

Section 1: The Holy Scriptures

- a. The Bible, which contains the Old and New Testaments, is the only written revelation of God to humanity and is authoritative in all matters of saving knowledge, faith, and conduct.
- b. The Scriptures, which are sufficient, complete, and without error, reveal God's will. They are the final authority, revealing the way to salvation and the principles by which we should live.
- c. The Old and New Testaments, given by God, guide us in all aspects of life and are to be fully accepted and obeyed.
- d. The books commonly called the Apocrypha were not given by divine inspiration and so are not part of the canon or standard of the Scriptures. Therefore, they have no authority for the church of God and are not to be recognized or used in any way different from other human writings.
- e. The authority of the Scriptures does not depend on any human testimony or church but solely on God, their author. We are moved to believe in their truthfulness not by external proofs but by the Holy Spirit speaking through them.
- f. Some parts of the Bible are easier to understand than others, and some people grasp its teachings more clearly than others. However, the essential truths necessary for salvation are presented so plainly in various parts of the Bible that everyone, regardless of education level, can gain a satisfactory understanding of them through normal means of study.
- g. The Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek, being directly inspired by God, are preserved by Him through the ages. They are the final authority for the Church.
- h. The Scriptures are the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, human teachings, and private interpretations must be examined and judged by them.

(Mark 10:19; 12:29-30; Matthew 12:40; Isaiah 8:20; Luke 24:27, 44; Romans 15:4; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 3:15-16; 1 Corinthians 2:1-13; Galatians 1:11-12; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 4:2)

Section 2: God and the Holy Trinity

- a. There is only one living and true God, eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. He is self-sufficient and sovereign over everything.
- b. God is singular in His essence but exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; each with distinct persons, but without division of nature, essence, or

being. This God has revealed Himself to humanity through His works of creation, providence, and redemption.

- c. God the Father is self-sufficient, infinite, and perfect. Only God can fully comprehend His divine essence; He is a pure, invisible spirit, not limited by human form or emotion. He is immortal and exists in a realm of unapproachable light. God never changes, is omnipresent, has always existed, and cannot be fully understood by us. He is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, completely holy, and all-wise.
- d. In God's sovereign plan, Jesus Christ stands as the mediator between God and man, fulfilling the roles of prophet, priest, king, and the savior of all who genuinely believe. Being fully God, Jesus incarnated, embracing humanity's frailties yet without sin. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin.
- e. His death on the cross, and His resurrection manifest His complete submission and victory over sin. He ascended bodily to intercede for us before God and will return as the ultimate judge. By His sacrifice, Jesus satisfied divine justice, enabling reconciliation and securing eternal salvation for those the Father has granted Him.
- f. The Holy Spirit is God, the third person of the Trinity, who is actively at work in the world. He dwells permanently in every genuine believer, helps them to pray, comforts them, teaches them, convicts people of sin, equips and empowers believers to serve God, strengthens and molds them to be more like Christ, producing in them the fruit of the Spirit, and protects believers to guarantee their eternal life.
- g. God used the sign gifts to authenticate the Apostles' message and establish the early church. We believe in the Holy Spirit's role in divine revelation given to the writers of the Old and New Testaments. We affirm that with the completion of the 66 books of the Bible, divine revelation to add to the word of God has ceased. We believe that God is Sovereign and may use individuals to display miracles if He pleases, especially where the gospel is forbidden or unavailable. However, we also acknowledge the warning of Scripture against false miracles. Thus, we approach the miraculous with healthy skepticism.

(1 John 5:7; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14 ; Exodus 3:14; John 1:1, 14; 14:11; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:1-3,14,18; 15:26; Galatians 4:6; Isaiah 55:8-9; Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Jeremiah 10:10; Isaiah 48:12; 1 Timothy 1:17; Malachi 3:6; Psalm 5:5-6; 1 Kings 8:27; Jeremiah 23:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3-6; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:2, 2:14-17, 4:17, 9:14, 10:14; Romans 8:30, 9:5; 1 Timothy 2:5; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 12:12; 13:8-11; 14:21-22; Acts 5:3-4; Romans 8:14-16,26; Galatians 5:22-26; Matthew 7:21-29; 1 John 4:1; Ephesians 1:13; Titus 3:4-7).

