

HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN CHRISTIAN UNION

The Churches of Christ in Christian Union traces its origin as an independent body to the year of 1909 at the council of The Christian Union Churches which was held at Marshall, Ohio. A prominent breach was present among the churches of that district. The point of controversy was the preaching of holiness as a second definite work of grace subsequent to regeneration. Those opposed to such preaching, being in the majority, enacted certain legislation to silence those upon whose preaching they frowned. Instead of being silenced, this group, led by The Reverend J.H. McKibban, withdrew by compulsion and took the name "The Churches of Christ in Christian Union."

On October 27, 1909 a convention of this group was held at the Christian Union publishing house at Washington Court House, Ohio with The Reverend E.S. Cartwright presiding. At this convention a charter of The Churches of Christ in Christian Union was read and endorsed by the ministry and members present. There was also a Declaration of Rights written and presented. Being no longer members of the council of Christian Union Churches, this new group was compelled to establish their own council.

The first council of The Churches of Christ in Christian Union was held at Jeffersonville, Ohio October 28 to 31, 1909. The Reverend E.S. Cartwright was moderator of this council. Annual councils have been held from that date. At the thirty-seventh annual council at Circleville, Ohio in 1945 legislation was enacted amending the Articles of Incorporation and resolutions passed permitting the organizing of other state and district councils and their incorporation in this body of believers.

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The first general council (composed of all districts) was held at Circleville, Ohio in 1948. General councils are held every two years. Before the work of redistricting was completed in 1959, there were districts in Ohio, Michigan, West Virginia, and the Northeast District composed of New York and northern Pennsylvania, the latter district having been formed by the affiliation and merger of the Reformed Methodist Church of New York with The Churches of Christ in Christian Union. The Northeast District was composed of churches in New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. The other three districts were divided into two; namely, North Central and South Central, the two being divided by a line following U.S. Highway 40 from the Ohio Pennsylvania line westward to the junction of U.S. 22; thence southwest and west on U.S. 22 to Washington Court House and the junction of U.S. 35; thence northwestward to the junction of U.S. 40; and from there westward following U.S. 40.

In 1972 the South Central District was divided to form the Southern District. Churches which remained in the South Central District were in Ohio (see northern boundary above), Kentucky, Indiana, and West Virginia. The new Southern District was composed of churches in Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida. In 1979 these two districts were reunited into a single district known as the South Central District.

On July 15, 1972 the North Central District Council passed a resolution to divide the North Central District into two (2) districts; namely, the Midwest and the Mideast. The Midwest District was composed of all Ohio churches in the North Central District west of U.S. Route 23 and all of the Indiana churches. The Mideast District was composed of all North Central District churches east of U.S. Route 23 and all Michigan churches. In 1979 these two districts were reunited into a single district which is known as the West Central District.

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In its missionary work the church is active in fields around the world. Through partnership with World Gospel Mission we have missionaries working in Bolivia, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, The American Indian Field in Arizona and New Mexico and Hispanic Ministries in the USA. A school has been built in connection with the Papua New Guinea mission.

The official publication of the church is *The Evangelical Advocate*. Ohio Christian University (Circleville Bible College) was established by council action and began its first year in 1948.

A new administration building housing both the school and the offices of the general church work was erected on the Mount of Praise grounds in 1953. A new library and laboratory building was erected in 1958. In 1964-65 a new brick and stucco dormitory was erected. Continued growth of the school necessitated plans for a new campus. After extensive study a forty acre campus was laid out on the north side of U.S. 22 east of Circleville on the church farm. Construction was started in 1966 with the erection of an administration building. A men's dormitory, the chapel, and a combined classroom dining hall followed rapidly.

In September, 1969, full classroom operations were started at the new campus. In 1970 a student center building was completed. Landscaping and athletic fields have also been provided. In 1972 phase one of the campus development was completed with the erection of the women's dormitory. Townhouses were constructed in 1977 to house married students. The Melvin and Laura Maxwell Library was constructed in 1979. Since that time, a new townhouse has been constructed (1998), upgrades to both the women's (1997) and men's (1998) dormitories, an addition doubling the size of the Melvin and Laura Maxwell Library (1999) the completion of the Maxwell Leadership Center, initially in 2007 with additional phases completed in 2012.

