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Isaac Errett, Synopsis of the Faith and Practice of the Church of Christ

Isaac Errett

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A SYNOPSIS OF THE FAITH AND PRACTICE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

Meeting at the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Beaubien Street, Detroit: together with the Br-Laws which regulate the Order and Business of the Church.

SYNOPSIS.

For the information of the public, the following statement of faith and practice is put forth by the Church of Christ meeting at the corner of Jefferson Avenue and Beaubien street, in the city of Detroit.

I. We accept the Bible—Old and New Testaments—as the word of God; as furnishing the only certain and sufficient knowledge of God, of Salvation, of Duty and of Destiny: so that we need no other basis of faith, guide to duty, or bond of union, than is therein contained. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* 2d TIM. III. 16, 17.

II. While eschewing the metaphysical distinctions and technicalities of philosophies and creeds, on the subject of the Trinity, as being fruitful sources of confusion and strife among Christians, we recognize the tri-unity of the Godhead in the teachings of the New Testament, and accept, in the fullest sense; as a matter of revelation, and not of philosophy; of faith, and not of speculation, every Bible utterance concerning Father, Son and Holy Spirit. MATT. XI. 27: JOHN I. 1-5, 14: JOHN XIV. 16, 17; XVI. 7-15: MATT. XXVIII. 19.

III. We regard the Divinity of the Lord Jesus, as emphatically the Christian creed—the truth to be believed; out of which, when believed, flows salvation to the sinner; out of which also, spring the obligations, enjoyments, and hopes of spiritual life. Hence, in laboring for the conversion of sinners, this is the great theme; and in accepting converts to baptism, the only confession of faith to which they are required to assent is, That Jesus is the Son of God, and the Anointed Prophet, Priest and King, through whom we are to obtain “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” MATT. XVI. 15-20; 1st. COR. III. 11; EPH. II, 19-22; JOHN XX. 31; ACTS. VIII. 35-38; 1st. JOHN V. 1.

IV. Not only do we accept as facts, the death of Christ as a sin-offering, and his resurrection from the dead; but we regard these mighty facts as constituting the very Gospel by which we are saved. 1st. COR. XV. 1-4. Facts, Precepts, Promises, comprise the Gospel scheme. Jesus, the Divine Saviour, is the center of all these. The facts concerning Jesus, believed; the commandments of Jesus, obeyed; the promises of Jesus, enjoyed; these constitute the essentials of the Christian religion—the marrow and fatness of the Gospel feast.

V. Faith and repentance are the indispensable prerequisites of baptism. An entire reliance on Jesus as a crucified and risen Saviour, joined with such a sorrow for sin as shall lead the heart and life away from wickedness, to the service of the Lord, is en-

joined on, and required of every person seeking admission to baptism and church membership.

VI. To such a believing penitent, baptism is "for the remission of sins;" not as *procuring* or *meriting* pardon, nor yet as accomplishing spiritual regeneration; but as *bringing the believer into contact with Gospel promises*, and conveying to him a scriptural assurance of forgiveness. Hence we teach every person coming to baptism, to trust implicitly the Saviour's promise—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." MARK. XVI. 15, 16.

VII. In baptism, the believer is immersed "in the name," or *by the authority* of the Lord Jesus, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;" and thus enters into covenant relationship with God as his Father, with Jesus as his Saviour, and with the Holy Spirit as his Comforter. Being buried with Jesus by baptism into death, and rising to walk in a new life, he is entitled to the promises of the Gospel, and is under the most solemn covenant obligations to walk in all the commandments of the Lord.

Presuming not to judge those who have honestly mistaken sprinkling or pouring for baptism, but who show in their lives a cheerful conformity to all the known will of God, we nevertheless feel bound to maintain the integrity of this ordinance, First—because we dare not interfere with divine appointments, to change either their *form* or their *design*; and, Secondly—because we see in immersion, which all admit, and not in sprinkling or pouring, which but a part accept, a possibility of ending controversy and promoting union among the people of God. We do not wish, however, to place any obstacle in the way of any of the children of God who may desire to partake with us of the Lord's Supper, or to share in any of the privileges of Christian worship.

NOTE.—We submit the following passages of Scripture touching the *action*, the *subjects* and the *design* of baptism to the careful consideration of the reader.

I. They were baptized by him in the river Jordan. Matt. iii. 6: Mark i. 5. John was baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there. John iii. 23. And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. Acts viii. 38, 39. They were buried with Him by baptism into death. Rom. vi. 4. If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death. Rom. vi. 5. Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also we are risen with Him. Col. ii. 12. The bath or washing of water. Eph. v. 26. Bath of regeneration. Titus iii. 5.

