

# Statement of faith

Brunstad Christian Church

- As summarised by the Elders of the BCC Federation

*An English translation of the Norwegian - Trosgrunnlag*

**June 2022**

## Foreword

### Background

Brunstad Christian Church (BCC) had its small beginnings from the beginning of the 1900s. It all began with one man, Johan Oscar Smith (1871-1943). He had known God's drawing upon him right from childhood, and he had an unusually strong desire for truth and godliness. At the age of fifteen and a half he went to sea, and 2 years later entered the Navy, where he served and where he was converted to God on May 17, 1898, at the age of 26.

Smith read in God's Word how a Christian should live. It became a tremendous need for him that he was unable to make this succeed in his own life. He joined some other young people who prayed and read the Bible together, and God's Spirit worked powerfully on him to cleanse himself. Two years after his conversion, he received the Holy Spirit, and God's Word became more and more living for him.

We know that Smith was primarily concerned with living a faithful life in fellowship with Jesus Christ, and that he never thought or intended to form a separate church denomination. From his posthumous literature, it is clear to see that he was also took an interested in what was going on in the society at large of which he was a part. He followed the development of the spiritual revivals that had influenced people both in Norway and other countries. He refers to books by various authors, and was edified by many believers in his own time, not least by prominent figures from what has been called the "Holiness Movement" that emerged in the early 1800s and especially made a strong impact in North America and Great Britain.

In 1912 Johan O. Smith began publishing the magazine Skjulte Skatte with his brother, Aksel Smith (1880 - 1919). In the periodical's more than 110-year-old history, there are a plethora of articles written as edifying literature for people who have a desire for growth and development in their Christian life. The vast majority of articles clearly show a kindred spirit in this longing.

Smith served in the Navy for 39 3/4 years, and travelled frequently along Norway's entire coastline, not least on neutrality patrol during World War I (1914-1918). When he had shore leave he sought out Christian assemblies and individuals from Vadsø in the north to Halden in the south. In this way, small groups of friends emerged which, in several places in Norway, developed into churches. Today, there are churches that began in a small way and spread from Norway to more than 50 countries on all continents of the world.

Johan O. Smith had an extensive correspondence, especially with his nine-year-younger brother Aksel and, eventually, also with his close co-worker Elias Aslaksen (1888-1976). Many of these letters have been preserved in their original form. These personal letters, written confidentially to his friends, say a great deal about Smith's love for the truth and the wisdom God gave him because of his Godly fear. The letters provide a unique insight into the beginning and early development of our churches and why, along with the articles in the Skjulte Skatter [Hidden Treasures magazine], they have come to be of such significance and enrichment for BCC as a church community. Johan Oscar Smith died 1st of May 1943.

### About this Statement of Faith

BCC's Statement of faith is enshrined in article 1.2.A of the BCC Federation's constitution, which states:

The BCC Federation's Statement of Faith is grounded in the Bible as Holy Scripture, given by inspiration from God, containing everything pertaining to man's salvation, and with the Bible as the only authoritative Scripture.

We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and Earth.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

We believe that the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will teach us and remind us of all that Jesus has commanded us. We subscribe to the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds.

The BCC Federation's Statement of Faith is further based on the substance and intentions of the teachings and Christian values that Johan O. Smith stood for, primarily as they appear in his articles in the periodical *Skjulte Skatter*, his posthumous works, letters and writings, published by Stiftelsen *Skjulte Skatters Forlag*.

The BCC Federation's Statement of Faith is based on the Norwegian "Trosgrunnlag - Brunstad Christian Church" which was published by the elders of the BCC Federation.<sup>1</sup>

BCC's Statement of Faith is described in this document as comprehensively as we have deemed adequate to sufficiently account for significant aspects of our faith and doctrine. Brunstad Cristian Church as a movement belongs to the Christian layman's tradition, and we have attempted to describe and explain what we believe in an understandable way.

Several core topics will understandably be repeated in different places throughout this document. This is something we are fully aware of, and some topics will be briefly touched on in one chapter, and described in more depth in another chapter. This will not least be the case when we touch on the fundamental aspects of our Christological interpretation. It is therefore important to bear in mind that the document will not provide a comprehensive insight into our beliefs without reading everything in its entirety and in context.

In BCC's doctrinal tradition, no specific doctrines are laid down, and we have no authoritative writings beyond God's word, the Bible.<sup>2</sup> However, Johan O. Smith's writings are given special importance through article 1.2.A of the BCC Federation's constitution, which states that "The BCC Federation's Statement of Faith is centred around the substance and intentions of the doctrines and the Christian values that Johan O. Smith exemplified, primarily as they appear in his articles in the publication *Skjulte Skatter*, his posthumous works, letters and writings, published by the Foundation *Skjulte Skatters Forlag*."

We have an abundance of literature that explains what we believe, but we have not previously had a comprehensive explanation of what we believe in classically-theological and codified language. This Statement of Faith will illustrate our perspective on Man, The Fall and Jesus as Saviour and Propitiator. Our Christological doctrines, both of Jesus in His pre-existent state, as the incarnate Son of God and His activity in His post-existent state, will be dealt with in more detail in a separate chapter. Paul writes to Timothy that, as an apostle, he preached the promise of life in Christ Jesus. Jesus also says that He had come so that we might have life, and that we may have it more abundantly. It is of crucial importance to us that all doctrine must lead to a life worthy of repentance. It is for this reason that a few selected themes will be covered more extensively, particularly those themes that are applicable to the new life we are called to live in Christ Jesus. These will include such subjects as, living a crucified life with Christ, what we understand by living a victorious life, and the terms and conditions that apply and also the promises that apply to Jesus' disciples.

We believe that the Church, the body of Christ, is a living organism, knit together and consisting of those who have received Christ as Lord and walk with Him as their Lord. It is of paramount importance that each

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<sup>1</sup> The Elders are the BCC- Federations ultimate authority on questions of faith and questions of doctrine.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise stated the quotations from the Holy Bible will be from the New King James Version 1975 by Thomas Nelson Publishers.

member of the body has a personal connection with the Head, Jesus Christ. That is why we have given particular focus to this. We believe that there are prerequisites, but also promises that apply to anyone who is an active member of the body; and we want to describe this highly exalted and heavenly calling.

We hope that this Statement of our faith is both informative and comprehensible to all those who wish to familiarise themselves with the doctrines and teachings that are so crucially important to us, both as individuals and as a church.

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# Chapter 1 – Faith in the Triune God - The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit

## 1 Faith in the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

### 1.1 Trusting the Bible as the Source of Authority

We believe in the Bible, the Holy Scripture, which is given by inspiration from God and contains everything man needs for his salvation and growth in his life with God. We place the Bible as our only absolute authority and basis for all our teachings. We believe that God's Word is God's will for mankind, revealing God's entire plan of salvation to all people: "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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Even though "Scripture" in this verse includes the holy scriptures that were available to Paul at the time, we believe that it has validity for all the books of the Bible. We believe that both the Old and New Testaments are inspired by God. The Old Testament with its 39 books deals primarily with the covenant that God made with Abraham and His chosen people, Israel. The old covenant prophecies and temple service point forward to the promises that were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The New Testament's 27 books and epistles in which the very gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ appears in its power and fulness are recorded by people who were compelled by the Spirit of God.

Many prophecies pointed towards, and were fulfilled by, the birth and life of Jesus, and there are several prophecies in God's Word that have come true in the past century.<sup>3</sup> Other prophecies concerning the end-times wait, through God's longsuffering, for their fulfilment. We believe that all of God's Word is the truth and is a testimony of God's truthfulness. (Psalm 119: 160, John 17:17). Jesus also says, "And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe." (John 14:29).

We believe that God's Word must be received by faith, and by the obedience of faith it will become an effective power in the life of the believer. Paul had received his apostleship to work for obedience to the faith among the Gentiles. (Romans 1:5). The same apostle writes to the church in Thessalonica: "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

James exhorts us to be doers of the Word, not just its hearers, or we will deceive ourselves. (James 1:22). We believe this means that we are to be doers of the words that Jesus preached in the Gospels, as well as the Word of God that the apostles preached. We believe that openness, receptivity, and obedience in the encounter with God's Word as stated in the New Testament are the foundation for all true growth and development both in personal life and in the churches. (Romans 15:18). "Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7). God's Word is given to help us to be preserved from error and self-deception.

### 1.2 The Creeds of the Early Church

We subscribe to the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds. Even though we have no liturgical tradition of communal recitation of these early church creeds, their content will be reflected in what is preached and

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<sup>3</sup> Amongst others the prophecies about Israel in Jeremiah 66:8-10 were fulfilled when the country was "born in a day" on 14th May 1948.

in the doctrinal instruction in our church. Below are the two creeds written down according to the traditional English wording.

### **The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and Earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
and born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
He descended into hell,  
Rose again from the dead on the third day;  
He ascended into heaven,  
And is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty,  
and He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy universal Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

Amen.

### **The Nicene Creed**

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and Earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and on the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets.

In one holy universal and apostolic Church; We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.



### 1.3 God – Three in One

The Trinity was formulated in the early church, primarily in the Apostolic Creed and in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. In our church community, we hold firm to the belief in the Triune God, without having this written and formulated as an aspect of our faith. We believe in the internal workings of the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to bring salvation to mankind, and the disciples to growth in Jesus Christ, so that they can be conformed to the image of the Son.

#### Who is the Father?

The Father is the name of God that Jesus often used, and also denotes God's relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19). Paul writes to the church in Rome, that “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For... you have received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Romans 8:14-15). Jesus says that “no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” (Matthew 11:27). Therefore, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, and God will be our Father and we shall be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. (Galatians 4: 6, 2. Corinthians 6:18).<sup>4</sup>

God created man in His own image. He put eternity into their hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11), and gave them a free will to choose, either to be obedient to God's commandments or to do their own will. (Genesis 2:16). We believe that from the Creation, God has revealed Himself to people in various ways and desires an intimate relationship with them. (Psalm 25:14). For this reason, Paul bowed his knees in reverence and gratitude to the Father, “from whom the whole family in heaven and Earth is named.” (Ephesians 3:14-15).