Section 3: God's Decree

- a. God has decreed from eternity all things that happen, doing so freely and for His own glory. This decree does not make God the author of sin, nor does it violate the will of creatures or take away the free working and the contingency of secondary causes.
- b. Although God knows everything that could happen under any condition, His decree of salvation applies only to the elect, whom He has chosen in Christ out of grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works.

(Isaiah 45:7; 46:9-10; Ephesians 1:3-5; 1:11; Hebrews 6:17; Romans 8:30; 9:11-18; 11:5-6, 20; James 1:13; Numbers 23:19; Acts 15:18; 1 Timothy 5:21; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2:19; Matthew 25:34; Jude 4; John 13:18; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2, 10)

Section 4: Creation

- a. In the beginning, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created the universe and everything in it, not from preexisting materials but from nothing, by His Word, in six days, and it was all very good.
- b. After creating all things, God continues to uphold, direct, dispose, and govern them according to His purpose, manifesting His unchangeable power, wisdom, and goodness. This includes the foreordination of all events, yet God is neither the author of sin nor has fellowship with any in their sin.

(Genesis 1:26-28,31; 2:7,17; 3:6; John 1:2-3; Hebrews 1:2; Romans 1:20; Colossians 1:16; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Romans 2:14-15)

Section 5: Divine Providence

- a. God, in His wisdom and power, upholds and governs all creatures and all their actions, directing them to His purposes. This governance is universal, meticulous, and harmonious, exercised in accordance with His infallible foreknowledge and His immutable decree.
- b. God's providence extends to the first fall and all other sinful actions of angels and humans. While He has a purpose in permitting them, He does not create or approve of sin, nor does He destroy the will or accountability of His creatures.
- c. In His providence, God makes use of means, yet He is free to work without, above, or against them at His will. In all this, His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy shine forth.

(Hebrews 1:3; Isaiah 46:10; 55:10-11; Acts 2:23; Romans 4:19-21; 8:28; 11:32-34; Psalm 76:10; 135:6; Ephesians 1:4-5,11; Genesis 50:20)

Section 6: The Fall of Man, Sin, and Its Punishment

- a. God created humanity in His own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. However, by disobeying God's command, they fell from their original state, bringing sin and corruption into the human race.
- b. This fall brought all humanity under God's wrath and curse, subjecting them to death and eternal separation from Him. Every person is now born in sin, leading to guilt and a corrupt nature.
- c. The effects of this sin are pervasive, corrupting the mind, will, emotions, and body, making humans wholly inclined to evil and deserving of eternal damnation.
- d. Despite the fall, God still endows humans with the dignity of His image, but the saving relationship can only be restored through Christ.

(Genesis 2:16; 3:12,13; 6:5; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Romans 3:10-19,23; 5:12-19; 6:20-23; 7:18-25; Titus 1:15; Jeremiah 17:9; 1 Corinthians 15:21,22,45,49; Psalms 51:5; Job 14:4. Ephesians 2:3; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; James 1:14,15; Matthew 15:19; Romans 8:7; Colossians 1:21; Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 1:8; Galatians 5:17)

Section 7: God's Covenant

- a. The distance between God and humanity due to sin is bridged only through God's establishment of a covenant of grace, wherein He freely offers sinners life and salvation through Jesus Christ, requiring faith for them to be saved.
- b. This covenant was manifested first to Adam after the fall, then through successive promises in the Old Testament, and finally fulfilled in the New Testament through Christ. This covenant of grace is one throughout all time, though administered differently before and after Christ's coming.
- c. Under the law, this covenant was given through promises, prophecies, sacrifices, and circumcision, all pointing to Christ. Now, in the Gospel, Jesus Christ has fulfilled the law and ministers to believers through His Word and Spirit.

(Romans 3:20-21; 4:1-2; 8:3; Titus 1:2; Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 6:44-45; Galatians 3:10; Genesis 2:17; 3:15; John 8:56; Acts 4:12)

Section 8: Jesus Christ the Mediator

- a. It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the mediator between God and man. As the mediator, He is the prophet, priest, and king, the head and savior of the Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world.