II. He that believeth, and is baptized. Mark xvi. 16. Repent and be baptized. Acts ii. 38. They that gladly received the word were baptized. Acts ii. 41. Believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. Acts v. 14. When they believed Philip they were baptized, both men and women. Acts viii. 12. What hinders me to be baptized? If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. Acts viii. 36, 37. Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized. Acts xviii. 8. Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead. Col. ii. 12.

III. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. Mark xvi. 16. Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Acts ii. 38. Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. Acts xxii. 16. Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he

cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. John iii. 5. Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Gal. iii. 26, 27. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. *Tit. iii. 5. The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. 1st Peter iii. 21.

VIII. Being desirous of returning, as fully as possible, to the purity and simplicity of Primitive Christianity, we have been led, from a careful examination of the Scriptures, to the following conclusions :

1. The first church of Christ was planted in Jerusalem, on the Pentecost succeeding the resurrection of the Messiah. See Acts ii. *in extenso*.

2. Its converts were accepted to baptism and church membership, on their faith in Christ, and repentance toward God—and not upon subscription to any human creed or articles of faith.

3. "They that gladly received the word were baptized;" no infant membership was recognized.

4. "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers." Acts ii. 42. *In the teaching of the Apostles*, therefore, as found in Acts and in the Epistles, are Christians to find an *authoritative* utterance of the will of God.

5. From the apostolic teaching we learn: That all the baptized believers dwelling in one locality, constituted the church in that locality.

That every church when organized by an Apostle or Evangelist, was an independent community, so far as its own affairs were concerned, with a government of its own; dependent on and amenable to other churches only so far as the sentiments of Christian brotherhood, or the demands of weakness or poverty, might allow of a mutual claim for counsel and co-operation.

That every church, when fully organized, had a Bishop and Pastor, and frequently a plurality of Bishops, to preside over its spiritual interests; and Deacons, who attended to the wants of the poor, and the temporal interests of the church, and assisted likewise in its spiritual ministrations.

That the churches met on the first day of the week for prayer, praise, preaching, teaching, exhortation, observance of the Lord's Supper, contributions for benevolent purposes, and the cultivation of brotherly love.

That as soon as the ability of a church or of neighboring churches allowed of it, Evangelists or Missionaries, duly qualified and approved, were sent forth to preach the Gospel in other regions, foster infant churches, and oversee them until organized.

That in accomplishing all these functions, the churches had nothing but apostolic teachings to guide them, in all matters of expediency outside of apostolic teaching, every church acting on its own responsibility.

That human leaderships, sects and parties were discouraged and denounced as anti-Christian.

That on this simple basis of the Lordship of Christ and apostolic

authority, it was sought to unite in one brotherhood, all who received Jesus as their Saviour and King.

We seek to return to this standard of the Apostles' doctrine. In this age of division and distraction, we esteem it our especial duty to call Christians from the confusions of the apostasy to the order and harmony of the primitive church; from human creeds and philosophies to the Bible; from party to Christ; from denominational names and interests, to the symmetry and perfection of the Body of Christ; from speculative theology, which divides, to the faith and love of Christ, which unites; from all that tends to alienation and partyism, to the units and unity which apostolic teachings present. *There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* EPH. IV. 4-6.

IX. To sum up all in one paragraph: Christ Jesus is our all; without his Light and Love, we perish forever. His Divinity is our foundation; His life our example; His death our salvation; His resurrection our hope; His intercession our foundation of grace and mercy; His teachings our guide; His church our school; His Spirit our comforter; His gospel our reliance for the conversion of sinners; His commandments our life; His promises our rejoicing; so that through faith and obedience, we may be blessed with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." To trust in the Lord Jesus, to love and obey Him—this is salvation here, and life eternal hereafter.

X. This declaration of our faith and aims is not to be taken as a creed. We assume no right to bind the conscience with any stereotyped formula. Vital religion is a thing of growth in the heart of the individual Christian. We design a mere statement, for general information, of the purpose which have induced us to band together, and the principles we propose to develop. We have no sectarian shackles with which to bind Christ's freemen—no spiritual prison-house for the confinement of the soul. We present no authoritative standard of interpretation of the Bible. The Spirit that indited the word, can best bring home to the heart the significance of its truths. The practice of the divine precepts, furnishes the best interpretation. We repudiate all human authority in spiritual concerns—MATT. XXIII. 8-12. JOHN VII. 16, 17.