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The university also added additional dormitory space from 2007-2010. Each of the districts conducts its own annual camp meeting, youth camps, and councils. The Northeast District operates Lily Lake Campground near Port Crane, New York. The South Central District Campground is located in the community of Nipgen, northwest of Waverly, Ohio.

The Mount of Praise camp meeting is an annual function of the general department. In 1996 the Mount of Praise moved to the Ohio Christian University campus. The East Ohio Street location was sold in 1998. In 2005 the denomination completed a conference center facility west of the Maxwell Library. Youth facilities for the Mount of Praise camp were completed July 2006 with accommodation for 90 plus students.

In cooperation with Ohio Christian University and The Churches of Christ in Christian Union ground was broken for a new leadership ministry center on August 13, 2006. This new facility houses many of the university's sports, special events, executive offices, cafeteria, university bookstore as well as the worship center for the Mount of Praise camp. A new denominational headquarters, known as the Global Ministry Center, was completed in July of 2008 and relocated across the street from the university at 1553 Lancaster Pike.

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WHAT WE TEACH

As a church we unite in our basic beliefs of what the Scriptures teach. Such teachings, or doctrines, are valid only as they are based in God's Word. No other source is an acceptable authority — no individual, any tradition, any religious writings or church dogma. This section lists the topics of our shared doctrine, and the short summary accompanying each topic contains the scripture on which we base that statement.

I. GOD, THE FATHER

A. God the Father is the first Person of the Trinity.

God as the Trinity consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is three distinct personalities, yet one God, often referred to as God, the Three in One (Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19). Note that whatever the Bible teaches about God applies to the Godhead and God the Father equally.

B. God is the creator of the entire universe.

He is the creator of man, all other creatures, and of the universe itself (Genesis 1).

C. God is omnipotent.

He is all powerful; He is the Almighty (Genesis 17:1; Jeremiah 32:17-18, 27).

D. God is omnipresent.

He is present everywhere at once (Psalm 139:7-10).

E. God is omniscient.

He knows all things, and nothing is hidden from Him (Psalm 139:1-6; Hebrews 4:13).

F. God is eternal.

He has neither beginning nor ending. He is the first cause of all things, and all things derive from Him (Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalm 90:2; Habakkuk 1:12).

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G. God is holy and just.

In the Old Testament alone He is called the Holy One of Israel over 30 times (Psalm 89:18; Isaiah 1:4). He is a just God (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 89:14). His holiness is just, and His justice is holy (Genesis 18:25; Exodus 34:5-7).

H. God is loving and merciful.

His love and mercy extend to all His creatures (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8, 12).

I. God is worthy of our total trust and submission.

Because He is all wise and loving, we should submit our wills to Him and trust Him implicitly (Job 13:15; Psalm 37:3, 5; Proverbs 3:5; 2 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Timothy 1:12).

II. GOD THE SON, JESUS CHRIST

A. Jesus Christ is God.

He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. All that has been said of the Father may be said of the Son (John 1:1-3).

B. Jesus Christ was man.

For the redemption of humanity He became a man. (1) He was born of the Virgin Mary, having been conceived by the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:18-21; Luke 1:26-35). (2) He lived a sinless life, having been born without sin though in all other things He shared our humanity (John 8:46; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26-28).

C. Jesus Christ is our Savior.

Of His own free will and volition He laid down His life and was crucified for our salvation. He as our substitute went to the cross. He actually died for us (Romans 5:6-8; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

D. Jesus Christ is alive.

The third day He rose from the grave and showed himself to more than 500 witnesses (Matthew 28:5-6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:5-6; John 20; Acts 2:22-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-9).

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Forty days later He ascended to heaven in the presence of many believers and is now sitting at the right hand of the Father interceding for us (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11; 7:56; Hebrews 4:14-16).

E. Jesus Christ will return to earth.

At the end of this age the coming of Jesus will be in two phases (Acts 1:11). First, He will come to translate the Church to heaven and to himself (John 14:1-3 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; 1 John 3:1-3). Second, He will come to judge the existing nations and set up His millennial kingdom of 1,000 years; therefore, His second coming will be premillennial (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:1-6).

F. Jesus Christ will be our judge.

He will finally judge all mankind and all fallen spirits at the end of time (John 5:22-29; Revelation 20:7-15).

