

THE ARTICLES OF FAITH (BFM1925)

I. THE SCRIPTURES

We believe that the *Holy Bible* was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried.

Scripture References: Luke 16:29-31; Ephesians 2:19-22; Matthew 22:29-32; John 1:45; II Timothy 3:14-17; Hebrews 1:1; II Peter 1:19-21; Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119:1-9, 105.

II. GOD

There is one and only one living and true God, an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe, infinite in holiness and all other perfections, to whom we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. He is revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

Scripture References: Genesis 1:1; Exodus 3:14; Deuteronomy 5:6-7; Deut. 6:4-5; Isa. 48:12-13; Jer. 10:10, Matt. 28:19; John 1:14-18; John 5:26; Gal. 4:4-6; I Tim. 1:17; I Cor. 8:4-6; Hebrews 11:6.

III. THE FALL OF MAN

Man was created by the special act of God, as recorded in Genesis (Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:7). He was created in a state of holiness under the law of his Maker, but, through the temptation of Satan, he fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and in bondage to sin, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors.

Scripture References: Romans 3:21; Gen. 1:27; Gen. 2:7; Gen. 3:4-7; Gen. 3:22-24; Psalm 51:5; John 1:23; Rom. 5:12-14; Rom. 7:23-25; Col. 1:21.

IV. THE WAY OF SALVATION

The salvation of sinners is wholly of grace, through the mediatorial office of the Son of God, who by the Holy Spirit was born of the Virgin Mary and took upon Him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by His personal obedience and made atonement for our sins by His death. Being risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven, and, uniting in His person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, He is in every way qualified to be a compassionate and all sufficient Savior.

Scripture References: Matt. 1:21-25; Luke 1:35; Rom. 1:1-6; Rom. 3:25; I Cor. 13:3-4; Gal. 2:19-20; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:7-14; Eph. 1:20-23; Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 1:21-23.

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V. JUSTIFICATION

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of righteousness of all sinners who believe in Christ. This blessing is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but through the redemption that is in and through Jesus Christ. It brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other needed blessing.

Scripture References: Rom. 3:21-26, 5:1-2, 8:30; I Cor. 1:30-31; II Cor. 5:21

VI. FREENESS OF SALVATION

The blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel. It is the duty of all to accept them by penitent and obedient faith. Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner except his own voluntary refusal to accept Jesus Christ as teacher, Savior, and Lord.

Scripture References: Mark 16:16; John 3:14-18; Rom. 5:1-11; I Cor. 1:30-31; Eph. 1:5; Eph. 2:4-10; Rev. 22:17.

VII. REGENERATION

Regeneration of the new birth is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit, whereby we become partakers of the divine nature and a holy disposition is given, leading to the love and practice of righteousness. It is a work of God's free grace conditioned upon faith in Christ and made manifest by the fruit which we bring forth to the glory of God.

Scripture References: John 1:12-13; John 3:1-8; Rom.8:1-3; II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:1-10; Eph. 4:30; Col. 3:1-11; Titus 3:3-7.

VIII. REPENTANCE AND FAITH

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

Scripture References: Mark 1:14-15; Mark 6:12; Luke 13:1-5; John 16:8-11; Acts 2:38, 3:19, 17:30, 20:20-21; Rom. 3:25-31.

IX. GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE

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

Scripture References: Acts 26:18; Rom. 8:29-30; Rom. 11:7-16; Eph. 1:9-10; Eph. 1:15-23; Eph. 2:4-7; II Tim. 1:8-10.

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X. SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is the process by which the regenerate gradually attain to moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts. It continues throughout the earthly life, and is accomplished by the use of all the ordinary means of grace, and particularly by the Word of God.

Scripture References: John 17:15-17; Acts 20:32; Romans 6:3-7; Romans 8:17-28; II Cor. 3:18; Galatians 5:16-26; Eph. 3:14-21; Heb. 12:14.

XI. PERSEVERANCE

All real believers endure to the end. Their continuance in well-doing is the mark which distinguishes them from mere professors. A special Providence cares for them, and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Scripture References: Matt. 26:70-75; John 10:27-31; Rom. 5:8-10; Rom. 8:28-39; Rom. 9:16; I Cor. 11:32; II Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14; Eph. 4:30; II Timothy 2:19; I John 2:19-20.

XII. A GOSPEL CHURCH

A church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the end of the earth. Its Scriptural officers are bishops or elders, and deacons.

Scripture References: Matt. 16:18; Matt. 18:15-18; Acts 2:41-47; Acts 14:21-24; I Cor. 1:2; I Cor. 9:6, 14; Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:1-13.

XIII. BAPTISM AND LORD'S SUPPER

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The act is a symbol of our faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior. It is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation and to the Lord's Supper, in which the members of the church, by the use of bread and wine, commemorate the dying love of Christ. Scripture References: Matt. 3:13-17; Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; Matt. 26:26-27; Luke 22:19, 30; John 3:22-23; Acts 8:38-39; Rom. 6:3-5; I Cor. 10:16-17; I Cor. 11:23-26.

XIV. THE LORD'S DAY

The first day of the week is the Lord's day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, and by refraining from amusements, and resting from secular employments, works of necessity and mercy only excepted.

