

# THE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES

## PREFACE

Because an increasing number of people, both Christians and non-Christians, are seeking information concerning the local churches, we have prepared this booklet as a basic introduction to our beliefs and practices. As children of the light, we are thankful for this opportunity to bear public testimony to what we believe, teach, and practice. We have many other publications available on various important Scripture subjects, including the experience of Christ, regeneration, transformation, the growth in life, the church, the kingdom, the Triune God, the purpose of God, and the human spirit. Detailed studies of many books of the Bible are available as well. We welcome all inquiries that spring from a sincere desire to know the truth.

We want it to be known by all that the Christians in the local churches are absolute for the common faith and are the most orthodox of Christians. We have received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. He is living in us as our life, and He is everything to us. We love Him, we serve Him, and we are seeking to bring many others to a living knowledge of Himself. We are meeting together in various localities simply as blood-washed, born-again, Spirit-filled Christians without any denominational affiliation, because we seek to give testimony to the unity of the Body of Christ. We welcome all true believers, and we seek fellowship with them as our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is our sincere and earnest desire that the Lord's testimony on this earth may be spread and greatly strengthened in order that His Bride may be prepared for His soon return. May the Lord honor and vindicate His own work on this earth in these days.

## OUR BELIEF

1. We believe that the Holy Bible is the complete divine revelation verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit.
2. We believe that God is the only one Triune God-the Father, the Son, and the Spirit-co-existing equally from eternity to eternity.
3. We believe that the Son of God, even God Himself, became incarnated to be a man by the name of Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, that He might be our Redeemer and Savior.
4. We believe that Jesus, a genuine man, lived on this earth for thirty-three and a half years to make God the Father known to men.
5. We believe that Jesus, the Christ anointed by God with His Holy Spirit, died on the cross for our sins and shed His blood for the accomplishment of our redemption.
6. We believe that Jesus Christ, after being buried for three days, resurrected from the dead physically and spiritually and that, in resurrection, He has become the life-giving Spirit to impart Himself into us as our life and our everything.
7. We believe that after His resurrection Christ ascended to the heavens and that God has made Him the Lord of all.
8. We believe that after His ascension Christ poured down the Spirit of God to baptize His chosen members into one Body and that the Spirit of God, who is also the Spirit of Christ, is moving on this earth today to convict sinners, to regenerate God's chosen people, to dwell in the members of Christ for their growth in life, and to build up the Body of Christ for His full expression.
9. We believe that at the end of this age Christ will come back to take up His members, to judge the world,

to take possession of the earth, and to establish His eternal kingdom.

10. We believe that the overcoming saints will reign with Christ in the millennium and that all the believers in Christ will participate in the divine blessings in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth for eternity.

## **STANDING**

1. We stand on the Holy Scriptures, not according to any traditional interpretation, but according to the pure Word of God.
2. We stand on Christ, the living rock, the foundation stone, the Head of the Body, and the life and reality of the church.
3. We stand on the genuine unity of the Body of Christ. We are not sectarian, nor denominational, nor nondenominational, nor interdenominational.
4. We stand on the ground of the oneness of all believers in each locality; we recognize all the blood-redeemed and Spirit-regenerated believers in Christ as members of the one church in each city.

## **MISSION**

1. To preach the gospel of grace and of the kingdom to sinners that they may be saved.
2. To minister the life supply to believers that they may grow in Christ.
3. To establish the church in each city that the believers may become a local corporate expression of Christ in practicality.
4. To release the living and rich word of God from the Holy Scriptures that the believers may be nourished to grow and mature.
5. To build up the Body of Christ so that the Bride may be prepared for the coming back of Christ as the Bridegroom.

## **HOPE**

1. We hope that as many as are ordained by God to eternal life will believe in the Lord Jesus.
2. We hope that all regenerated Christians will seek the growth in life, not the mere increase of knowledge.
3. We hope that all seeking Christians will see the vision of the church and come into the practical church life in their locality.
4. We hope that the Lord will have a remnant of overcomers that His Bride may be prepared.
5. We hope that the coming back of the Lord will be hastened by our growth and that we may participate in the blessed rapture and in His coming kingdom.

## **CONCERNING THE RECOVERY**

We in the local churches are for God's recovery. A basic definition of what we mean by recovery is necessary for an accurate understanding of our testimony.

The word "recover" means to obtain again something that has been lost, or to return something to a normal condition. "Recovery" means the restoration or return to a normal condition after a damage or a loss has been incurred. To say that God is recovering certain matters means that in the course of church history they have been lost, misused, or corrupted and that God is restoring them to their original state or condition.