We believe that God's being, His nature, and name are revealed in God's Word, and He reveals His name as "I am." (Exodus 3:13-15). God is the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and Earth. (Psalm 121: 2, 2 Corinthians 6:18, Psalm 115:3). God is an all-knowing God, and nothing is impossible for Him. (1 Samuel 2:3, Matthew 19:26). God's Word describes God as a merciful and gracious God, and a God who forgives, (Exodus 34:5-6, Exodus 33:18-19), who is long-suffering and rich in mercy. (Ephesians 2:4). He is a just God. (Psalm 116:5). God is Zealous, for the Lord's name is Zealous. (Exodus 34:14 Norwegian). God is also love (1 John 4:8, and 16) and truth (Psalm 119:160), and He sent his Son into the world to testify of the truth. (John 18:37).

#### Who is the Son?

We believe that Jesus is God's only Son, begotten of the Father. (1 John 4:9). He is “very God of very God”, and is the Author of all creation.<sup>5</sup> (Revelation 3:14 and Colossians 1:18). We believe that, as a human being, Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, as the Word of God testifies (Luke 1:35-37, Luke 2:6-7), and became a man according to the seed of David. (Romans 1:3, John 1:14). The author of Hebrews writes that Jesus received flesh and blood like the children in order to be able to come to our aid when we are tempted. (Hebrews 2:14-15). He emptied Himself of His privileges (NKJV margin), and gave up equality with God, partaking of man's condition (Philippians 2:6-8). According to the Spirit of holiness, He was proven to be God's mighty Son through the resurrection from the dead. He suffered death in His flesh and was made alive by the Spirit<sup>6</sup> (1 Peter 3:18, Norw. “in His spirit”). At the resurrection God could affirm: “You are my Son, today I have begotten You” (Hebrews 1:5, Acts 13:32-33), as the firstborn of many brothers (Romans 8:29).

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<sup>4</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1916/01. The Father and the Son.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. Letters December 12, 1905.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1918/08. A glimpse into the Mystery of Godliness

One of Jesus' names is: The Word of God. (John 1:1-3. Revelation 19:13). " Jesus answered and said to them, 'You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.'" (Matthew 22:29). Jesus' whole life was that God's will, as expressed in Scripture, should be fulfilled. (Colossians 1:19). His work was to live according to, and fulfil, all God's Word from the time He entered the world until He returned home to His Father. (Hebrews 10:5-7).

We believe that today He sits as High Priest on the right side of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, "a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man."<sup>7</sup> (Hebrews 8:1-2). We believe that as man, Christ Jesus is the Mediator between God and man. He mediates and helps us to relate to God as a man, as He has also been in flesh and is acquainted with all our weaknesses.

### **Who Is the Holy Spirit?**

The Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Old Testament, in the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, and in the New Testament epistles. We believe that the Holy Spirit works with the Father and the Son to fulfil the Father's plan of salvation.<sup>8</sup> (John 17:4). He is given as God's gift to mankind for power and guidance in life, to be witnesses to Jesus on Earth. (Acts 1:8). God wants to send the Spirit of His Son into the hearts of men. In this Spirit, we can call upon God from a pure heart. (Galatians 4:4-7).

The Holy Spirit is the Advocate whom Jesus promised His disciples. "The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (John 14:17-18). "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" (Galatians 4:6).

If the Holy Spirit dwells in us, He who raised Jesus from the dead will also make our mortal bodies living by His Spirit. (Romans 8:11). Paul also writes that the Holy Spirit "is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:3-14). "We are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." (Acts 5:32). The Holy Spirit also intercedes for the believer. (Romans 8:26). When we are obedient to His promptings, the Holy Spirit will write God's laws and commandments in our hearts and minds. Only by obedience to Jesus' commandments does the believer come to growth and development. The Holy Spirit brings us joy and peace in faith in Jesus Christ. He gives us an abundance of hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13-15).

## **1.4 Doctrinal Summary**

We believe in the Bible as Holy Scripture, given by inspiration from God, containing everything man needs for his salvation. It reveals God's entire plan of salvation to all people. We believe that God's Spirit has permeated both the Old and New Testaments. We believe that God's Word must be received by faith and that it must be done, not just heard. (Hebrews 4:2-3 and James 1:22-25). Knowledge of, and obedience to, God's Word as primarily stated in the New Testament is the basis for all true growth and development, both in personal life and in the churches. (Matthew 22:29, 2 Timothy 3:15-17).

We subscribe to the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds. We believe that God's being and name are revealed in God's Word, and He reveals His name as "I am." We believe that from the Creation, God has revealed Himself to people in various ways and desires intimate fellowship with them.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. We believe that Jesus according to the flesh became a man, partaker of flesh and blood like

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<sup>7</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter 1938/12 "Epistle to the Hebrews" Ch. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, Johan O. Letters. December 10, 1909.

the children. Thus, as the man Christ Jesus, He became the mediator between God and man. (1 Timothy 2:5-6). He suffered death in His flesh and was made alive in His spirit. He rose from the dead on the third day and was declared to be the mighty Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

We believe that the Holy Spirit works with the Father and the Son to complete the Father's plan of salvation. He is given as a gift of God to man, for power and guidance to be Jesus' witnesses on Earth. The Holy Spirit gives us joy and peace in faith in Jesus Christ, and He intercedes for the believer.

The Father is the name for God that Jesus often used, and also denotes God's relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit. We believe in the internal workings of the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to bring salvation to mankind, and the disciples to growth in Jesus Christ, so that they can be conformed to the image of the Son.

## Chapter 2 – Man

### 2 Man

#### 2.1 Man – Created in the Image of God

We believe that God created man out of the dust of The Earth and in His image, and breathed the spirit of life into him into his nostrils the breath of life. (Genesis 2:7). He placed man on Earth as the pinnacle of His creation (Genesis 1:27, Psalm 8:5-7), and put eternity into his heart. (Ecclesiastes 3:11). He thereby made man an eternal being, for the spirit that is in a man is of God and endures forever. (Ecclesiastes 12:7). From the moment he was created, God gave man a free will and enabled him to make his own choices.

Man consists of spirit, soul and body. The spirit (Greek: pneuma) is that part of man that primarily connects us to God. The soul (Greek: psyche) is that part of man that includes the feelings, reactions, opinions and is the seat of his personality. The body (Greek: soma) is that part of man that is in contact with the material and physical world. Our hope is that the God of peace will sanctify us completely and preserve our spirit, soul, and body perfect, blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

The Bible also uses the term heart and mind as a central part of our person, and as a generic term for our consciousness. The first commandment reads thus: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment." (Mark 12:30). It is into our hearts and minds that the Lord in the new covenant will write His laws and commandments. (Hebrews 10:16). We are exhorted to keep our heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. (Proverbs 4:23). We believe that sin dwells in the flesh of man. Through The Fall, sin permeated all mankind.

We believe that man was created to live in fellowship with God. (Psalm 25:14). Through Christ, we have all gained access to the Father in one Spirit (Ephesians 2:18), and God has appointed us to be His children, that we should be sons and daughters of God Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:18).

#### 2.2 Adam and Eve – The Fall

In the beginning, The Earth was desolate and empty, and there was darkness over the great deep. God's Spirit hovered over the waters, and God said, "'Let there be light,' and there was light." God saw that the light was good, and He separated the light from the darkness. This was the beginning of a new dispensation; a time, which can be measured in days and years. (Genesis 1:2-4. Ephesians 1:8-10).

God had created the Garden of Eden where He put Adam and Eve, and gave them the task of cultivating and keeping the glory that was there. Adam and Eve did not know about sin, and everything existed in peace and harmony in fellowship with God. In the midst of the garden, God had planted two special trees, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:9). God had given man a free will, and they could freely eat of all the trees in the garden, except the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Eating from this tree would mean separation from God. As to the tree of life, God had, at that time, given no prohibition. (Genesis 2:16-17).

We believe that Ezekiel chapter 28 and Isaiah chapter 14 describe Satan, who exalted himself and wanted to become like God, who was also in the Garden of Eden with his pride and evil power represented by the serpent. (Genesis 3:1). We believe that the serpent, by its cunning and its lie, succeeded in sowing doubt

as to what God really had said.<sup>9</sup> He led Eve astray into unbelief, and gave birth to sin in her heart.<sup>10</sup> Eve took from the tree of her own free will, and gave of the fruit also to Adam, and they both ate of it. (Genesis 3:6). By disobedience, these two people partook of a knowledge that they should not have had at this time. In this way, sin entered the world.

The result of this disobedience was that both were driven out of the Garden of Eden, and God set the cherubim with flaming swords that swung every way to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:24). God's wrath came upon sin, but at the same time He sided with man against the deceiver, promising that the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. (Genesis 3:14-17).

There came about a separation between God and man at the time of The Fall: "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." (Isaiah 59:2). The serpent gained power over mankind, and sin permeated all mankind. (Romans 5:12). Man thought evil and did evil all the day, and God was grieved in His heart, regretting that He had created them. (Genesis 6:5-7).

### 2.3 Sin and the Conscience

We believe that sin is a separation from fellowship with God. It means that one violates God's will, and this leads to a divorce between God and man. Sin is always in opposition to God, and is always against God's will. Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. (1 John 3:4). Among other things, sin causes man to open himself to the wisdom of this world, and God "has made foolish the wisdom of this world." (1 Corinthians 1:18).

The Bible takes sin seriously; the message of Scripture is both a doctrine of what sin is and a clear message of salvation from sin. (1 Timothy 1:15, Matthew 1:21). Sin is more than a human weakness; there are thoughts, words, and deeds that violate God's will.

The conscience is a moral judge that all people are endowed with. The results of its judgements, however, will be coloured by traditions and cultural context. Paul writes to the Romans about the Gentiles who had not received the law, but that did not give them an excuse to live a morally reprehensible life. "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel." (Romans 2:14-16).