Scripture References: Matt. 28:1-6; John 20:1; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:9-11.

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XV. THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

There is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and wicked. Those only who are justified through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit are truly righteous in His sight. Those who continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked and under condemnation. This distinction between the righteous and the wicked holds in and after death, and will be made manifest at the judgment when final and everlasting awards are made to all men.

Scripture References: Matt. 25:31-46; Mark 9:48; Luke 23:43; John 3:36; Rom. 9:22-24; I Cor. 15:45-53; II Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 3:20-21; I Thess. 4:16-17; Rev. 20:10-15.

XVI. THE RESURRECTION

The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus rose from the dead. His grave was emptied of its contents. He appeared to the disciples after His resurrection in many convincing manifestations. He now exists in his glorified body at God's right hand. There will be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. The bodies of the righteous will conform to the glorious spiritual body of Jesus.

Scripture References: Matt. 28:6; John 5:28-29; John 14:1-3; John 20:1-29; Acts 24:14-15; I Cor. 15:1-58; II Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 3:20-21, I Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 20:12-15.

XVII. THE RETURN OF THE LORD

The New Testament teaches in many places the visible and personal return of Jesus to this earth. The time of His coming is not revealed. It is the duty of all believers to live in readiness for His coming and by diligence in good works to make manifest to all men the reality and power of their hope in Christ.

Scripture References: Matt. 24:29-44; Mark 13:24-37; Luke 21:25-28; Acts 1:9-11.

XVIII. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to the church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The Gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Scripture References: Matt. 24:17-21; Mark 12:13-17; Rom. 13:1-7; I Tim. 2:1-4; I Peter 2:17.

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XIX. PEACE AND WAR

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war. The true remedy for the war spirit is the pure gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace and oppose everything likely to provoke war.

Scripture References: Matt. 5:3-12; Matt. 5:38-48; Rom. 14:17-19; Rom. 12:17-21; Heb. 12:14; James 4:1-3.

XX. EDUCATION

Christianity is the religion of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is therefore a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. An adequate system of schools is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people. The cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches.

Scripture References: Deut. 4:1-14; Deut. 6:1-10; Psalm 19:7-11; Prov. 4:1-13; Neh. 8:1-9; Matt. 28:19-20; Col. 2:2-7; II Tim. 2:14-15.

XXI. SOCIAL SERVICE

Every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ reign in his own life and in human society; to oppose in the spirit of Christ every form of greed, selfishness, and vice; to provide for the orphaned, the aged, the helpless, and the sick; to seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth and brotherly love; to promote these ends, Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth. All means and methods used in social service for the amelioration of society and the establishment of righteousness among men must finally depend on the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Scripture References: Ex. 20:16; Ex. 22:9-15; Lev. 6:1-5; Deut. 4:41-42; Deut. 15:1-2; Deut. 27:17; Ezek. 18:5-9; Zech. 8:16-17; Luke 10:25-37; Luke 6:27-36; Rom. 12:14-21; Col. 3:12-17; James 2:8.

XXII. CO-OPERATION

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over each other or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Individual members of New Testament churches should cooperate with each other, and the churches themselves should cooperate with each other in carrying forward missionary, educational, and benevolent programs for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such

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cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His word as revealed in the New Testament.

Scripture References: Ezra 1:34, 2:68-69, 5:14-15; Neh. 4:4-6, 8:14; Mal. 3:10; Matt. 10:5-15, 20:1-16, 22:1-10; Acts 1:13-14, 1:21-26, 2:1, 2:41-47; I Cor. 1:10, 3:1-15, 11:12, 16:2; II Cor. 9; Eph. 4:1-16; III John 5-8.

XXIII. EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

It is the duty of every Christian man and woman, and the duty of every church of Christ to seek to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life. It is also expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by personal effort and by all other methods sanctioned by the gospel of Christ.

Scripture References: Matt. 10:5-15, 13:1-23, 22:8-10, 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16, 16:19-20; Luke 24:46-53; Acts 1:4-8, 2:1-4, 21, 39; 8:1-40, 10:42-48, 13:1-3, 13:30-33; II Cor. 5:19-21, I Thess. 1:1-8.

XXIV. STEWARDSHIP

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. We have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the Gospel, and a building stewardship in our possessions. We are therefore under obligation to serve Him with our time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to us to use for the glory of God and helping others. Christians should cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally contribute of their means to advancing the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Scripture References: Lev. 27:30; Mal. 3:8-10; Matt. 23:23, 25:14-30; Luke 12:41-48; Acts 2:44-47; I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 8:1-15.

XXV. THE KINGDOM

The Kingdom of God is the reign of God in the heart and life of the individual in every human relationship, and in every form and institution or organized human society. The chief means for promoting the Kingdom of God on earth are preaching the gospel of Christ, and teaching the principles of righteousness contained therein. The Kingdom of God will be complete when every thought and will of man shall be brought into captivity to the will of Christ. And it is the duty of all Christ's people to pray and labor continually that His Kingdom may come and His will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

Scripture References: Dan. 2:37-44, 7:18; Matt. 4:23, 6:10, 8:12, 13:25; Mark 11:10; Luke 12:32, 22:29, 23:42; John 3:3, 18:36, I Cor. 15:24; Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28.