Because the church has become degraded through the many centuries of its history, it needs to be restored according to God's original intention. Concerning the church, our vision is governed not by the present situation nor by traditional practice, but by God's original intention and by His unchanging standard as revealed in His Word. We regard the New Testament revelation of the church not merely as a historical antecedent, but as the norm for church practice in the present day.

God's recovery did not begin in the twentieth century. Although it is difficult to fix an exact date for its beginning, it is convenient to set it at the time of the Reformation. The recovery has gone through several stages since the Reformation, passing through the partial recovery of the church life in Bohemia under the leadership of Zinzendorf, moving on to the unveiling of the many precious Bible truths through the Plymouth Brethren, and then going on to the genuine experience of the inner life. Now it has reached its present stage with the establishment of genuine local churches as the expression of the Body of Christ.

In His recovery today the Lord is doing two things. He is recovering the experience of the riches of Christ, that is, the enjoyment of Christ as our life and our everything, and He is recovering the practice of the church life. These two matters go hand in hand, for the practical church life is the issue of the enjoyment of the riches of Christ. We in the Lord's recovery today testify that Christ is unsearchably rich, that He is the all-inclusive One for our enjoyment. Furthermore, we testify that the Lord has burdened us for the practice of the church life according to the revelation of the pure Word of God.

## CONCERNING SALVATION

In Christ God has provided for man a full and complete salvation. This full salvation includes our whole being: spirit, soul, and body. In God's salvation, man's spirit is regenerated, his soul is being transformed, and his body will be transfigured.

In order to be saved, one must have a living faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Every genuinely saved one has what the Bible calls the "common faith" (Titus 1:4), which includes what we must believe in order to be saved: we must believe that the Bible is the complete divine revelation wholly inspired by God; that there is a unique Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God incarnated to be a man; that Christ died on the cross for our sins, shedding His blood for our redemption; that on the third day He was bodily raised from the dead; that He has been exalted to the right hand of God and made the Lord of all; and that He is coming again for His own and to set up His kingdom on earth.

Eternal salvation is by grace through faith, not by our works.

In order to be saved, one must have a living contact with Jesus Christ. Therefore, in bringing unbelievers to salvation, we emphasize prayer and calling on the name of the Lord. According to Romans 10:9 and 10, if a man is to be saved, he must believe in his heart and confess with his mouth.

Once a person has been saved, he may have both the assurance of salvation and the security of salvation. Once we are saved, we are saved forever.

## CONCERNING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

**REGENERATION:** The Christian life begins with regeneration. To be regenerated is to be born of the Spirit in our spirit (John 3:6) through the redemption of Christ and thereby to have the life and nature of God imparted into our spirit. This makes our spirit alive with the very life of God.

**SEPARATION:** The true Christian life requires a proper separation from this corrupt and evil world. This separation is not according to legalistic, man-made rules; it is according to the life and nature of the holy One who dwells within us. We are separated unto God by the redeeming blood of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, and in the name of the Lord Jesus. In order to live a proper Christian life, we must maintain such a separated position. Although we are not of the world, we nevertheless live a godly life in the world.

**CONSECRATION:** The Christian life is a life of consecration. To be consecrated to the Lord means that we are utterly given to the Lord, not to do something for Him nor to become something, but to make ourselves available to Him as a living sacrifice so that He may work on us and in us according to His good pleasure. We consecrate to the Lord because we love Him and delight to belong to Him. We also recognize that we already belong to Him because He has purchased us with His precious blood. We in the local churches are living not for ourselves, but for God and for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose.

**LOVING THE LORD:** In our Christian life we emphasize loving the Lord. Above all else, God desires that we love Him. We testify that our Lord Jesus Christ is the altogether lovely One, that He has won our -hearts, and that we love Him, not with a love of our own, but with the very love with which He first loved us.

**THE WORD OF GOD:** The Bible occupies a very important place in our Christian life. All those in the local churches are encouraged to read the Word in a regular way, even to read it through once a year. We read the Word, we study the Word, and we take the Word by prayer as spiritual food. All teachings, inspirations, and guidance which claim the Holy Spirit as their source must be checked by God's revelation in His Word. Although the Bible reveals the mind of God concerning so many matters, to us the Bible is not primarily a book of doctrine; instead, it is mainly a book of life. We come to the Word not merely for knowledge, but, through a prayerful reading of the Scripture, to contact the Lord Jesus, who is Himself the living Word.