III. GOD, THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. The Holy Spirit is God.

He is one with the Father and with the Son, and all that has been said of the Father may be said of the Holy Ghost.

B. The Holy Spirit is a person.

He is not a mere influence (John 16:13-14).

C. *The Holy Spirit is the source of conviction.*

He is the agent of the Godhead in the convicting of sin (John 16:7-11).

D. *The Holy Spirit is the administrator of God's grace.*

He is active in converting and regenerating those who repent (John 3:5-6) and in sanctifying the lives of believers (Acts 15:8-9).

E. *The Holy Spirit is the indwelling sustainer.*

He dwells within believers giving them comfort, aid, counsel, and ability to live victoriously in this life (John 14:16-17; Acts 9:31).

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F. *The Holy Spirit is the source of our understanding about Christ.*

He magnifies Christ within the vision and life of the Christian (John 16:13-15).

IV. THE BIBLE

A. *The Bible is God's inspired Word.*

Holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to write God's message for us. The Bible is inspired in a sense distinctly different than any other book. The Word which He inspired has also been preserved by Him, and that preservation is in itself a verification of the claim of inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).

B. *The Bible is infallible.*

God has provided a totally accurate and dependable record of His message (Deuteronomy 32:4; 2 Samuel 7:28). It is infallible in every detail, especially in the original languages, Hebrew and Greek.

C. *The Bible is the only rule of faith and practice.*

As the only rule, the Bible is a sufficient authority on which to base our faith and our behavior (Galatians 1:8). The practice of imposing on believers any rules or regulations, other than those contained in the Bible is to be rejected and shunned.

D. *The Bible is the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16).*

If this gospel is faithfully and dynamically proclaimed with simplicity and prayer, the Spirit of God will use it to draw unbelievers to God and to give direction and light to Christians for their daily lives.

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V. MAN

A. *Man is a created being.*

Man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27; 5:1).

He is, therefore, unique among all that God created. He has the ability to make rational choices as well as the ability to relate to God, the Creator. He is a person, and his personhood links him to the Person who made him. His choice or will, however, is that which relates him to God (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Man was created a spiritual being (Job 32:8). It is his spirit which enables man to be aware of, as well as communicate with God, and God with him (Proverbs 20:27).

Man was created a physical being. Man's physical body must not be abused or misused (1 Corinthians 6:15). The body is valued by us because it is valued by God as both a worthy sacrifice or offering to Him and an object of His own care (Romans 12:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

B. *Man bears great worth.*

As an object of God's love, man's worth is more than all else in God's eyes. God was willing to give His Son to redeem man (John 3:16) and even consider him as a son (John 1:12).

Since Christ died for all, all men are created equal. There is no room for prejudice and bigotry in the lives of God's people (Proverbs 22:2; Acts 10:28).

C. *Man is entrusted with great responsibility.*

God has purposed that man should care for the rest of God's creation (Genesis 1:28; 2:15, 19; Psalm 8:6). Christians should seek to care for, protect, and preserve our world for the glory of God.

God has placed man (redeemed man, in this case) at a strategic point in His plan to redeem all mankind

(Matthew 14:28:18-20). Only as men of God proclaim the message of God will others be able to come to Him (Romans 10:14).

D. *Man is a sinner by nature and by choice.*

Because of Adam's disobedience man is by nature a sinful being (Genesis 3:1-7; Romans 3:23). The image of God has been marred by this original sin which all have inherited (Romans 5:12). Even so, the image of God remains, marred as it may be, waiting to be restored. But man also commits acts of sin and thus is in need of forgiveness (Romans 6:23). God has in love provided full salvation for all men for both pardon and cleansing. That provision is accepted or rejected only by man's own choice.

VI. SALVATION

A. *Salvation meets man's need.*

Man's need to be saved is derived from the fact that he is a fallen creature. He is a sinner by nature, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

The book of Genesis records the fall of man (Genesis 3). Adam, as the first parent, is the head of the human race. Although created in a state of perfection, which included his will, he exercised that will "in disobedience." The penalty of sin, death, has been passed on to the whole human race. All men are born into a slavery to sin (Romans 6:6, 12, 16-18).

Sin is a part of all men's lives, both as acts of disobedience as well as the nature that produces those actions (1 John 3:4; Romans 6:12; 8:5-8). Both the act and the principle are addressed by God's provision of salvation.