Human nature is full of lusts, which are the desires of the flesh that are rooted in The Fall. When the mind is drawn away and in agreement with this desire, lust or desire is conceived in the mind and gives birth to sin, and when sin is full-grown, it brings forth death. (James 1:14-15). There is then a judgment of God resting over this sin in the conscience. The same mind that gave into lust now feels judged. We believe that if this judgment is not upheld, and man does not allow himself to be chastened, but continues to live in sin, he will eventually be able to sin without recognizing God's judgment over his conscience.<sup>11</sup>

If man seeks to get away from the chastening of his conscience, then this produces death. In this death there is a kind of peace, a peace from qualms of conscience, yet no peace with God. We therefore believe that it is essential that our conscience is formed and developed by God's Word and God's Spirit. A person is completely dependent on maintaining a good conscience in order to come to spiritual growth. Paul always strove "to have a conscience without offence toward God and man." (Acts 24:14-16).

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<sup>9</sup> Smith, Johan O. Letters – 12.12.1905.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. Answer to Korsets Seier – Do the Saints have sin. 24 April 1922.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter 1915/12 "The manifestation of the man of sin and the man of God."

## **2.4 God's Love toward Mankind**

"The Mighty One, God the Lord, has spoken and called The Earth from the rising of the sun to its going down. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth." (Psalm 50:1-2). We believe that God has a calling to mankind and wants all people to be saved and come to the acknowledgement of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4). For thousands of years a message has sounded from heaven calling mankind to repentance. Ever since The Fall, God has, by His infinite love, called to them. God loves all His creation. Here man is uniquely positioned, because he is created in the image of God.

Throughout the Old Testament, we read about how God sent prophets and persuaded Israel to turn away from idols to love the Lord his God with all of his heart. Hebrews chapter 11 tells of those who, with confidence and conviction, accepted faith in the Almighty and became a cloud of witnesses for those who choose to follow Jesus Christ.

We believe that when God sent His Son to Earth, it was not to judge or condemn it, but so that those who believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16-17). The time, according to His dispensation, was right to send His own Son to Earth to deliver mankind from their bondage to the sins in which they lived. Jesus says that "whoever commits sin is a slave to sin", and that He had come so that man could be truly free from the bondage of sin. (John 8:34-36).

Satan accused men night and day because they had all sinned. (Revelation 12:10). Jesus became a ransom and was given the authority to forgive all the sins of the world. Paul puts it this way: "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made an open spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." (Colossians 2:13-15).

We believe there is forgiveness and salvation for all who confess with their mouths the Lord Jesus, and believe in their hearts that God raised Him from the dead. (Romans 10:9-10). This unconditional love is evident when Jesus forgave one of the thieves who was crucified with Him on Calvary. He acknowledged his sin and turned to Jesus. He received the promise of being with Jesus in Paradise. (Luke 23:41-43).

## **2.5 Doctrinal Summary**

We believe that man, consisting of spirit, soul, and body, was created in God's image as the pinnacle of God's creation. He is called to live in fellowship with God. But at The Fall, God's original plan was disrupted because Satan appealed to man's free will, and man was disobedient to God's will. Sin thereby created a separation between God and man.

Conscience is a moral judge that all human beings are endowed with, but which is coloured by tradition and culture. We therefore believe that it is important that the conscience is formed and developed by God's Word and God's Spirit. It is of paramount importance that a person maintains a good conscience in order to come to spiritual growth. (1 Timothy 1:19 and Hebrews 13:18).

God wants every person to be saved and come to an acknowledgement of the truth. God saw the need of mankind, and in His great love sent His own Son into the world, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He did not come to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him. Jesus became a ransom and was given the power to forgive all the sins of the world. We believe there is forgiveness and salvation for all who confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in their hearts that God raised Him from the dead.

## Chapter 3 – Jesus Christ

### 3 Jesus Christ – Son of God

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” By the Word everything was created and sustained. Through the Incarnation, life was revealed on Earth in its fulness by the Word, the Only Begotten Son, who came with a fulness of grace and truth. (John 1:1-4 and 14). As a man on Earth, Jesus Himself expressed that His Father in heaven took pleasure in hiding who He was from those who considered themselves wise and prudent. It would be to babes He would reveal Himself. (Matthew 11:25-27). Jesus' own words tell us that what we know about Him must be revealed to us by the Father and the Son.<sup>12</sup> (John 14:21-23).

Peter writes that God's divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, and that He has called us by His own glory and power. (2 Peter 1:3). We believe that the whole of God's Word speaks in unison about the opportunities for salvation, growth, and development given to us in God's Word. Even though Jesus' incarnation according to the flesh cannot be explained exhaustively, what it means that the Son of God became a man, and what it means that the man Jesus Christ was also the Son of God, has been a complex topic of discussion from the first centuries after Jesus had departed from this Earth, and was discussed in depth at several church councils, until about the year 450. Jesus Himself was sentenced to death for blasphemy when He said He was the Son of God.

The prophet Isaiah prophesied of Jesus some 700 years before His birth: "Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1). That Almighty God should be revealed as a man with human limitations, suffering, humiliation and death was both a stumbling block of offence and foolishness. (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Jesus revealed Himself to John on Patmos as a person in the like a son of man. He introduced Himself to him saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last", and "alive for evermore", as the One who held "the keys to death and Hades". In a later chapter, He is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David". He had prevailed and was in appearance as "a Lamb". (Revelation 1:13-14, Ch. 1:17-18, Ch. 5:5-6).

When the great light from heaven struck Saul on the road to Damascus, and Jesus appeared to him, he fell to the ground and asked, "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 22:8). Saul, in all his zealous service, had not understood who Jesus was, and he later writes to his co-worker Timothy: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory." (1 Timothy 3:16). The Master Himself revealed Himself to Saul at the time: "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting." (Acts 22:8).

The mystery of godliness is also expressed in other words where Paul writes to the Romans that Jesus after the flesh came of the seed of David, but according to the Spirit of holiness was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus that the Father of glory would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. From his various letters we understand that Paul had this Spirit of revelation, but he nevertheless acknowledged that he only understood in part. (Ephesians 1:17, 1 Corinthians 13:9-12).

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<sup>12</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter.1918/08 and 09. A glimpse into the mystery of Godliness.

Because Jesus humbled Himself to such a lowly place, He has been highly exalted and given the name that is above all names. (Philippians 2:9). We believe that the depth of the mystery of godliness means that the question, "Who are you, Lord?", will always be a very pertinent question for every disciple who continually longs for more light and life until he attains to the goal of being with his Saviour, Lord, Master, and Forerunner.

### 3.1 The Pre-Incarnation of Christ

Christ was the Only Begotten Son of God in the bosom of the Father, begotten of God the Father before all the worlds. The Son was wholly one with the Father. (John 1:18). The Bible uses different words to describe Christ in his pre-incarnate state. One of those words is "the wisdom of God." We believe, as Scripture says, "The Lord possessed Me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old." (Proverbs 8:22-31). He was God's delight, and appointed by God from before all worlds. He was worked beside the Father "as a master craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him...and My delight was with the sons of men."<sup>13 14</sup>

We believe that He who had His delight in the sons of men, in His pre-incarnate state, would Himself enter into our dimension of time and follow the walk of the children of Israel through the desert, as it is written: "and they all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4). All of Scripture points toward Christ and His coming to Earth. Moses, David, and the prophets prophesied of His coming in many contexts.<sup>15</sup> We believe that the divine service, the structure and arrangement of the tabernacle, and the temple pointed to the One who was to come. (Hebrews 9:8-11).

Paul also writes about the pre-existent state of Christ, that He was at home with the Father. (Colossians 1:15-17). We believe that He, one with the Father, was an image of the invisible God and that by Him everything was created in both the visible and the invisible world. By Him, who was the wisdom and power of God, thrones, dominions, powers, and authorities were created; they also exist through Him. Jesus Christ was and is the Mediator of all Creation. By being perfectly one with His Father, renewal and creation lie in the power of His hands.

### 3.2 The Incarnation— Gods Kingdom Breaks Forth

In the fulness of time, God sent His Only Begotten Son to Earth during the time when the law of Moses was in force. The time had come when man could be freed from the law and adopted as children of God. He in whom the Word—the truth—became flesh, came full of grace and help and salvation for all mankind and to be conformed to God's image. (Galatians 4:4-5, John 1:14, Romans 8:29-30).

The angel Gabriel was sent to a virgin, Mary of Nazareth, with the tidings that she would give birth to a son whose name was to be Jesus. "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:32-35).

The kingdom of Israel was built up through the laws and ordinances that were conveyed through Moses, and brought a great blessing upon the Jews. We believe that Jesus came with the kingdom of God that will last forever. He became the stone that the builders rejected, and God made Him the cornerstone of

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<sup>13</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1912/01 The Bride.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, Johan O. Letters. 27 May 1907.

<sup>15</sup> Deut. 18:18-19, Isa. 7:14, Isa. 53, Zech. 9:9, Psa. 2, Psa. 22 :17-32, Psa. 110.



God's building. (Psalm 118:22, Matthew 21:42). When He began His preaching activities, it reads: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15). The Sermon on the Mount tells about what God's Kingdom consists of. It was the life of Jesus, and a key to this kingdom is expressed in Jesus' words: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs." (Matthew 5:3). This is the kingdom Jesus received into Himself in His mortal life, and He planted it by God's Word as a seed in His disciples.

Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a small seed that grew into a mighty tree, where the birds of heaven could build a nest and feel safe. There was life, and abundance of life and blessing He poured out, and gave to the poor. When John's disciples were sent to ask if He was the one who should come or if they were to expect another, the answer was: "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: the blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." (Matthew 11:4-6). He preached the mysteries of the kingdom of God in parables and laid down the laws of the kingdom of heaven in the hearts of His disciples, in those who had an ear and a sense for the things which belonged to God's kingdom. He taught that whoever sought God's kingdom first and His righteousness would receive in addition what was needed for their livelihood. (Matthew 6:33).