**PRAYER:** The Christian life is also a life of prayer. In prayer we enjoy sweet, intimate personal communion with the Lord. By prayer we declare our dependence on God, our submission to Him, and our desire to cooperate with Him in the fulfillment of His purpose. All those in the local churches are encouraged to have a time of personal prayer every day.

**THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST:** We have seen from God's revelation in the Bible that the Christian life is actually Christ Himself living in us. For this reason, we lay great emphasis on the experience of Christ. According to the New Testament Epistles, Christ is revealed in us, is living in us, is being formed in us, is making His home in us, is being magnified in us, and is becoming all in all to us. Instead of imitating Christ according to an outward pattern, we seek to live out Christ and to live by Christ by allowing the indwelling Christ to occupy our whole inward being and to express Himself through us in our daily living.

**A CRUCIFIED LIFE:** As genuine Christians, we are to live a crucified life. We are not ashamed of the cross of

Christ, and we do not shrink back from following the Lord along the narrow pathway of the cross. If we would truly experience Christ and live by Him, we need to experience daily the subjective work of the cross in our lives. We have seen something of the ugliness of man's fallen flesh in the eyes of God, and we agree with God's judgement upon it. Moreover, we have seen that both the self and the natural man are opposed to God. Therefore, we welcome the inward working of the death of Christ so that we may experience Christ and live by Him in the riches of His resurrection life.

**NOURISHMENT:** If we would live a normal Christian life, we need to be nourished daily with spiritual food and spiritual drink. For this reason, we emphasize the partaking of Christ as our spiritual food and drink. In the Spirit and through the Word, we enjoy Him as our life supply. As He Himself said, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:57). The Lord is the living bread, the bread of life, and the bread of God who came down from heaven to give life to the world (John 6:33, 35, 51), and we are nourished by Him day by day.

**THE GROWTH IN LIFE:** In the local churches we emphasize the fact that in the Christian life we should grow normally in life. We are not content to remain spiritual infants. The divine life, like the human life, must have a normal development leading to maturity. Therefore, as seekers of the Lord, we pursue the growth in life. We desire to be a full-grown man to express the Lord, to represent Him with His authority, and to engage in spiritual warfare to defeat His enemy.

**HUMAN LIVING:** As Christians, we also live a normal human life, free from extremes and balanced in every way. We desire that our entire being, spirit, soul, and body, be maintained for the glory of God. We seek to express the humanity of Jesus in all our relationships and bear a worthy testimony of Him in all walks of human life: at home, at school, in our neighborhoods, and at our places of employment. To us, the Christian life cannot be divorced from our daily human life. We find that the more we grow in Christ, the more truly human we become, and the more we enjoy in a practical way the uplifted, transformed humanity of Jesus.

**THE SPIRIT:** The Christian life is a life of walking according to the Spirit. To walk in the Spirit is to have our living and our being according to the Spirit. Therefore, we need to set our mind on the Spirit and put to death the practices of the body (Rom. 8:6, 13). When we walk according to the Spirit, all the righteous requirements of God are fulfilled in us spontaneously. Only by living in the Spirit and walking according to the Spirit will the divine things revealed in the Scriptures become real to us. Hence, to be a normal Christian we must know the Spirit, live in the Spirit, and walk according to the Spirit.

**TRANSFORMATION:** Many Christians know of the regeneration of the spirit and the transfiguration of the body, but they neglect the crucial matter of the transformation of the soul. Nevertheless the Bible says, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2). Therefore, we recognize the need to be dispositionally transformed in our souls by the inward working of the Spirit of life. As we are transformed, an inward change takes place in our very being. As our soul is permeated with the element of God, it is purified and sanctified. It can thereby fulfill its God-created function to express the Lord who dwells in our regenerated spirit. This transformation of the soul is intimately related to our readiness to meet the Lord at His coming. Those who would dwell in His holy and glorious presence must not merely be positionally sanctified, but be dispositionally transformed. This transformation requires the operation of the cross negatively and the working of the Spirit of life positively.

**TRANSFIGURATION:** Finally, at the culmination of the Christian experience in life, our body will be

transfigured and made like the Lord's glorious body (Phil. 3:21). In the Bible this is called the redemption of the body, the fullness of sonship. Therefore, the Christian life begins with regeneration, passes through transformation, and consummates with the transfiguration of the body.