B. *Salvation is the result of God's love.*

Though man is a sinner, he is the object of God's love, "For God so loved the world . . ." (John 3:16). He manifested His love for man by giving His Son for his redemption and

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salvation from sin. Salvation begins with man's need plus God's love and willingness to meet that need, which He does through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ.

C. *Salvation is conditional.*

The Bible makes it clear that there are two definite things that man must do before he can experience God's pardon for the sins of the past. The first is repentance. Repentance is a godly sorrow for sin and consequently a turning from sin to righteousness. Repentance may be accompanied by acts of restitution, as God may reveal to the penitent that which needs to be and can be restored (Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9).

The second, all inclusive condition is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is an act of trust in the merits of Jesus Christ. It is believing that God, for Christ's sake, forgives the penitent sinner. John 1:12-13 makes clear that to receive Christ and believe in His name are one act which leads one to become "born of God" (1 John 3:9).

D. *Salvation may be said to be in three stages.*

Salvation is fully expressed in the following terms: "regeneration," "sanctification," and "glorification" in heaven.

VII. REGENERATION

A. *Regeneration is an act of God.*

Regeneration, or the new birth, is that act of God whereby we are made children of God in response to faith. We are given new life; we are resurrected from the death of sin (Ephesians 2:1, 5).

B. *Regeneration is verified by the Holy Spirit.*

The Holy Spirit bears witness to the fact that we are now the children of God (John 3:1-8; Romans 8:10, 15).

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C. *Regeneration enables us to live righteously.*

We are, therefore, enabled to live righteous lives, even though we may have previously been exceedingly wicked. This takes place at the same time that God pardons our sins. This is when the

mighty miracle of human salvation takes place.

VIII. SANCTIFICATION

A. Entire sanctification is a second, definite work of God's grace.

By this act of grace the heart of a child of God is cleansed from what is known as "original sin" and is also filled with the Holy Ghost. We use the words "entire" or "wholly" with sanctification to designate it from the sanctification that every Christian possesses when he is born again. Note: 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

B. All sanctification involves separation from sin to God.

When we are regenerated, we are given power to cease from our past habits of the practice of sin. This may be gradual as God gives light. When we are entirely sanctified, a second work of grace, we are immediately or instantly cleansed from all sin (1 John 1:7).

C. Sanctification enables us to live above sin.

We maintain that while all may sin, sin is not a necessity. We do not become infallible; however, any more than Adam was infallible when God created him. Though he was created perfect, he fell into sin.

D. Sanctification involves specific conditions.

Since God commands us to be holy (1 Peter 1:16-17) and willed and called us to sanctification and holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7-8), it becomes our responsibility to acquire this grace. The conditions for this are also clear. There must be complete consecration to the will of God (Romans 6:13; 12:1-2). In this sense we sanctify ourselves,

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since we must certainly provide the willingness to be sanctified (1 John 3:3). Faith is a must. Note in Acts 15:8-9 where Peter makes clear that the hearts of those who receive the Holy Ghost at Pentecost were purified by faith. Note also in Acts 26:17-18 where Jesus spoke to Paul about an "inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." See Hebrews 13:12.

IX. GLORIFICATION

A. Glorification is the last act of redeeming grace.

This will take place at the second coming of Christ. At present we are, at best, in a state of probation awaiting the coming of the Lord. Our bodies are subject to disease, death, and decay. At His second coming Jesus will resurrect all the Christian dead and translate the living into heaven with their bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

B. Glorification involves a physical change.

One of the clearest teachings of the New Testament is that at Christ's coming our bodies will be changed and made like His present glorified body (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2).

C. Glorification is final salvation.

It is termed salvation, in prospect, by the Apostle Peter in Acts 15:11. This is the everlasting life which will crown every faithful believer at the end. We shall live with Christ eternally (John 14:1-3). This is the immortality that will rob every grave of its victory because it will rob it of its victim.

D. Glorification, as final salvation, is conditioned on faithfulness.

It is those who endure unto the end who shall be saved in this ultimate sense (Mark 13:13).

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X. THE CHURCH

A. The true Church is the Body of Christ.

The Body of Christ is made up of many members who by faith have received Christ and have thus been born again. As a body the Church possesses the various spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit has designated for each member (Ephesians 4:16). More important, the Head of the Body is Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15; 5:22-23; Colossians 1:18).