Jesus taught that the kingdom of God was at hand (Mark 1:15, Matthew 4:17). We believe that Jesus is the cornerstone that consists of the attributes, wisdom, and power of the kingdom of God in its fulness. This kingdom will one day put an end to all other kingdoms and fill The Earth with righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Daniel 2:44-45). This was the person that Moses foresaw when he spoke: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear." (Deuteronomy 18:15). He came from the midst of Israel, from the brothers of Moses, born of a woman. He was from the seed of the woman, and through Him God's prophecy to the devil was fulfilled: "He shall bruise your head." (Genesis 3:15).

### 3.2.1 Christ Manifested in the Flesh

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory." (1 Timothy 3:16).

We believe it is a mystery that the Son of the Most High God could dwell amongst us as a man – a man with a flesh that all men have. We believe that the Son of Man, Jesus, in every temptation, rejected evil from the flesh with which He had willingly clothed Himself and chose the good in perfect surrender and union with the will of the Father. We believe that this is a mystery that only godly fear can reveal and explain to those who are willing to follow in the footsteps that the Son of Man has left for us to follow in.<sup>16</sup> We believe that Hebrews 5:7-9 clearly describes that this did not happen automatically, but that for Jesus it was a conscious struggle that led to prayer because of His godly fear. Thus, God defeated sin in man by the power of an indestructible life. This is a great mystery of godliness.

God's Word refers to Jesus as a person who is both exalted and humbled. One who is a ruler, a king, raised up and exalted, the other a man who was mistreated and despised.<sup>17</sup> We believe that 'humiliated' and 'rejected' describes Christ in His mortal life, in His humiliation in the day-to-day struggle in His flesh to bring about salvation for lost who lived in fear of death. (Hebrews 2:15). The prophets also write about a Man who would rule in godliness, who would come out from Edom, glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength. (2 Samuel 23:3-4, Isaiah 63:1-4).

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<sup>16</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1932/02. Christ manifest in flesh.

<sup>17</sup> Num. 24:17, 2 Sam. 23:3-4, Isa. 9:6-7, Zech. 9:10, Luke 1:32-33, Isa. Ch. 53.

We believe that Jesus Christ is very God and very man. According to our understanding and faith, Hebrews 2:16-18 is central to understanding the phrase "very God and very man." The Son of Man was to give aid to the seed of Abraham. "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." He thus came both to atone for the sins of the people and to aid those who are tempted.

We believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the exalted Saviour and King whom the prophets had prophesied for centuries would come to Earth. We also confess Him as Lord: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36).

Jesus is the son of God and the son of Mary. Paul describes in Romans 1:1-4 who Jesus was, both according to the flesh of the seed of David and as the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness: "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

### 3.2.2 Very God

We believe that Jesus Christ was very God, conceived by the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist prophesied of Him. "He who comes from above is above all; he who is of The Earth is Earthly and speaks of The Earth. He who comes from heaven is above all." (John 3:31). "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God." (John 13:3, and 16:28). The prophet puts it this way: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah 11:1-2). The Spirit of the Lord found a place in Jesus to rest upon every day during His Earthly life and pilgrimage here.

"If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." (John 10:37-38). "I and My Father are one." (John 10:30). "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." (John 14:9). We believe that this is descriptive of the incarnate Jesus as very God.<sup>18</sup>

We believe, like the author of Hebrews, that the Son was the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person. (Hebrews 1:1-3). We believe that the Father's person was in Jesus by the Spirit of holiness, the seven spirits of God that rested upon Him—the seven torches of fire that burn in the presence of God's throne. (Isaiah 11:2, Revelation 4:5). He only did the works of His Father, and did nothing of Himself. The words and deeds that came from Jesus were the words and deeds of the Father. (John 14:10). There was never any place in Jesus' heart or mind that would have allowed Him to break this intimate fellowship with His Father. (John 6:35-40).

### 3.2.3 Very Man

We believe that Jesus was born of the seed of David, of the Virgin Mary. He was what He called Himself: the Son of Man. (Matthew 16:27). As son of man, He had a human soul and will, human feelings and understanding, and was fully aware of what it was to be a man subject to our human condition. In His time of incarnation, Jesus was limited by time and place, and had to walk in faith. He always chose to do the will of the Father at the expense of His own will. (John 5:30, John 6:38).

"He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground." (Isaiah 53:2). Paul exhorts us to remember Jesus Christ, who was raised up from the dead. He was of the seed of David.

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<sup>18</sup> John 5:19 and 30, 6:38-39, 8:16, 8:28 and 38, 10:30, 12:50, 14:10, 15:4 and 17:21-23.

Jesus says the same thing about Himself: He was the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star. (2 Timothy 2:8, Revelation 22:16). In this flesh of the seed of David, by the Spirit of holiness He took up His priestly struggle against the flesh, sacrificing Himself by virtue of an eternal Spirit. He suffered death in the flesh, but was made alive in the Spirit. (Hebrews 9:14, 1 Peter 3:18).

Jesus' final battle in prayer here on Earth were fought in Gethsemane. This battle was also between His own will and God's will. "Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.'" He wanted to do the will of the Father, no matter the cost. (Matthew 26:42). We believe that this battle was absolutely and unequivocally a genuine battle against the powers of darkness in the obedience of faith. His soul was troubled, and He was sorrowful unto death. There was a clear "No!" in Jesus' heart and mind to all that was not in perfect harmony with the Father's will. (John 12:27).

Scripture refers to Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our faith. (Hebrews 12:2). The same author also writes that Jesus learned obedience from what He suffered, and when He was finished, He became the author of eternal salvation for all those who obey Him. (Hebrews 5:7-9). Paul also writes that Jesus "did not consider it a robbery to be like God", but emptied Himself of His privileges [NKJV margin] as He took on the form of a servant and came in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:6-7).

<sup>18</sup> John 5:19 and 30, 6:38-39, 8:16, 8:28 and 38, 10:30, 12:50, 14:10, 15:4 and 17:21-23.

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." (Luke 2:52). We believe from this that Jesus was in a development during the time of His incarnation.

#### **3.2.4 In the Likeness of Sinful Flesh**

Sin entered into the world through one man. Because of sin, death also entered in. It penetrated to all mankind, because all had sinned. Sin came into the world by Adam, who is referred to by Paul as the first Adam. The first human being was a type of the one who was to come. (Romans 5:14). Jesus was willing to become a man and address in His flesh the problem, the sin that came into the world through the fall of the first Adam. One man's transgression led to the condemnation of all men, and so the righteous deed of one man by obedience became the justification of life for all men. (Verse 18).

We believe that Jesus partook of flesh and blood and He likewise shared in the same as the children, the same as all people born after The Fall of the first Adam. He had to become like His brethren in all things, just the same as anyone who is tempted by the sin that dwells in the flesh. (Hebrews 2:14-18). He was the Son of man; according to the flesh He came of the seed of David. Against this flesh, the law was powerless and could not lead anyone to perfection. The law was a gift to men, and brought with it great blessing when man was obedient and kept the commandments. "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:3-4). Jesus, was the first, fulfilment of the righteous requirements of the law: "You shall not covet." (Romans 7:7). The sin in man's flesh lusts against the Spirit and this is contrary towards God. (Galatians 5:16-18).

We believe that Jesus' righteous work was this, that by the Spirit of holiness He presented Himself as a sacrifice and was united with the Father, who condemned sin in that flesh which Jesus, inasmuch as the children had partaken of, He clothed Himself with the same. Jesus loved the Father with all of His heart, soul and might. His heart and mind were in heaven even though His body was on Earth. (John 3:13). He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15).

We understand by this that He suffered and was tempted like us, but passed all the tests without sinning. He overcame in every temptation. Sin never gained power and was never expressed through Him, and no one could convict Him of sin. (John 8:46). By His body the kingdom of God came forth in its power and fullness. He came into the world to do God's will as it in heaven. To do this will, He had to deny His own

will. Doing the will of the Father was His desire. He learned obedience from what He suffered and was perfected through suffering. (Hebrews 2:10, and 5:8).

We believe that the second veil in the Jewish Temple figuratively was the flesh with which He had clothed Himself. (Hebrews 10:20). Through this veil, Jesus has consecrated a new and living way. When Jesus cried out from the cross, "It is finished," the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. We believe that the way was consecrated, and all sin in Jesus' flesh was condemned. Then death was brought to naught, and Satan's head was crushed. Therefore, Jesus could be resurrected in His body that had never sinned. The new and living way through the flesh was paved with Jesus as the Forerunner. The last Adam became a life giving spirit. (1. Corinthians 15:45).

As the one who had never sinned, He had the power to atone for the sin of mankind. He was the Lamb of God who was slaughtered for our sake. When the Chief of this salvation had completed this work, He became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey Him. He became the abundant wealth of grace and justice. (Romans 5:17). "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead." (1 Corinthians 15:21).

### 3.2.5 A New and Living Way

"Therefore, we also, since we are surrounded by so great a great cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls." (Hebrews 12:1-3). Through this, man has been given the opportunity to follow our Master on the new and living way. We believe it is this race that Paul exhorts saved sinners to enter into. (1 Corinthians 9:23-27, Philippians 3:12-14).

Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered. (Hebrews 5:8). He knew the Father's works and heard His voice. "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life." (John 12:49-50). The Gospel of John has many references to Jesus' own statements about this.

Jesus was the Author and Finisher of our Faith, and lived by faith. His love for God was exceedingly great, as the Song of Solomon 8:6 puts it: "For love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame." The Spirit of holiness contains within it a fire, a most vehement flame. With a love for His Father stronger than death, Jesus faced temptations in faith and obedience. We believe the cross was at work every day in Jesus during the days of His flesh. He voluntarily took this suffering in the flesh upon Himself for our sake. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit." (1 Peter 3:18). In this spirit, God could lay down His wisdom.

Jesus' will was expressed in this: "Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God." (Hebrews 10:7). We believe that the new and living way was consecrated by Jesus in the days of His flesh, in these days He lived His life from Nazareth to Calvary, where He completed His course and became our atoner and forerunner. Throughout all these days, Jesus' will was consistent, He took up His cross every day and denied Himself, the self He had inherited when He became a man. We believe He had to present Himself as a sacrifice in the power of an eternal Spirit. By this will, we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:10).