## CONCERNING THE CHURCH LIFE

**A CORPORATE LIFE:** By its very nature the Christian life, which is the living out of Christ as life from within us, is a corporate life. Many expressions in the New Testament confirm this: we are sheep in God's flock, we are living stones in God's building, we are branches in the vine, we are members of the Body of Christ. Although we remain individuals, as Christians we should no longer live individualistically, that is, caring only for our own interests, activities, and goals. On the contrary, God desires that we live a corporate life, conscious of the Body of Christ, mindful of the things of others, and concerned for the building up of the church. Therefore, we are experiencing a recovery not only of the normal Christian life, but also of the normal church life.

**THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST:** In the church life we all need to honor the headship of Christ. We are the Body, and He is the unique Head of the Body. **No one and nothing can presume to usurp Christ's headship. We cannot tolerate any system, organization, or leadership that insults the headship of Christ. Among us there is no permanent, official, organized leadership. Furthermore, there is no hierarchy. Rather, all the members of the Body are encouraged to have direct fellowship with the Head and receive from Him all directions concerning their life and movements. We recognize no subheads, no intermediaries between Christ and the members of His Body.**

**FELLOWSHIP:** Even as we honor the headship of Christ, we also enjoy the fellowship of the Body of Christ. We recognize that, in Christ, we should no longer live in an individualistic way. On the contrary, we greatly value the fellowship among the members of the Body. How we enjoy the flow of life that circulates through the Body of Christ! We testify that this flow, this fellowship, is a blessed reality.

**ONENESS:** Another vital concern in the church life is the keeping of the oneness. Before He was crucified, the Lord prayed that those who believe in Him would be one even as He and the Father are one. Therefore, we must diligently maintain the unique oneness of the Body of Christ, which is expressed in local churches established on the ground of oneness with all believers in a locality. We must care for the oneness; therefore, we must repudiate all division and abhor it. What a shame and a reproach to the testimony of the Lord is the divisive state of today's Christians! In the church life, we stand for the unique oneness of Christ's Body. In order to maintain this oneness, we meet as believers on the ground of oneness, we receive all believers according to the common faith, and we seek to grow in Christ so that we may be with Him in the Father and in the Father's glory, where we are perfected into one. We believe that the Lord's prayer in John 17 will be answered on earth and that as we are perfected into one, the world will believe and know that the Father has sent the Son.

**MUTUAL CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER:** In the practice of the church life, we care for the saints, the believers in Christ, in a practical way. We delight to bear one another's burdens, to extend hospitality to visitors, to open our homes for fellowship, and to meet the practical needs of the brothers and sisters through loving service in the name of Christ. We encourage one another, refresh one another, minister Christ as life to one another, and build up one another. Our church life is not limited to meetings in our place of meeting; it goes on all the time.

**THE CONSCIENCE:** In the church life we also honor the conscience of others. This means that all the believers in Christ have the liberty to follow the Lord according to their conscience and in the light they have received from God through His Word. There is no external control molding and manipulating our daily lives, and there is no authoritarian disregard of our conscience. There is no coercion nor compulsion. Rather, all are encouraged to deal thoroughly with their conscience in the sight of God and to maintain a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man. Thus, we care for our conscience and for the conscience of others.

**MEETINGS:** Because the church life is a meeting life, we usually have meetings several times a week. To us, meetings are not a drudgery; they are an enjoyment. In the church meetings we are supplied, instructed, strengthened, encouraged, enlightened, inspired, equipped, built up, and commissioned by the Lord. In the proper church life there is a balance between the personal Christian life and the corporate meeting life. The personal time with the Lord cannot replace the meetings, and the meetings cannot replace the personal time. We delight to meet with Him individually, and we enjoy even the more meeting with Him corporately. We testify that in the church meetings the resurrected Christ truly is with us as we are gathered into His name.

**THE FUNCTION OF ALL THE MEMBERS:** In the church life every member of the Body can function. Although we do not all have the same function, we all have a function, and the function of every member is appreciated. We absolutely repudiate the clergy-laity system as a strategy of Satan to frustrate the function of the members of the Body of Christ. In the local churches we have no clergy and we have no laity; rather, we are members of the Body, all of whom have the right to function according to their measure. Furthermore, we have no pastor and no janitor. All the saints may share in the meetings, and all may also partake of the cleaning service.