B. The Church is more than any denomination of Christianity.

The Church as the Body of Christ is composed of all persons, everywhere in the world and throughout

all ages, who truly know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. One becomes a part when sins have been forgiven and faith in Christ becomes reality. The Church then transcends any denominational group. Those who claim to be Christian but have never experienced a saving faith in Christ may be a part of an earthly church or denomination, yet not be a part of the Church which is the true Body of Christ. Salvation, not an affiliation with a local congregation, brings one into participation in the Body of Christ, the true Church.

C. The Church is both a human and a divine institution.

It is God's medium on earth, but it is composed of frail humanity which is also subject to failures; therefore, no leader or head of any of its branches is infallible.

D. The Church is a body of fellowship.

There should be fellowship and communion between all believers even though divided into various denominations. This unity is much more important than it is to have one great organization of the whole Church (John 15:12; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 2:17).

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E. The Church is a body with a mission.

The Church is to be a light in the world and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16). The Church has a commission from Christ, the Head, to "preach the gospel to every creature." To be true to the Lord, the Church must be a missionary Church at home and abroad. As long as there are souls who have not heard the good news anywhere in the world, it is the Church's responsibility to find them. Since millions have not even heard of Christ, the Church's mission is not yet complete (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8).

Additionally, as a Church with a mission it is the visible expression of the Kingdom of God. The Church is to live out the ethics of God's Kingdom so as to bring God's will to bear upon society, never forgetting, however, that it is engaged in a spiritual warfare with principalities and powers, not with flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12)

XI. GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

A. The gifts of the Spirit are the specific, enabling graces God gives the Church.

The purpose of the gifts is to build up the body of Christ. By means of these gifts members of the body minister to one another and on behalf of one another to those outside of the body (Romans 12:4-13; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:4-12; 1 Peter 4:8-11).

B. All the gifts are under the sovereign dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

Gifts are granted to individuals as the Spirit wills (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). The combination of gifts in a congregation may be an indication of the dominant strategy that a group of believers should follow in fulfilling their part of the Church's mission.

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Gifts are to be desired only by the corporate body, not each individual member, and then only with preference for those gifts that declare, "Thus saith the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:1ff.). It is, however, unscriptural to pray to receive any particular gift. The phenomenon of speaking in tongues on the day of Pentecost was distinctly the miracle of speaking in other languages already in existence, "every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6, 8, 11).*

*See complete text of General Board definition on this subject under General Board Ruling on page 156.

The problem at Corinth with which Paul dealt in 1 Corinthians 14 is not this same manifestation of the Spirit as on the day of Pentecost. When the gift of tongues was bestowed, people heard the Word in the language wherein they were born. We believe it was missionary in character. Therefore, the problem at Corinth dealt with in 1 Corinthians 14 is not the gift of tongues, but rather the problem of confusion of tongues within a worshipping congregation. Paul did not mention the subject to any of the other churches to whom he addressed his epistles. No one gift of the Spirit is the exclusive evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

XII. THE SACRAMENTS

A. *We recognize only two sacraments or church ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper.*

The sacraments are outward symbols that teach us about the inner life, faith, and the hope of the believers. Baptism by water is an outward confession and testimony of the believer's relationship to Christ and separation from the world. Most of us advocate immersion in water, but we believe that the mode is not so essential as the fact. We leave the candidates to choose the method whereby they wish to be baptized, whether by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 1:13-17).

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The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ as a memorial of His death. Only those who have real faith in Christ should partake of this, and we are indeed commanded to do so until Jesus comes (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30).

B. *We do not recognize any sacraments as saving ordinances.*

We do not wish to quibble with those who recognize other sacraments and practice them. We do, however, strongly object to the teaching that any sacrament is a saving ordinance. Salvation is the product, not of our acts, but of God's acts of grace (Ephesians 2:8).

XIII. STEWARDSHIP

A. *Christian stewardship springs from the recognition that we are not our own.*

We belong to God with all that we possess; therefore, we are trustees or stewards of all our time, our talents, and our material possessions. As Christian stewards we are also tenants upon God's earth, and God has a right to a portion of all that we have.

