefits and bear responsibilities from both relationships. Their first allegiance is to God; but that does not release them from responsibilities to country, if they do not conflict with the clear teachings of the Scripture (Romans 13:1-7). They should pray for "all who are in authority" (1 Timothy 2:2) and should "submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (1 Peter 2:13). They should actively participate in civic life by involvement in constructive efforts for the improvement of social, cultural, and educational standards (Matthew 5:13-16); by opposition to degrading influences (2 Peter 2:4-10); and by the exercise of the right to vote.