## QUESTIONS

Those interested in our beliefs and practices have directed a number of questions to us. Certain of these questions with brief answers appear below:

### 1. What is the name of your church?

The local churches do not have a name. The only name we hold and honor is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. To take any other name is to insult Him. The term "local church" is not a name; it is a description of the local nature and expression of the church, that is, the church in a locality. To print the words "local church" with capital letters is a serious mistake, for this gives the impression that our name is "local church." Just as the moon is simply the moon regardless of the locality over which it is seen, so the church is simply the church regardless of the locality in which it is established. When the church was established in Jerusalem, it was known simply as the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), and in Antioch, the church was the church at Antioch (Acts 13: 1). Likewise, the practical expression of the church in Anaheim today is simply the church in Anaheim. As local churches, we meet in the Lord's name on the ground of genuine oneness.

### 2. Who is your leader?

Our unique leader is Christ. We have no official, permanent, organized human leadership. Furthermore, there is no hierarchy of any kind and no worldwide leader. We regard no person as infallible, and we do not follow anyone blindly. On the contrary, we follow only those whose teaching and practice is in accordance with the

truth of God's Word. Those who take the lead do not lord it over the saints, but rather shepherd them in love. Likewise, those who serve the Lord do not control the churches, but rather serve them as bondslaves of Christ in the ministry of the living Word.

### 3. Where is your headquarters?

Each local church is autonomous in its administration. Therefore, there is no central headquarters. No particular local church should be regarded as the head church or leading church. On the contrary, all the local churches share the same standing before the Lord.

### 4. What do you do in your meetings?

We pray, praise, sing, give testimonies, and minister the Word. Every Sunday we have the Lord's table at which all the Lord's children are welcome to partake with us of the bread and wine. The church meetings are open, and all believers are free to participate.

### 5. What is pray-reading?

The word "pray-reading" is a compound word that describes our practice of praying with the words of the Bible. We pray-read the Word in order to enjoy the life element contained in the Word; we thereby enjoy the Word as our spiritual food. We can testify after many years' experience that we are edified, strengthened, and inspired by praying with and over God's words in the Bible. However, the fact that we pray-read the Bible, repeating the words of Scripture in prayer to God, does not mean that we neglect the ordinary reading of the Scriptures or the careful study of the Word of God.

### 6. What do you mean by eating and drinking Jesus?

This term is offensive to some today just as it was to the religionists at the time of the Lord Jesus. In John 6 the Lord said that unless we eat His flesh and drink His blood, we do not have life in us, for His flesh is the real food and His blood is the real drink. In our experience, Christ is the redeeming Lamb and the tree of life. In order to live by Him, we need to partake of Him as the Lamb and as the tree of life. Furthermore, the Lord is our living water. As we drink of Him, we are satisfied. Therefore, to eat and drink of the Lord is to receive Him in Spirit through the Word as our spiritual food and drink.

### 7. What is meant by the term "the economy of God"?

The word "economy" comes from the Greek word *oikonomia*, which denotes a household arrangement; its meaning also includes a stewardship, an administration, and a dispensation, that is, a process of dispensing. When seen in the light of God's eternal purpose as revealed throughout the Scriptures, God's economy refers to God's divine arrangement to dispense Himself into us for the producing and building up of the church.

### 8. Do you hold a modalistic view of the Trinity?

Certainly not! Modalism is heretical. Instead of teaching that the Three of the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, co-exist eternally, modalism claims that They are merely temporary manifestations of the divine essence. We believe according to the Bible that God is essentially three in one and one in three. We surely recognize eternal distinctions within the Godhead. However, our emphasis with respect to the Trinity is not on the doctrinal analysis of the nature of God, but on the dispensing of the Triune God into us as our life and our all.

Our orthodoxy concerning the doctrine of God must be determined by whether or not our teaching is in accord with the pure Word of God. When our belief concerning the Triune God is considered fairly in the light of Scripture, it will be found that we believe neither in modalism nor in tritheism, but in the revelation of the Triune God according to the pure Word of God.

#### 9. Do you teach that man is evolving into God?

Such an accusation, which has been made against us, is utterly false and without foundation. According to the Bible, we teach that God is dispensing Himself into man and that the believer is being transformed by and permeated with the element of God. The fact that, as sons of God, we partake of the life and nature of God does not mean that we become God Himself. Yes, the Triune God is being wrought into us and we are partaking of His very nature, but we are definitely not evolving into the Godhead.