By this offering, all that dwelt in His flesh was denied and put to death. Therefore, death could not hold him. As He gave up His spirit on the cross, the veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. We believe that now because of this work we have boldness in the blood of Jesus to enter the sanctuary (Hebrews 10:19-20), where we can meet the high priest, Jesus. He was tried in all things like us, and He

always did God's will and never His own will. He had to suffer in the flesh and passed the test without sinning.

We believe that in this way all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him (Hebrews 5:9, Colossians 1, 19, Philippians 2:5-8), so that the way and Jesus became one, and He could say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). On this new and living way, Jesus has left us an example, that we should follow His steps, who committed no sin. (1 Peter 2:21).

### 3.2.6 Jesus Battle and Temptations

Because Jesus "became like His brethren in all things," He too could be tried in all things like them. He was tempted like us, but was preserved in perfect purity and innocence. Because He knows what this struggle cost Him, He can have compassion with our infirmities, "and can come to our aid when we are tempted." (Hebrews 4:15, and 2:18).

We believe that He was tempted like us, from the flesh with which He had voluntarily clothed himself.<sup>19 20</sup> Jesus' own will was defeated because Jesus, with His heart and mind, was in a covenant relationship with God's will. The prophecy in Psalm 40:7-9 says of Jesus: "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart." When God's will was to be done, Jesus entered into temptation. In the volume of the book He found God's will, the word was a lamp to His feet and a light to His path. This will was His food, that He might become the bread that came down from heaven to give life to the world. (John 6:48-51). We believe that the Father's life was in this way revealed through Jesus.

We believe that the temptations and trials that Jesus endured, including the bodily afflictions, are expressed in Hebrews 5:7: "Who, in the days of His flesh, when He has offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear." We believe that His whole life was a battle. This comes to view in Matthew 4:1-11 where the devil tempted Him, among other things, with all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, but his offer was rejected, and the devil departed from Him. Jesus was rooted in God's Word, and used it in the fight against the devil. His final battle in prayer was fought in Gethsemane, and three times He prayed the same prayer: "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." (Matthew 26:42-44).

We believe that these battles were very real indeed, where He fought against the powers of darkness in the obedience of faith. His soul was troubled, and He was sorrowful until death. "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour." (John 12:27). In the Spirit of holiness<sup>21</sup> the divine powers were made available to fight and overcome. In this Spirit, He presented Himself as a sacrifice without blemish to God. In this Spirit lay the hatred of injustice and the love of righteousness. The Father's pleasure anointed Him with the oil of gladness in His battles. (Hebrews 1:9). The Spirit who gives knowledge of the Lord and the fear of Him rested upon Jesus. (Isaiah 11:2-3). Because of this godly fear, contained within His ardour of love, He was heard. Where sin is removed, death is powerless, and Satan and his power are crushed.

### 3.2.7 Jesus' Humiliation

Paul writes about Jesus that He "He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:7-8). Jesus began His life on Earth in a manger. He remained in this lowly state throughout His time as sojourner and pilgrim on The

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<sup>19</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1928/04. Jesus as High Priest.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1915/05. Has Christ come in the flesh?

<sup>21</sup> Smith Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1943/03. Spirit – Fire.

Earth, until He finished in the lowest state of all, humanly speaking, at His ignominious death on Calvary's cross, crucified between two criminals. Throughout His life, from His birth to His bodily crucifixion on Calvary's cross, He took the form of a bondservant.

We believe that it was God's plan for Jesus to take the form of a bondservant. He humbled Himself and went down to the lower parts of The Earth. (Ephesians 4:9). That was where He lived, and where He carried out His ministry. When Jesus came riding into Jerusalem, it was on a donkey, on the foal of a beast of burden. There was no human greatness about Him. He did not come to be served, but Himself to be the servant. He gave His life and paid the price to redeem the many from the power of darkness. (Matthew 21:4-5, Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 20:28). We believe that this humility and lowliness in Christ's heart and mind was the key to the power and dignity with which He radiated the life and glory of the Father.

In Matthew 11:28-30, He invites all those who labour and are heavy laden. He testifies of Himself that He is gentle and lowly in heart. He was like this to the end, even on the last night with His disciples as He washed their feet before instituting the Lords Supper. (John 13). We believe this was a manifestation of the humility and love that dwelt in His heart, whereby He left an example in how we, as His followers, are to serve one another.

In Jesus' heart and mind, only love was given dominion and allowed to grow. We believe that even He who only served and gave Himself was tempted when He was met with resentment, contempt, hatred, and contradiction by sinners. But He humbled Himself under the mighty hand of God and continued to serve in the form of a bondservant without losing His love. His body was never used to seek His own glory. He was reviled and had to suffer unjustly, but never reviled in return and He did not threaten. He never sinned in thought, word, or deed. (1 Peter 2:21-23). We believe that in all these circumstances of life, Jesus was the Master of rest and thankfulness, and was always anointed with the oil of gladness. (Hebrews 1:9). We believe that it is precisely in this way that Jesus' footsteps are laid out before us.

We believe that these footsteps of humility and self-humiliation became the way, the new and living way that He consecrated through the veil, that is His flesh. (Hebrews 10:20). Thus, He became the way, the truth, and the life. (John 14:6).

All God's of Word and all of God's will was fulfilled bodily in Him, and all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him. We believe that it was on this path of sacrifice that the devil was crushed and death was destroyed. "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out." (John 12:31). God condemned all sin in Jesus' flesh, and thus all sin that came in through The Fall was "cast out." Jesus could then say, "For the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me." (John 14:30).

### **3.2.8 Putting to Death the Enmity**

In Ephesians, Paul describes the work of Christ in few words: "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity." (Ephesians 2:14-16).

The law came with many commandments and ordinances. It also said, "You shall not covet." Covetousness remained concealed in the flesh; it was not be outwardly apparent. Lust gave increase to enmity. When God condemned sin in Jesus' flesh, He was willing to be a sacrifice, so that the enmity would be mortified. Thus, the law was fulfilled, and He became the end of the law, for righteousness to everyone who believes.

It was on the cross that He destroyed the enmity. We believe that this took place on the cross which He daily carried about with him, a work that was finished on the cross of Calvary. When the enmity had been

destroyed and the fullness of God dwelled in Jesus, there were no obstacles and no wall of separation anymore. The two, Jew and Gentile, were united in Jesus Christ and could emerge together as a new people. They both gained access to the Father in one Spirit, in the same Spirit in which Jesus sacrificed Himself and presented Himself as a sacrifice without blemish to God. (Ephesians 2:11-22).

We believe that everything that hindered fellowship and unity, all sin and all enmity due to cultural differences, ethnic differences and historical grounds were destroyed in His flesh. He united the "nations" and made them one. We believe that it is therefore written: "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all." (Colossians 3:11). Thus Jesus also became a light to the Gentiles, so that salvation would reach to the ends of The Earth. (Isaiah 49:6). In this battle He gave His precious blood, and we believe that it was in this battle that He appeared as the Lion of Judah. (Revelation 5:5). He came from Edom with red garments from Bozrah with a day of vengeance over all flesh. (Isaiah 63). It cost His life, and the foundation was laid so that He could become all and in all.

### 3.3 Jesus' Death and Resurrection

Jesus Christ, God's own Son died On Calvary's cross, whom God in His great love had given to mankind, that we should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16). As He breathed His last breath, He cried out, "It is finished!" "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And The Earth trembled, and the rocks tore." (Matthew 27:51). He had completed the work that the Father had given Him to do, a work that had gone on from His birth until He gave up His spirit on Calvary's cross. He was the righteous One who died for the unrighteous.

We believe that Christ's suffering at the crucifixion on Calvary was the end of a life in which He had daily taken up His cross to do God's will. (Luke 9:23, Matthew 16:24). He had, in His mortal life, destroyed death and the devil, and he who had the power of death. In this way He had gained power over all flesh. (John 17:1-4). Death was swallowed up in victory, the sting of death, which is sin, was removed. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save it. (John 3:17). We believe that through this "great salvation" (Hebrews 2:3), all people can be justified before God and have peace with Him. Christ has become our atoning sacrifice once and for all, and through this sacrifice God reconciled the world to Himself. There is no longer a need for animal sacrifices for sin, that which in the old covenant each year had to be brought before God for forgiveness of sin. Now Jesus has once for all presented Himself as a perfect sacrifice, and forever making them perfect who are being sanctified. (Hebrews 10:10-14). All people, no matter how deeply they have fallen into sin, can, through faith in Jesus Christ, receive the forgiveness of sins without merit and by grace. When we confess our sins and turn away from them, the Father in His faithfulness and righteousness will forgive our sins and cleanse us from them. (1 John 1:9). It was by that victory that He won over sin that Jesus was able to grant forgiveness of sins to the thief on the cross, because he acknowledged his guilt, and Jesus gave him access to Paradise.

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared." (1 Peter 3:18-20). We believe that Jesus' atoning work was crucial also for those who lived before the Flood.<sup>22</sup>

Jesus took the punishment upon Himself, and we were thereby redeemed from the curse of the law, as He became a curse for us. Thus, Abraham's blessing could come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus. Faith

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<sup>22</sup> Smith Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1941/12. The Inheritance.

gives access to receive the Spirit. (Galatians 3:13-14). We have then been given the power to fight the lust in our flesh, and we are raised up with Christ who is sitting at the right hand of God. (Colossians 3:1-2). We believe this is the true redemption and justification by faith.

Jesus died a bodily death, but this death could not keep Him in the kingdom of death (Acts 2:31), and He rose again on the third day. The Resurrection from the dead confirmed that Jesus Christ had completed the mighty work of salvation, the work that the Father had given Him to do. We believe that "The Third Day" is one of the most important days in the history of the world. Jesus spoke to Mary Magdalene who was at the tomb and said, "But go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" (John 20:17).