- b. Jesus, being the true and eternal God, became human, yet without sin. He perfectly fulfilled the law, suffered, and died on the cross for the sins of all who believe in Him for salvation.
- c. By His obedience and sacrifice, Christ has fully paid the debt of all those who are justified by faith in Him, securing their eternal redemption. He was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven, where He intercedes for His people and ensures their eternal salvation.
- d. Jesus was fully God and fully man, not fifty percent man and fifty percent God.

(Isaiah 42:1; 53:10; 1 Peter 1:19-20; Acts 2:36; 3:22; 17:31; Hebrews 2:14-17; 5:5-6; 7:22,26; 9:15; Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Timothy 2:5; John 5:22,27; 10:18; Romans 5:10; Philippians 2:5-11)

Section 9: Free Will

- a. God has endowed the will of man with natural liberty and the power to choose good or evil, yet without coercion. However, in the state of innocence, man freely chose to sin, losing the freedom to choose good.
- b. Because of the fall, human wills are in bondage to sin and cannot turn themselves to God or do good without the grace of God regenerating them.
- c. When God converts a sinner and transforms the will, it is enabled to choose and perform that which is pleasing to God, yet not without continual need for divine grace.

(James 1:14; Deuteronomy 30:19; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Genesis 3:6; Romans 3: 10-12; 5:6; 7:15-23; 8:7; John 6:44; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:13)

Section 10: Effectual Calling

- a. At the appointed time, God effectually calls all those whom He has predestined to life through the ministry of the Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit. This call invites them to Jesus Christ for salvation and is irresistible, leading to conversion.
- b. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not on account of anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive until, being made alive and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.
- c. Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit. The same is true for all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.
- d. Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word and may experience some common operations of the Spirit, cannot be saved because the Spirit does not work in them the grace of conversion.

(Romans 8:30; 11:7; Ephesians 1:10-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Ephesians 2:1-10; Ezekiel 36:26-27; Deuteronomy 30:6; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Matthew 13:20-21; 22:14; John 6:44-45, 65)

Section 11: Justification

- a. God graciously justifies those He elects, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and accounting their faith as righteousness. This faith He gives them is in Jesus Christ's atonement.
- b. Justification is based solely on Christ's righteousness credited to us, not on any work we do. Faith is the only means by which we receive this justification, and even this faith is a gift from God.
- c. Although good works are evidence of faith and gratitude towards God, they do not contribute to our justification. The full merit of Christ's sacrifice is the sole basis for our acceptance by God.
- d. This doctrine of justification brings peace, assurance, and joy to believers, grounding their confidence in Christ alone for their salvation.

(Romans 3:24,28; 4:5-8; 5:17-19; Ephesians 1:17; 2:8-10; Philippians 3:8-9; Galatians 5:6; James 2:17; Hebrews 10:14; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:5-6; Colossians 1:21-22; Titus 3:4-7; 1 John 1:7-9; John 10:28; Psalm 32:5; 51)

Section 12: Adoption

- a. God has not only justified believers but also adopted them into His family, granting them all the privileges of sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. This includes a spirit of sonship, grace, comfort, and a promise of inheritance.
- b. Adoption gives believers the liberty and access to approach God confidently as a Father. Although God may discipline believers and bring them into trial, these are signs of God's fatherly love and are meant for their good.

(Ephesians 1:5; 2:18; 4:30 Galatians 4:4-6; John 1:12-13; Romans 8:15-17; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Hebrews 12:6)

Section 13: Sanctification

- a. Those united to Christ, justified, are also sanctified by God's word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification is progressive, increasing in strength and perfection over a believer's life.

- b. Sanctification involves a dying off of old sins and a coming to life of righteousness. It is imperfect in this life, as remnants of corruption linger in every part of them, causing a continual and irreconcilable war within.
- c. The war between the flesh and the Spirit continues throughout the Christian life, but the victory ultimately belongs to the grace of God, which will fully sanctify the believer in eternity.