#### 10. Do you teach that Satan is in man's body?

When man fell by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, sin, the nature of Satan, was injected into man's body and transmuted it into the flesh. The fall was not simply an outward transgression; it was also an inward poisoning and contamination of our very being. According to Romans 5 through 7, sin functions in our members as the virtual personification of Satan. Therefore, we may say that Satan as sin dwells in man's flesh. This does not mean, however, that Satan has no objective existence apart from man, for the Bible clearly refers to him as the spirit of the power of the air. Furthermore, the Bible reveals that fallen men are children of the Devil and that the Devil is their father (1 John 3:10; John 8:44). To be children of the Devil is to have the life and nature of Satan. In the sense of having within our flesh the life and nature of Satan we say, according to God's Word, that Satan in the form of sin dwells in man's flesh.

#### 11. What takes place at your trainings?

Ten-day trainings are currently held semi-annually in Anaheim. The content of each training is an intensified study of a book of the Bible or portion thereof.

#### 12. How are the local churches supported financially?

Each local church is supported by voluntary gifts from its members. The financial affairs of a local church are under the administration of that church. There is no financial accountability to any other church body. In this matter, as in all administrative affairs, the local churches are autonomous and locally governed. The members are encouraged to give in a way that is hidden and not ostentatious, according to the commitment they have with the Lord. No offerings are taken in the meetings, and there is very little talk of financial matters. A financial statement is available for examination by members. As far as financial affairs are concerned, the local churches are properly registered with the government as non-profit religious corporations.

#### 13. What is your attitude toward the historic, institutional Christian church?

We stand outside of and apart from historical, organized, institutionalized Christianity because we regard it as a system filled with unscriptural teachings and practices. For the sake of the genuine recovery of the church life revealed in the Bible, we meet together in the Lord's name on the ground of genuine oneness in the locality.

#### 14. What is your attitude toward other Christians?

We would like to make it emphatically clear that we neither believe nor teach that one must be in a local church in order to be a genuine Christian. We recognize that in the Roman Catholic Church, in the denominations, and in the independent groups there are many genuine blood-washed, Spirit-regenerated believers in Christ, and we receive them as our brothers and sisters in the Lord. All who have saving faith in the Lord Jesus are welcome to all our meetings, especially the Lord's table, where we testify of the oneness of the Body of Christ. Although we must, for conscience' sake, stand apart from organized religion, we do not stand apart from our brothers and sisters in Christ. In faithfulness to the Lord, we stand on the unique ground of the church for the sake of the Lord's testimony. But we do not take this stand with a narrow, exclusive, or sectarian spirit. On the contrary, we take our stand on behalf of the whole Body; we receive all believers even as the Lord has received us.

#### 15. What is your attitude toward the government?

According to the Bible, human government has been ordained of God to preserve peace and to maintain order. For the sake of conscience, all Christians are to be subject to the civil authorities. Therefore, we submit to all governmental authorities and are obedient to them, living as good citizens of our nation, state, and community. We are prepared to fulfill all our responsibilities toward the human government ordained of God.

### A WORD OF TESTIMONY

We wish to conclude with a word of testimony concerning our experience of Christ and our practice of the church life. We testify to all that the Lord is bringing us back to our first love for Himself, back to Himself as our life and our everything. We have come to know the Lord Jesus as the altogether lovely One, as the fairest among ten thousand. The most charming and attracting person in the universe, He has won our hearts and has drawn out of us a fervent love for Him and devotion to Him. As Mary broke the alabaster box and anointed the Lord, we desire to pour out ourselves upon Him. This desire is fittingly expressed in a stanza of a hymn written by a brother in one of the churches:

Precious Lord, my flask of alabaster  
Gladly now I break in love for Thee;  
I anoint Thy head, beloved Master;  
Lord, behold, I've saved the best for Thee.  
Dearest Lord, I waste myself upon Thee;  
Loving Thee, I'm deeply satisfied.  
Love outpoured from hidden depths within me,  
Costly oil, dear Lord, I would provide.

We testify that our hearts have been captured not by a teaching, nor by a practice, nor by a movement—we have been conquered by a wonderful person, even by Christ Himself. Above all else, we wish to bear testimony to God, to man, and to the principalities and powers that this lovely One is worthy of all we are and have. Our first responsibility and calling is to testify of Him by manifesting what He is in us and to us. May the Lord bring us all to the point where we can say with the Apostle Paul, "To me to live is Christ."

Along with the enjoyment of this unsearchable, all-inclusive Christ, we have the privilege of participating in the recovery of the practical church life. Today, by His mercy and grace, the Lord is bringing us back to the beginning, back to the enjoyment of Christ and to the practice of the church life.

By the Co-workers in the Lord's Recovery

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