May the God of grace and truth bless the reading of these pages, that they may assist in giving consistent views of the Gospel to the human inquirer, as well as in dissipating the prejudices of Christians; so that the former may be led to accept the salvation of God, and the latter be encouraged to seek after the simplicity of faith and unity of spirit, which belonged to the church of Christ before sects disturbed her harmony, or treacherous hands rent her seamless garment.

BY-LAWS.

For the Regulation of the Order and Business of the Church.

I. The affairs of the church shall be under the management of the pastor and those associated with him in office—they being re-

sponsible to the church therefor—except where any special business shall, at a business meeting, be assigned to a committee.

II. Any immersed believer, expressing a desire to unite with us in carrying out the objects of our organization, shall be entitled to membership, unless satisfactory reasons are known against his or her admission.

III. Members of the church, of both sexes, shall be allowed to participate in the social services of the church, and shall vote on all questions equally.

IV. At the meetings on the Lord's day, the services shall be conducted by the pastor and such brethren as may be invited by him to assist. At the business meetings, any member who desires may speak. While we wish to impose no arbitrary rule, it is nevertheless expressed, as the general sentiment of the church, that such speeches should not exceed ten minutes in length.

V. Regular business meetings of the church shall be held annually on the first Monday in January. Special business meetings may be called by the officers, at their own suggestion, or at the request of not less than five members.

VI. The pastor shall preside over the business meetings; or, in his absence, the senior officer present; or, in the absence of all the officers, any one who may be called to the chair by the members of the church present.

VII. No business meetings shall be held on the Lord's day.

VIII. All meetings shall be opened by reading the Scriptures and prayer, and closed by prayer.

IX. The order of business shall be:

1. Reading minutes of last meeting.
2. Report of the Secretary.
3. Report of the Treasurer.
4. Report of the Sunday School Superintendent.
5. Reports of Committees.
6. Miscellaneous business.
7. Reading and approval of the minutes.

X. The election of all officers, except Treasurer and Secretary—who shall be appointed by the Deacons—shall be by the church; a vote of at least two-thirds of the members being requisite to elect any one to office.

XI. Bishops and Deacons shall be elected to serve during good behavior; but they may be required to resign by a vote of two-thirds of the members of the church, or their resignation may be accepted by a majority vote.

XII. The salary of the pastor shall, from year to year, be fixed by the Deacons, subject to the approval of the church.

XIII. In matters of discipline, it shall be the duty of the officers of the church to investigate all charges regularly made, and report to the church their decisions for approval. In case of a decision, when approved by the church, being complained of as unjust by any party involved in said decision, upon request made by such party to the officers, the matter of complaint shall be referred to a committee mutually chosen from sister churches by the officers and the complainant, and the decision of that committee shall be acquiesced in as final.

XIV. The officers shall meet at least monthly for consultation on the interests of the church.

XV. It is understood that while we enter into these regulations, to preserve order and expedite business, the great law by which we propose to be governed in all our public and private intercourse, is the law of love.

XVI. Any member of the church, desiring to withdraw membership, whether the reasons for such withdrawal are approved by the church or not, shall be entitled to a certificate of his or her standing, at the time of such withdrawal.

XVII. In all matters of order in the business meetings, not provided for in these rules, the presiding officer shall be governed by the rules laid down in Cushing's Manual.

XVIII. No change shall be made in these rules, nor in the established order of the church, except by a vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the church; notice of said change to be given at least three months before the next regular business meeting.

CHURCH OF CHRIST,

Corner of Jefferson Avenue and Beaubien Street, Detroit,

ISAAC ERRETT, PASTOR.

Preaching every Lord's Day, at the usual hours of morning and evening service. Sunday School at 2, P. M. Communion service, 3, P. M. Prayer meeting Wednesday night. The public are respectfully invited to attend.

REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING.

THERE is not a sound man in our ranks who has seen the preceding "Synopsis" that has not felt scandalized by it. I wish we possessed even one decent apology for its appearance. It is a deep offense against the brotherhood—an offense tossed into the teeth of a people who, for forty years, have been working against the divisive and evil tendency of creeds. That it was meant as an offense by the brethren who have issued it, I cannot think. Still their work has a merit of its own, a merit which no lack of bad intention on their part can affect. Our brethren will accept this "Synopsis" for what it is, not for what it may possibly not have been designed to be. We are told that this "declaration" is not to be taken as a creed. But will this caveat prevent it being so taken? Never. When Aaron's calf came out had he called it a bird, still all Israel seeing it stand on four legs, with horns and parted hoofs, would have shouted a calf, a calf, a calf. The brethren