(Acts 20:32; Romans 6:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-23; Romans 6:14; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Galatians 5:16-24; 1 Peter 2:11)

Section 14: Saving Faith

- a. Faith that saves is the work of the Spirit of Christ in the hearts of the elect, enabling them to believe the gospel promise. This faith leads them to rest on Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life.
- b. The strength of this faith varies among believers and may be weak or strong, yet even the weakest faith receives the same Christ, the same righteousness, and the same means of salvation.
- c. Faith is ordinarily produced by the ministry of the Word. It can also be increased and strengthened through the Lord's supper, baptism, prayer, and other means appointed by God.

(Ephesians 2:8; Acts 15:11; 16:31; 20:32; 1 John 5:4-5; Romans 10:14, 17; 2 Timothy 1:12; John 1:12-13; Galatians 2:20)

Section 15: Repentance to Life and Salvation

- a. Repentance unto life is a gospel grace, wherein a person, made aware by the Holy Spirit of the manifold evils of their sin, humbles themselves for it with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, with a purpose and endeavor for walking before God so as to please Him in all things.
- b. Repentance must be diligently pursued throughout the entire life of a believer, recognizing that the heart is deceitful and constantly prone to wander from God.
- c. Repentance involves a genuine turning from every known sin towards God, with a heartfelt intent to walk in obedience to His commandments. While no one can do this perfectly, the sincere effort and direction of one's life are evidence of true repentance.

(Titus 3:2-5; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Ezekiel 36:31; Luke 19:8; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 2 Timothy 2:25; 2 Peter 1:10; 3:9)

Section 16: Good Works

- a. Good works are only those actions that God commands in His holy Word. They should flow from a true faith, conform to the Scriptures, and be done for God's glory, not to earn salvation.
- b. These works are the fruits and evidence of a true and lively faith. Through them, believers express their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, build up fellow believers, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of adversaries, and glorify God.
- c. Although good works done by believers are imperfect and mixed with sin, they are accepted in Christ, have their reward in this life, and have the promise of the future.
- d. Believers are not able to think, will, or do any good works without the influence of the Holy Spirit. However, the obligation to perform them is not nullified by their inability, nor should they grow negligent because they are preserved in Christ.

(James 2:18; 1 John 2:3-5; Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:12-13; Romans 3:20; Galatians 5:22-23; John 15:4-5)

Section 17: The Perseverance of the Saints

- a. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, called, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace but shall persevere to the end. This assurance, however, does not make them careless but motivates them to spiritual diligence.
- b. This perseverance depends not upon their own free will but upon the immutability of the decree of election, the love of God, the efficacy of Jesus Christ's merit and intercession, and the abiding of the Spirit and seed of God within them.
- c. Although they may fall into grievous sins and temporarily continue in them, they are renewed to repentance and preserved through faith in Christ Jesus to the end.

(John 10:28-29; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 John 2:19; 3:9; Psalm 89:31-32; Romans 8:30; 9:11,16; Matthew 24:13)

Section 18: The Assurance of Grace and Salvation

- a. False believers and unregenerate persons may think they are saved, but they deceive themselves.
- b. Believers can be assured of their eternal salvation through their faith in Christ, which leads them to believe in the Gospel promises. This assurance comes from the divine truth of the promises, the inward evidence of the graces to which these promises are made, and the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, which witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God.

- c. This assurance is not a constant experience because it can be shaken by negligence, serious sin, or God's withdrawal to renew their dependence on Him. Yet, the Spirit of God never leaves the saints without some presence and seed of God within them.
- d. This assurance does not belong to the essence of faith but is attainable through the Spirit enabling believers to know the things freely given to them by God.

(Matthew 7:21-23; 1 John 2:3; 4:13; Romans 6:1-2; 8:15-16; Hebrews 6:11)

Section 19: The Law of God

- a. God gave Adam a law of universal obedience written in his heart and a specific command not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. By disobeying, he and all his descendants were subjected to the curse of the law.
- b. This law, after the fall, continues to be a perfect rule of righteousness and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai. God's law to Israel included the ceremonial law, the moral law, and their civil law.
- c. Christians are not under the law as a covenant of works to be thereby justified or condemned, yet it is of great use to them and to others as a rule of life informing them of God's moral standards and their duty. It directs and binds them to walk accordingly, also revealing the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives.