Later, Jesus revealed Himself to several of His disciples. He ate with them, and talked to them about the things of God's kingdom so that their hearts burned within them. (Luke 24:32). After 40 days with them, He left The Earth and went home to His Father. "Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God." They then all said, 'Are You then the Son of God?' So He said to them, 'You rightly say that I am.'" (Luke 22:69-70).

### 3.4 Jesus' Post-Existent State

Ten days after Jesus left The Earth, the Father sent the Holy Spirit upon His disciples. (Acts 2:1-4). Then these words from David were also fulfilled: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" (Psalm 110:1), and further: "I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.'" (Psalm 2:7). The Son of Man, Jesus Christ, sits at the right hand of the Father, at the throne of the Majesty in heaven. (Hebrews 8:1). He lives to intercede for us and is our Advocate with the Father. (1 John 2:1, Ephesians 1:19-20).

#### 3.4.1 Jesus as High Priest

We believe that the High Priest's great work of love and mission is to a constantly increasing degree to conform an individual to the image of God and Christ. (Romans 8:29). It is an unimaginably great work that Jesus carries out with the Father. Jesus showed all His longsuffering to Paul and revealed Himself to him on his way to Damascus to bring him to repentance. (1 Timothy 1:16). Christ is the head of the church and the Saviour of His body. "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27).

"And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." (Hebrews 9:15). We believe that the Mediator and the High Priest work on His disciples by the Holy Spirit to conform them to the likeness of the image of the Son. "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." (Hebrews 5:1). We believe it is important to distinguish between Jesus as the propitiation for our sins, and Jesus as High Priest and Mediator of a new covenant. The sinner needs Jesus as an atoning sacrifice for his sin, while the saved man needs Him both as atoning sacrifice, High Priest and Mediator.<sup>23 24</sup>

We believe that it was necessary for our heavenly High Priest to be taken out from among men. Jesus came in flesh and blood as a man. He was tempted as a man and tested in all things as a man, without ever sinning. He conquered His own will in the temptations from the flesh He had received. He overcame

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<sup>23</sup> Smith Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1928/04. Jesus as High Priest.

<sup>24</sup> Smith Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1918/08. The High Priestly and Priestly Ministries.



so completely that He was without sin or blemish in every temptation. This was the case throughout His mortal life. When He died on Calvary's cross, He was the sacrifice without blemish who could once and for all atone for the sins of the whole world. Death could not hold Him, death was swallowed up in victory, and the devil had lost his power. Jesus rose on the third day, and He was appointed as High Priest forever by God. (Hebrews 7:28).

Jesus has become High Priest and Mediator according to the power of an indestructible life and ministers to mankind according to this power. He has become a priest, "not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.'" (Hebrews 7:16-17).

We believe that when we walk in the light that God allows to shine into our hearts, the Son will work by the Holy Spirit within us and write His laws and commandments in our hearts. (Hebrews 8:10). "But He, because He continues forever, has an unchanging priesthood. Therefore. He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:24-25).

Jesus as High Priest works in fellowship with His Father. The goal is a perfect salvation, that we will bear fruit for God. If there is to be growth in the good, the High Priest must work with us, so that we can get light on more of what dwells in our body of sin. Only after the sin has been illuminated can it be hated, and fought against until death, so that the life of Christ, the fruit of the Spirit, can come forth more through our mortal bodies.

We learn from Luke 13:6-9 that Jesus works with great longsuffering, even when the desired fruits do not come to fruition. "Sir, let it alone this year also, until I can dig it up around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down." That was how the High Priest, Head of the body, worked with the seven churches in Asia Minor. (Revelation chapters 2 and 3).

### **3.5 Doctrinal Summary**

We believe that all of God's Word together testifies to the possibilities for salvation, growth, and development that have been given to us, even though what remains of Jesus' flesh cannot be laid out in all its details. We believe that Christ was God's Only Begotten Son, begotten of the Father before all worlds. In His pre-existent state, the Son was wholly one with the Father. His delight was to serve the children of men. We believe that in the fulness of time, God sent His Only Begotten Son to Earth. He came with a kingdom of God that would last forever. It was this kingdom to which His whole life was devoted, and that is what He preached about. We believe that He was very God, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe that the nature of the Father was in Him by the Spirit of holiness throughout His walk and that He did only His Father's works. He did nothing of Himself, for He sought not His own will, but the will of Him who had sent Him.

We believe that Jesus was at the same time the Son of Man, as He called Himself. We believe that this refers to the fact that in the time of His incarnation He was limited by time and space. He had a human soul and will, feelings and intellect. We believe that the similarity further entailed His being tempted as a any man is tempted, having voluntarily taken upon Himself the same flesh as all mankind. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. We understand by this that He suffered and was tempted as we are, yet without sin, without falling into temptation. Sin never gained power over him and was never expressed through Him, and no one could convict Him of sin. To do God's will, He chose to deny His own will. His heart and mind were in heaven even though His body was on Earth. Through this body the kingdom of God came forth in power and fullness. As the one who had never sinned, He thus had the power to atone for the sin of mankind.

We believe that by living His Earthly life in this absolute faithfulness, where He took up His cross daily and denied Himself—the self He had inherited when He became a man—Jesus consecrated a new and living

way through the veil, which is His flesh. (Hebrews 10:20). This path leads into the sanctuary, that is, to an intimate fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

We believe that the temptations and trials Jesus lived through were, absolutely genuine temptations, as He fought against the powers of darkness in the obedience of faith. Throughout His life, from His birth in a manger to the bodily crucifixion on Calvary's cross between two criminals, He acted in lowliness and took the form of a bondservant. He came to Earth to serve and give His life. We believe that these footsteps of Jesus in humility and self-humiliation became a path on which we can follow Him, the new and living way; He became the way, the truth, and the life. Everything that hindered fellowship and unity, all sin and all enmity because of cultural differences, ethnic differences and historical backgrounds, was defeated in His flesh. In this battle He gave His precious blood. It cost His life and laid the foundation for Him to become all in all.

We believe that during His walk here on Earth, Jesus revealed a new life. He showed us God's goodness and God's love, leaving footsteps so we can follow Him on the narrow path that leads to life. We believe that when Christ was crucified on Calvary, death could not hold Him, because, throughout His life, He had overcome sin and thus also death, which is the consequence of sin. He rose again on the third day and became the author of eternal salvation. Through this unimaginably great salvation, all people can have peace with God, receive atonement, and be justified before God by faith in the work that Jesus carried out on Calvary.

We also confess Jesus Christ as our High Priest and Mediator. He now sits at the right hand of the Father, living to make intercession for us. We believe that He works by the Holy Spirit with His disciples to form them into the likeness of the image of the Son. We believe that as we walk in the light that God allows to shine into our hearts, the Son will work by the Holy Spirit within us and work with the regenerate man so that he is increasingly influenced by God's nature. If there is to be growth in the good, the High Priest must work with us, so that He can shed light on more that dwells in the body of sin. Only then can the sin that we get light over be hated, fought against and put to death, so that the life of Christ may manifest in our mortal bodies.

## Chapter 4 – The Holy Spirit

### 4 The Holy Spirit

#### 4.1 The Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem

Several of the prophets of the old covenant had prophesied of this great day when God would so powerfully reveal an historical new era. Joel prophesied, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." (Joel 2:28). The prophet Isaiah says, "For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring." (Isaiah 44:3).

Jesus cried out to the people during the festival in Jerusalem and invited all those who thirsted to come to Him to drink. He referred to the promise that living water that would flow forth from within them, if they would believe in Him. This is the promise of the Spirit that those who believed in Him would receive. (John 7:37-38). Jesus stated that it was for the benefit of His disciples that He would go away, so that the Holy Spirit would come to them and give them power to live the new life. (John 16:7-8). "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive.... I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (John 14:16-18).

When Jesus stood on the Mount of Olives with His disciples, He promised them power by the coming of the Holy Spirit, and they were to be His witnesses, first in Jerusalem, then in all Israel, even to the end of The Earth. (Acts 1:7-8). We believe that these prophecies and promises were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, 10 days after Jesus was taken up to heaven. The 120 or so disciples, women and men, gathered for prayer in the "upper room", "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4).

We believe this was one of the great and decisive events in history. Peter stood up in the power of the Holy Spirit. He spoke about the prophet Joel and raised his voice speaking boldly about the heroes of faith, of Jesus, whom they had crucified a short time ago, but who now sat at the right hand of the Father in heaven. This message cut them to the heart, and they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:37-38). As a result of this day's events (that) about 3,000 souls were added to the church. Peter further exhorted them to take a stand, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing would come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began". (Acts 3:19-21).

We believe that the sum of Christ's entire work is accumulated in His Spirit.<sup>25</sup> He is the way, the truth, and the life. Christ came to this result by suffering death according to the flesh and being made alive according to the Spirit. (1 Peter 3:18). Therefore, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who is the second Adam, has become a life-giving Spirit. After Jesus was raised from the dead and glorified by His Father, God sent the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, as He had promised. (Acts 2:33). It was the same Spirit that had been with Jesus in His mortal life, and He was now to be the guide for the disciples on the way in Jesus' footsteps.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1932/10. What we believe.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1936/08. The Three Witnesses: the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood

## 4.2 The Power of the Holy Spirit

God has throughout the ages worked upon people by His Spirit, and throughout history there have been great revivals in which God has poured out the Holy Spirit over great multitudes. People have come to know God's presence and goodness, been set free from that which has bound them in life and liberated from the many obstacles they faced, they have come to know the healing that is present in the Spirit, freedom from destructive thoughts, and often also healing from sickness. In this way, God has been good to His creation by saving men from sin and allowing them a taste of heaven. Here "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female." (Galatians 3:28).

The Spirit also distributes gifts, the gift of tongues, the gift to interpret, the gift to heal, the gift to prophesy, and other gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:1-11). Peter experienced this when he came to Cornelius and his family and preached God's Word to them, and the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard. The believers who belonged to the circumcision, those who had come with Peter, were aghast when they heard Gentiles speaking with tongues and praising God. (Acts 10:44-46).