B. *Christian stewardship embraces the practice of tithing.*

In the Scriptures we understand that God demands one tenth, called the tithe, of our income or material gain. This is to be used in God's work for the redemption of the human race. To those who argue that tithing was dispensed within the passing away of the Mosaic Law, our answer is as follows:

1. *The practice of tithing precedes the Law.* The tithing principle, like the Sabbath principle, preceded the giving of the Law. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, who was a king priest of the Most High God (Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:1-7, 17). Jacob vowed his tithe to the Lord (Genesis 28:22).

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The tithing principle was incorporated into the Mosaic Law with the specific statement that the tithe is the Lord's (Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 18:24). People were considered robbers when they withheld their tithe and were visited with a curse in this failure, but abundantly blessed when they obeyed (Malachi 3:8-10).

2. *Tithing has been a practice of the New Testament church from earliest times.* That practice is based upon these facts: a. Christ sanctioned tithing (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42). He, in fact, received tithe, in type, in the person of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:1-7, 17). b. He required tithing of His disciples (Matthew 5:20; Luke 18:12). The early church met His requirements both materially and in their spiritual dedication. At times they gave their all, but from a principle of love. Based upon these facts pastors are urged to preach and practice tithing. Members should support their churches by tithing and refrain from methods of financing God's work which bypass personal and responsible stewardship.

XIV. THE SABBATH

A. *The Jewish Sabbath*

The Jewish Sabbath was on the seventh day, or Saturday, and was sanctified as Sabbath in honor of God's rest from creation on that day (Exodus 20:10-11).

B. *The Christian Sabbath*

The Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day, is to commemorate the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week, or Sunday. There was no direct command for this, but the early church kept this day from the beginning in honor of Christ's resurrection (John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10).

XV. CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

In the area of Christian conduct there are some controversial matters. Yet there are some definite principles that should guide the life of every Christian.

A. Christian conduct demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit.

One of our cardinal principles is that good fruits are the only condition of fellowship. This is a good standard taken from the Scriptures where the Christian is described as a tree bearing fruit. In Galatians 5:22-23 we read, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

B. Christian conduct is based on love.

Love is the center and soul of Christian conduct, so it comes first in the list of nine graces which are said to be "the fruit of the Spirit." If we have been born again (John 3:3, 7), we have received the Spirit as our regenerator. If we maintain this relationship with Him, these graces will be manifested in our lives.

C. Christian conduct is patterned after Christ.

While love is the center and mainspring of Christian conduct, Jesus Christ is its primary pattern. We read in 1 John 2:6, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Again in chapter 4:17b, "As he is, so are we in this world."

D. Christian conduct expresses care and kindness to others.

Peter sums up for us the basis and spirit of the Christian life. 1 Peter 3:8 says, "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." Many sincere Christians seem to lack the graces of pity and courtesy. Courtesy should mark our conduct toward all men, especially if we wish to win them for Christ.

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E. Christian conduct is the focus of New Testament writers.

Every epistle in the New Testament gives some direction for the conduct of the Christian life. The sincere Christian will study these letters so as to know how to live in relation to God, to the government, toward members of his family, and toward all men, as well as toward himself.

XVI. SEXUAL IMMORALITY

We believe that the grace of God is all-sufficient to overcome the desire for and practice of sexual immorality. "Sexual immorality" includes but is not limited to incest, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, fornication, pedophilia or lascivious activity such as the use of pornography in its varied forms (Genesis 2:24, 19; Leviticus 18, 20; Deuteronomy 23:18; Judges 19-20; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

XVII. THE HEREAFTER

A. All people will be judged.

We believe in the righteous judgment of God. All people will stand before Him, and all secrets will be revealed (Matthew 25:32; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16).

B. Believers will be judged according to their works.

There will be an everlasting heaven and state of bliss for believers. They will also be rewarded for their works, some more and some less (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

C. Unbelievers will be sentenced.

The wicked will be judged at the last day and will be sentenced to the lake of fire. This state of torment we understand, from the teachings of Christ and His apostles, to be eternal (Matthew 25:46; Luke 19:15-27; Revelation 20:14-15).

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CONCLUSION

No church consists of members who see everything alike in Scripture. While the Holy Spirit may

enlighten one member to embrace something which another may not embrace, such variations of understanding are the result of the responsive care and direction of God in the light of each person's need and state of maturity. The emphasis in this section, however, has been on the common bonds of our faith, as indeed it should always be.