(Genesis 1:27; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Galatians 3:10-12, 21; Romans 2:14-15; Colossians 2:14-17; Matthew 5:17-19; James 2:10-11)

Section 20: The Gospel and the Extent of Its Grace

- a. The Gospel is the revelation of the promise of grace, made first to Adam and afterward by further steps until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament. It is the only means of conveying the knowledge of Christ and saving grace, and it is to be spread to all nations and people.
- b. Although the Gospel is offered freely to all, the saving power of the Holy Spirit is necessary to produce faith in the hearts of individuals. Thus, not all who are called by the Gospel are effectually called.
- c. The Gospel's grace extends to all sorts of sinners, inviting them to repentance and belief in Christ for forgiveness and salvation. Those who do not respond in repentance and faith toward this offer are left without excuse, as the Gospel is sufficient for salvation and is made accessible to all.

(Romans 1:16-32; Revelations 13:8; Luke 24:46-47; Ephesians 1:19-20; 2 Corinthians 4:4)

Section 21: Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience

- a. The liberty Christ has won for believers under the gospel includes freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law, and in this life, freedom from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation. It also grants them free access to God and the yielding of obedience to Him not out of slavish fear but a child-like love and willing mind.
- b. All these liberties are further extended, in greater fullness, to them in their eternal state, where they enjoy freedom from the presence of sin, the suffering of afflictions, the sting of death, and the victory of the grave.
- c. God's grace also frees the believers' consciences from the man-made doctrines and commandments that lead to superstition and spiritual tyranny, securing their right to undertake activities guided by the Gospel within the bounds of God's Word.

(Galatians 3:13; 5:13; Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Romans 6:14)

Section 22: Worship Assembly and the Sabbath Day

- a. The church meets on the first day of the week because this was the custom that the early church followed, not because the Sabbath was transferred from Saturday to Sunday.
- b. As the custom of many, on Sundays, believers gather in their localities to worship the Triune God, to celebrate the resurrection, to give to His work, to pray, and to preach His word.
- c. God who is Sovereign over all must be worshipped by faith, in fear, and with godly reverence. However, the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself in the Scriptures and is so limited by His own revealed will.
- d. Congregational worship should be given to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and on no account to angels, saints, or any other creature. Worship includes prayers, praises, and the offering of pledges when warranted by the Scriptures.
- e. The believers are not bound by the Jewish Sabbath, which is considered classified under ceremonial law. Believers are not under the ceremonial law but under grace. However, believers must value and practice the habit of rest for such is the will of God.
- f. Although congregational worship is often on Sundays, other days of the week may be valid if there are reasonable constraints or due to preferences.
- g. Other assemblies that the local church should practice are prayer meetings, fellowship, breaking of bread, and teaching and studying God's word.

(Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25)

Section 23: Lawful Oaths and Vows

- a. A lawful oath is a part of religious worship, wherein the person swearing solemnly calls upon God to witness the truth of what he swears. It should be made with the utmost fear and reverence, only in matters of weight and importance.
- b. An oath is warranted by the Word of God, so a lawful oath, being imposed by lawful authority in such matters, ought to be taken.
- c. Vows, which are voluntary commitments to God, must not be made to any creature but to God alone, and they must be performed with the utmost care and faithfulness, considering the seriousness of making promises to God.

(James 5:12; Nehemiah 13:25; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Matthew 5:37; Leviticus 19:12)

Section 24: Church and State

- a. God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world has ordained government leaders, law enforcement officers, or judges to be under Him and over the people for His own glory and the public good. For this purpose, He has armed them with the power to defend and encourage those who do good and to punish evildoers.
- b. Christians may lawfully accept and execute the office of a government leader, law enforcement, or judge when called upon. In the performance of such duties, they are especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each kingdom and commonwealth.
- c. Our position at all times shall be that it is better for us to obey God than men. Every local church should protect the flock from anti-biblical interferences from the state. In this sense, we uphold the separation of church and state, but we affirm the Christian duty to honor and pray for those in government authority, especially to pray for their salvation.
- d. It is the believers' duty to follow the law where the law does not compel us to commit acts of sin and immorality. As salt and light in this world, we are to promote and contribute to society's general welfare. Furthermore, we believe that individual believers may be called to serve in government, and if so, they should do so with the supreme intent to glorify God.