Jesus tells His disciples that He will send the Helper to them as a gift. By Jesus' prayer, the Father will send the Helper, the Spirit of truth, who would abide with them and in them forever. The world cannot receive this Spirit (John 14:15-18), because the love of God and the love of the world cannot be one. "'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.' 'I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'" (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

We believe that when the Advocate (the Helper) comes and dwells in us by faith, then we receive a gift that Paul calls the "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness". "For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:17). The prophet Zechariah speaks of the spirit to be sent upon the people of Jerusalem being a "Spirit of grace and supplication". (Zechariah 12:10). We believe that through this abundance of grace and riches and prayer in the Holy Spirit, God gives power to live and abstain from the manifest works of the flesh. He also gives power to put to death the hidden sin that dwells in our body of sin. "For if you live according to the flesh you shall die; but if by the Spirit you put to death<sup>27</sup> the deeds of the body, you will live." (Romans 8:13).

We believe that we can receive the Holy Spirit as a gift, not as a reward that we can earn. Through the Holy Spirit, God's love will be poured out into our hearts, and we will also have grace to boast in the hope of the glory of God. Faith gives us access to such help and power that we can even give thanks and be content in tribulations, as they are doors and opportunities for us to share in more patience, gain experience, and get to know God. This is how we achieve what we hope for by the power of love, which is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 5:2-5).

We believe that keeping the new covenant laws and commandments written in our hearts and minds is a joy for those who love God. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3). "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23). He comes to us and reveals Himself to us by the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit shall not speak of Himself, but will reveal the life of Jesus and proclaim to us the things to come. He will glorify Christ (John 16:13-15), for in Him dwells all the fullness of God. (Colossians 1:19).

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<sup>27</sup> This footnote is not relevant to the English version

We believe that the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father sent, is tasked with teaching the disciple all things and recalling all that Jesus has spoken. (John 14:26). In particular, Jesus mentions three important things to convict us about: sin, righteousness, and judgment. (John 16:7-11).

*Conviction of sin:* We believe that the Advocate convicts those who live in captivity to sin. One gains hope and becomes convinced that it is possible to come free from the dominion of sin.

*Conviction of righteousness:* We believe that this is a conviction for those who have received Jesus as Lord, and by faith have become righteous in Him and are resurrected with Him. This conviction brings gladness and joy of salvation into the believer's life, by seeing the kingdom of God and His righteousness. One has a Defender and Advocate who sits at the right hand of God.

*Conviction of judgment:* We believe that the conviction of judgment leads a man to know fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. This is possible because the prince of this world has received his judgment. For the believer, this is an ongoing process until we arrive at home with the Father, perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (Philippians 3,10, 1 Peter 4:17, James 1:4).

#### **4.2.1 The Spirit of Truth as our Guide**

Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit among other things as the Spirit of truth, saying, "And when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (John 16:8-13). Jesus also said, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." (John 5:17). The Father and the Son work continuously, and their work in us is through the Spirit sent on the day of Pentecost. This Spirit speaks nothing of Himself, only what He hears from heaven.

The Holy Spirit has much to teach the person who has become a disciple. He speaks truth and will guide us to the whole truth in fellowship with Him who is the way, the truth, and the life. We believe that the Spirit will guide us to walk in Jesus' footsteps. The sum of all God's Word is truth, and this truth was personified in Jesus. The Word became flesh as He sacrificed Himself in the power of an eternal Spirit. Jesus as the Son of Man lost His life in this world and lived the Father's life as He daily denied Himself and took up His cross. We believe that the same possibility lies open to every disciple through the guidance of the Spirit.

The Spirit proclaims to us the things to come so that we may be comforted and can rejoice in a living hope. (John 16:13). We believe this is the salvation Paul is referring to when he says, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

Jesus says He will come to His disciples when the Spirit comes. Therefore, the Lord is the Spirit, and there is freedom and possibilities for growth for anyone who with an open mind and pure heart beholds God and the glory of the Lord. We believe that all who gaze into the glory of the Lord as in a mirror are all transformed into the same image, from glory to glory. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). We believe this is a description of the work of the Spirit of truth in a disciple, to bring forth the life of Christ. Paul boldly writes that "Christ lives in me." (Galatians 2:20). It was by the power of the Spirit that he could live this crucified life in obedience to Christ.

We believe it was this salvation Jesus spoke of when He said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32). The disciple is baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire, has given up everything to follow his Master, and is willing to sacrifice his own will to do God's will. (Matthew 3:11, and Luke 14:33).

#### **4.2.2 Obey the Holy Spirit**

God's Word speaks both of walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25) and of obeying the Spirit. (Acts 5:32). We believe that these are two different ways of saying the same thing, and it is also essential if one wants to

preserve the Holy Spirit in one's life. There is a battle between the Spirit and the flesh, and one becomes double-minded if one lives a little after the Spirit and a little after the flesh. "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." (Galatians 5:17-18). We believe that to walk in the Spirit means to walk in the light that the Spirit reveals to one by the Word. In the time of temptation, the disciple must take sides with the Spirit against the flesh with its passions, lusts desires. In this position, crucified with Christ, a man will be able to overcome all the manifest works of the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that those who live according to the fleshly mind have set their minds on the things of the flesh. Those who live according to the Spirit are such as are born again to a living hope. They are on the side of the Spirit and long for life and peace (Romans 8:5-6), a kingdom of God that consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force. (Matthew 11:12). In the kingdom of heaven, there is forgiveness for our sins and a new life in the power of the Spirit, which takes up the fight against evil to overcome it. Light overcomes darkness, and the fruit of that light which we receive when we walk in the Spirit, triumphs over the power of darkness.

We believe it is important to surrender oneself completely to God's will, and to carry out God's will in such a way that His laws and commandments, by the Holy Spirit can be written in one's heart and mind. (Hebrews 8:10-11 and 10:15-16). A spiritual life is a life of progress from light to light according to God's will. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10). This is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. (Zechariah 4:6).

We believe that it is God who works both to will and to do His good pleasure. The operation of the Spirit in man leads to a hidden life before God's and a work by the word of life that leads to a deeper insight and sanctification. This operation is to be carried out without the flesh's murmuring and doubting being able to hinder us. Then we can live as God's blameless children in faith in Christ Jesus and shine like lights in the world, filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 2:12-16; 1:11).

We believe that the good works are come forth from joy and peace, with gratitude, longsuffering, in an increasing wealth of the fruits of the Spirit. These blameless children of God, these "celestial lights," represent the kingdom of God on Earth and bring tidings that the kingdom that will one day fill the entire Earth where Jesus sits enthroned with those who have followed Him and overcome as He has overcome. (Revelation 3:21). We believe that these people have given themselves completely to God's will. They do not live for themselves. There has been a circumcision of the heart in the Spirit. (Romans 2:29). Paul says, "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Philippians 3:3) Paul reminds us that our bodies are to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. We have received Him from God and He shall have full control over our body which shall be for the glory of God who purchased it at a high price, with His own blood, through Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

#### **4.2.3 Spirit and Fire**

John the Baptist says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Matthew 3:11). Jesus says, "I came to send fire on The Earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49).

When a man is born again by water and Spirit then love is poured out in the heart by the Holy Spirit, one experiences salvation in Christ Jesus and one, in truth becomes a child of God. God has become one's Father, and one is reconciled to God and has made peace with God. (Romans 5:1). Man is then justified by faith. This is without merit and by grace, one gains salvation through Christ's atonement. Those who experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and asked Peter what to do, received the answer: "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38).

"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4). Paul says in Philippians 3:10, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." In the fellowship of His sufferings, we come to know God as a consuming fire.<sup>28</sup> (Hebrews 12:29). We believe that when God works upon us that this causes a fire to come over all the sinfulness that has corrupted man ever since The Fall and which prevents the unity that Jesus prayed for: "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one." (John 17:23). By walking in the Spirit, one will experience the consuming effects of the fire and the fruits of the Spirit that result from it. We believe that this is what Peter is referring to when he says: "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12-13). We believe that instead of sinning and suffering in one's conscience, it is possible to suffer in the flesh and gain victory over the manifest works of the flesh. (Galatians 5:19-21).

We believe that self-righteousness, egotism, judgmentalism and the wrath of man, etc., are all rooted in The Fall. By the consuming work of the fire, this can gradually become spoil for the fire, and the new life and living water can flow forth from good treasure of his heart.<sup>29</sup> We believe this is what Jesus exhorts the angel of the church to do when he says, "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire." (Revelation 3:18) The result of this fire is a tested faith to be found to the praise and glory in the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:7). We believe that it is necessary for a disciple to go through this fire by walking in the Spirit in the days of his flesh. One day our life's work will be tested through fire. If it passes the test, we will receive our reward. If our life's work is consumed by the fire, we will suffer the loss of our reward. But we ourselves are to be saved, but as though through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:14-15). He who has done his deeds in order to be honoured by men have already received his reward from men (Matthew 6:1-2), and the house of one's life has been built on the sand.

#### **4.2.4 The Body as a Temple for the Holy Spirit**

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to build us up into a tabernacle of God, a temple of the Holy Spirit. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Jesus' body was completely sacrificed to do God's will. He was compelled by God and sacrificed Himself by the power of an eternal Spirit. He Himself suffered death in His flesh, and was made alive in His spirit. We believe that just as it was with the Master, so it shall be with the disciple. We are under the influence of the Holy Spirit who makes alive our human spirit. In this way, our bodies will be a temple of the Holy Spirit. He will write His laws and commandments in our hearts and minds. The love of Christ makes us keep these laws and commandments, and in this way our bodies become a weapon of righteousness for God.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1918/11. First Fire, then Salt.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1937/12. Salt and Fire.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1941/02. God's Dwelling Places.

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Paul describes how we are individually a tabernacle of God and that we grow up with the others to be a holy temple in the Lord. This is the unity of the fellowship in the Lord, whether we are alone or gathered together. We belong to Christ and shall inherit all things with Him.