(Luke 3:14; 2 Timothy 2:1-2; Romans 13:1-7; Matthew 5:13-16; 22:15-22; Mark 12:17; Acts 5:29; 1 Peter 2:13-17;)

Section 25: Marriage

- a. God is the author of marriage, which is between a biological male and a biological female. It is not right for a man to have more than one wife or a woman to have more than one husband at any given time. Marriage should not be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden in the Scriptures.

- b. God ordained marriage for companionship, mutual support, mutual pleasure, for filling the earth with children, and to prevent sexual immorality.
- c. Entering a marriage must be done with full consent; no one should be forced into marriage against their will.
- d. Marriage is a lifelong commitment, not to be dissolved at will by any but for serious causes like infidelity, domestic violence, and as the Scriptures allow.
- e. God's design in marriage is for the husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church, to cherish and nourish her. The wife should submit and respect her husband as unto the Lord. Husband and wife should treat marriage as the most sacred of human relationships.
- f. Christians should marry within the faith; thus, those who follow Biblical Christianity should not marry unbelievers, atheists, false believers, or idol worshippers. Similarly, the faithful should not marry those who live wickedly or those who hold to beliefs that lead to damnation.

(Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6; 1 Corinthians 7:2, 9; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Ephesians 5: 25-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7)

Section 26: The Church

- a. The universal church, which may be called invisible, consists of all the elect who have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ, the head thereof. This church is the bride, the body, and the fullness of Him who fills all in all. This universal church is made up of many congregations called local churches, which are communities of believers.
- b. Only Christ is the head of the church, no other occupies this position. Anyone claiming to be the head of the church, claiming authority that is higher than the word of God, is an antichrist or operates in the spirit of an antichrist, usurping dominion over the church.
- c. The Lord Jesus Christ appoints the order in worship and discipline of the church; no man may invent or enforce any mode of worship or system of governance in the church more than what Christ has commanded through His Word.
- d. The New Testament model of church leadership is not singular but plural. Bishops, elders, and pastors, who are all shepherds, work together to lead the local churches. The local church gathers for worship, teaching, outreach, and mutual edification, upholding the practices established by the New Testament.
- e. All believers must become members of a local church when and wherever they can. In conformity with Christ's teaching, everyone who is granted church privileges is also subject to its governance and discipline. Members of a local church express their commitment to Christ and to each other.

- f. Membership in a local church requires regular participation in communion, worship, fellowship, devotion to studying the Holy Bible with other believers, equipping, and engagement in the church's mission to evangelize and disciple all nations.
- g. While there is no such thing as a flawless local church, the fact that some have consistently succumbed to false doctrine and immoral behavior indicates that these churches are not of God.

(Ephesians 1:22-23; Hebrews 12:23; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 4:11-16; 5:32; Acts 2:42-47)

Section 27: The Communion of Saints

- 1. All saints are united to Jesus Christ, their head, by His Spirit and faith, although they are not united in a particular place. Being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces and are obliged to perform such duties, public and private, in a manner that promotes their mutual good, both inwardly and outwardly.
- 2. All believers, which the Bible calls saints, by profession, are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God and perform other spiritual services to help them edify one another. They should also relieve each other in outward things according to their various abilities and needs, which communion, as God offers opportunity, is to be extended to all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

(1 John 1:3; Romans 6:5-6; Ephesians 4:15-16; Hebrews 10:24-25)

Section 28: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

- a. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances directly established by the Lord Jesus Christ. They are symbols of the Christian's participation in Christ and affirmations of God's commitment to the Church. Both are to be observed by Jesus' followers until the end.
- b. Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, given by Jesus Christ, to be a sign of the believer's fellowship with Him in His death and resurrection, of being grafted into Him, of remission of sins, and of giving up oneself to God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life.
- c. The only proper subjects of baptism are those who actually profess repentance toward God, faith in, and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ.
- d. The outward element to be used in baptism is water, wherein the person is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary for the proper administration of this ordinance.

- e. The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus Christ to confirm believers' faith in all the benefits of Christ's death, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, their further engagement in and to all duties they owe to Him, and their bond and pledge of their communion with Him and with each other.
- f. In this ordinance, Jesus Christ is presented and conveyed to the Church in the substances of bread and wine, which are symbols of His body and blood, which believers partake of as a spiritual act of worship.

(Matthew 26:26-28; 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 11:23-29, 2 Corinthians 6:14-15; Romans 6:3-5)

Section 29: The State of Man After Death and the Resurrection of the Dead

- a. The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God—the righteous to rest with Him, the wicked to be reserved under darkness to judgment. The Scripture acknowledges no place for purgatory.
- b. On the last day, those who are alive shall not die but be changed, and all the dead shall be raised up with the selfsame bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever.
- c. The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonor; the bodies of the just, by His Spirit, unto honor and be made conformable to His own glorious body.

(Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 23:43; John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:42-43; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Philippians 3:21)

Section 30: Angels and Demons

- a. Innumerable and invisible angels are divine messengers and servants who worship God, enact His will, and support His followers. Contrarily, Satan, and demons, who were once angels, now embody rebellion against God, fostering malice and impeding divine objectives.
- b. They endeavor to mislead humanity, but their end is sealed by Christ's triumph. This guarantees their eventual judgment and perpetual banishment from God's presence, ceasing their capacity to negatively affect His creation and people. This ensures the ultimate sovereignty of God over evil, as upheld by the Scriptures.
- c. We believe that Satan and demons are not mere symbols but real personas at war against the kingdom of God. Our Lord Jesus treated Satan as a persona, calling him a deceiver and liar. The Lord Jesus and His disciples encountered demons who exhibited personal qualities.

- d. Believers overcome Satan by submitting to God, resisting through the Word of God, through prayer, and not by cursing Satan. We also believe that Christ has given believers authority over demons and empowered them to cast them out in His name.

(Matthew 1:20, 4:1-11; Luke 10:17; Acts 5:16, 8:6-7, 16:18; Isaiah 14:12-17; Hebrews 1:6-14; 2 Peter 2:4,11; Ezekiel 28:14-16; Isaiah 6:1-7; Luke 1:19, 4:1-13; Daniel 9:21, 10:13; Jude 9-10; James 4:7)

Section 31: The Last Judgment

- a. God has appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment are given of the Father. On that day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise, all persons that have lived upon the earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds, and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.
- b. The intent of God to appoint this day is for the manifestation of the glory of His mercy, in the eternal salvation of the elect; and of His justice, in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient. For then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and glory with everlasting rewards, in the presence of the Lord; but the wicked, who know not God and obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast aside into everlasting torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.
- c. Christ wants us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity. This doctrine of the Last Judgment is to be esteemed a most precious doctrine, as it comforts and supports the righteous in their suffering, with the expectation of the completion of their hope in the fullness of joy and everlasting life where they shall receive the fruits of their labor and the reward given by God Himself.

(John 5:22-27; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:8; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Romans 14:10; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

Section 32: Purity of the Gospel

- a. Through His suffering and death, Christ satisfied the justice and wrath of God against sin, but because He had no personal sins, death could not claim Him in the grave; He resurrected, thus defeating death. God's justice and mercy were fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ, resulting in eternal life for all who, by His grace, would repent and believe.

- b. The gospel contains the claims and person of Jesus Christ and the significance of His work, and the gospel proclamation should include the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, gospel presentations should call people to repent, believe, and deny the self.
- c. The apostles persuaded others to repent from dead works, to have faith, and to believe. We should not lessen the gospel's impact by removing repentance and self-denial. We believe in defending the purity of the gospel proclamation, that no one should make even the smallest of adjustments. The gospel must be presented accurately because it is the power of God to salvation.

(Matthew 3:2,8,11; 4:17; Luke 5:32; 11:32; 13:3-5; 24: 44-47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:19-20; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 1:6-12; 2 Timothy 2:25; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelations 2:5,16,21-22; 3:3,19; 16:9,11; Ezekiel 36:31)