We believe one grieves the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) when one chooses to follow the desires of the flesh instead of following God's will as given by the Holy Spirit. Sin has a destructive effect on our temple, the temple we are supposed to be for the Holy Spirit. Paul specifically mentions adultery and fornication, saying that if one commits adultery, one sins against one's own body and destroys one's body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Paul also writes of a transformation of our Earthly bodies: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." (Philippians 3: 20-21). We believe that everyone who is a member of His body will receive a body of glory and we shall all be together when the last trumpet sounds. (1 Corinthians 15:50-54). Then a kingdom of peace will be established on The Earth. (Revelation 20:2-3).

### **4.3 Doctrinal Summary**

We believe that the result of the work that took place in Jesus in His time of incarnation took place in His Spirit. God sent this Spirit on the day of Pentecost after Jesus was raised from the dead and glorified by His Father. It was the same Spirit that had been with Jesus in His mortal life, and He was now to be the strength and guide for the disciples on the way in Jesus' footsteps.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a gift we receive, not as a reward, but is without merit and undeserved. Through the Holy Spirit, God's love will be poured out in our hearts, and we can, by God's grace, rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We believe that through the riches of God's abundant grace and by prayer in the Holy Spirit, God gives power through obedience to the Spirit and, thus, we overcome the flesh with its lusts and desires.

The world cannot receive this Spirit (John 14:15-18), because love for God and love for the world cannot be made one. "Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.' 'I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the Advocate, whose task it is to teach the disciple all things and to bring to remembrance all that Jesus has spoken. One receives hope and becomes convinced that it is possible to come free from the dominion of sin. We believe that the Holy Spirit also convicts of righteousness, and this conviction brings joy and salvation in the believer's life by seeing the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We believe that by uniting with the Spirit's conviction of judgment (1. Corinthians 11:31-32), a man is led to know fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. For the believer, this is an ongoing process that continues until, at last one arrives at home with the Father with the progress that one has made.

We believe that the Father and the Son work continuously, and their work in the believer is carried out through the Spirit sent on the day of Pentecost. This Spirit speaks the truth and will guide us to the whole truth of fellowship with Him who is the way, the truth, and the life. The Spirit proclaims to us the things to



come, that we may be comforted and may rejoice in a living hope. We believe that the Spirit will guide us to walk in Jesus' footsteps.

We believe that the justified man still has in him inherent sin, called the body of sin, the flesh in which no good thing dwells. Therefore, we also need to come to know God as a consuming fire. When God works in us, this brings a fire upon the sin that has corrupted man ever since The Fall. We believe that it is necessary as a disciple to allow the fire to consume the sin by walking in the Spirit in daily life, so that the heart is filled with a good treasure, and the disciple is transformed from glory to glory by the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the Spirit operates in such a way that a man is led into a hidden life before God; it is a work that leads to deeper insight and sanctification. A spiritual life, therefore, is a life of development from light to light according to God's will. By walking in the Spirit, one will experience the effect of the consuming fire, which will produce fruits of the Spirit.

Our body is to be a weapon of righteousness for God and a temple for the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we have great promises for our spirit, soul and body. We belong to Christ and shall inherit all things with Him. When this is completed at Jesus' return, the Holy Spirit will have completed the work He came to Earth to accomplish on the day of Pentecost, and a kingdom of peace will be established on Earth.

## Chapter 5 – Justification

### 5 Justification and the Grace that is in Christ Jesus

#### 5.1 Jesus' Work of Atonement

Everyone who comes to faith in Jesus and asks Him for the forgiveness of sins is forgiven without merit and by grace. (Romans 3:24). A man cannot accomplish anything by himself in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins. Jesus gave the thief on the cross access to paradise when he acknowledged his sin. (Luke 23:42-43). This shows God's great love for mankind. He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16).

When the Jews kept the law (the law of Moses), they could obtain much and receive Earthly blessing, but the law could not free them from sin. The law could only deal with sin when it became evident through action of the body. The Jews, and all other peoples who did not have the law, had in common that they had all sinned and stood guilty before God. Through Jesus Christ, God made it possible to redeem all people and justly justify those who believe in Him. By His blood, Jesus can redeem people from the bondage of sin. (Romans 3:21-26).

Those who had sinned in the old covenant under the law of Moses deserved punishment and, in the most severe cases, the death sentenced. There has always been a requirement for a sin offering, but the sin was not removed through these sacrifices. Jesus became the lamb without blemish who could be sacrificed for all the sins of the world. (1 Peter 1:19). God reconciled the world to Himself through Jesus, and through Him the forgiveness of sins is preached to all men. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Jesus defeated the one who is the author of sin and who had the power of death, the devil, and was able to release all those who lived in the fear of death throughout their lives. (Hebrews 2:14-15).

##### 5.1.1 Certificate of Debt

We believe that, in all transgressions that had been committed, a certificate of debt was written which the devil had used when he accused man before God throughout the ages. The whole world was guilty before God. Enmity and death had come between man and his Creator. Jesus, who was guilt-free and stepped in between God and mankind as the debtor. When He was crucified and died, He took the certificate of debt with Him and nailed it to Calvary's cross. This means that every certificate of debt against every man who takes refuge in Him, dies with him. He who did not deserve to die, died according to God's will, the righteous for the unrighteous. The Certificate of Debt and death were destroyed. We believe that by this it is possible for a sinner to pass from death to life. (Colossians 2:13-14, 1 John 3:14, Isaiah 53:5-6).

We believe that through Jesus' sacrifice, people can come to salvation by calling upon the name of the Lord, and He receives every soul, even if they are in the final moments of their lives. He has the power to forgive sins, and did so even when He was on Earth. (Matthew 9:2). Jesus' love for the children of men made Him choose to die for them while they were still sinners, wicked, and enemies. (Romans 5:6-10). When He breathed His last on the cross, His heart had compassion for all mankind down to the most deeply fallen.<sup>31</sup>

##### 5.1.2 Justified before God by Faith in Jesus Christ

Paul presents Abraham as an example of justification without works. "For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham

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<sup>31</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1941/12. The Inheritance.

believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'" (Romans 4:2-3). We believe that when a repentant sinner, after the remission of sins, is presented as righteous before God, it is because Jesus gave Himself as a gift and a sacrifice. He atoned for our sin and paid our debts by His death on Calvary's cross.

We believe that redemption by His blood, the remission of sins, is a work of grace that makes us righteous before God without works, by faith in the finished work of Christ. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded". (Romans 3:20-27). Since there is not one who is just, no one can be justified by works of the law. We believe that the object of the law was to bring about an acknowledgment of sin. All have sinned and have nothing to boast of before God. God's righteousness is revealed without the law through faith in Jesus Christ.

According to our belief and understanding, that it is was of Jesus that the prophet Isaiah prophesied when he said, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:5-6). We were enemies on account of our attitude of mind in our evil deeds, but we were justified by His blood. (Romans 5:10). "And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offence resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offences resulted in justification." (Romans 5:16)

### 5.1.3 Repentance

We believe that repentance is a conscious choice a person makes in acknowledgment of their lost state, having no hope and without God in the world. (Ephesians 2:12). Jesus says in Mark 1:15, "Repent, and believe the gospel." Conversion in the original primary text means to turn around (*epistréfō*), i.e. to change direction. Repentance (*metanoéō*), moreover, means to change one's mind. We believe that conversion is both - to change the direction of one's mind and purpose. Conversion is God's work by the Holy Spirit. "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). God's goodness is completely without merit. (Ephesians 2:4-10). Paul describes God's heart in 1 Timothy 2:4: He "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." The prophet Isaiah also writes of God's thoughts and heart: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:7). We believe that conversion and the forgiveness of sins are intrinsically linked, and it is repentance and the forgiveness of sins that are to be preached to all nations. (Luke 24:47-48). We believe that God's goodness and forbearance, manifested by the forgiveness of sins, should have the effect on us that we also forgive others their sins and mistakes. If one is unwilling to do this, neither will the Father forgive one's own transgressions. (Matthew 6:14-15).

After the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up and said, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." (Acts 3:19-20). We believe that a natural consequence of the joy of having experienced redemption through the remission of sins is that one grasps a new mind and shares in the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:5). His mind was always to do the will of the Father. Peter saw it necessary to exhort the believers to put off all malice, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking, as new-born babes, they should long for and nourish themselves with the spiritually unadulterated milk, and thus come to growth. (1 Peter 2:1-2).

## 5.2 The New Birth

Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the new birth, saying, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3), and further, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We believe that Jesus mentions the water as an outward cleansing for the remission of sins, and the Spirit as power and

guidance to a new life in following Christ. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:5-6). He also says, "It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing. The words I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus states the prerequisite for being able to see God is a pure heart. (Matthew 5:8).

We believe that the Holy Spirit plants the Word, which is a seed, into the human heart and a new creation is born. Peter expresses this as follows: "Having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:23). James also writes that God, "of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. (James 1:18).

The sign of a new birth is that the believer begins to see the glory of God, and Christ begins to live in one. The new birth involves a repentance from the heart and ushers in a life of transformation. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Corinthians 3:16-18).

Paul exhorts the Ephesians to pray for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and for enlightened eyes of the heart, that they might see and understand even better and more clearly the hope and glory they were called to, and how great and rich His inheritance is among the saints. (Ephesians 1:15-23). This legacy is for those who have given up their old life, where the will of the flesh and mind ruled and dominated, and have been born again into a new life. We believe that as born-again believers, we are to be renewed and transformed by the Holy Spirit, and become heirs to the eternal life that we hope for. (Titus 3:4-7).

### 5.3 The Grace that is in Christ Jesus

We believe that grace denotes the mercy and portion of goodness that has been given without man's merit. In the second chapter of Ephesians, Paul has described what God's grace has made possible for a man who has lived according to the will of the flesh and mind. (Ephesians 2:1-10). God draws upon the unsaved through grace. Repentance and forgiveness of sins are only by grace, and the help and power of growth in sanctification, and being conformed to Christ, are all by grace from God. Without grace, a man is lost, as no man by his own efforts can save himself from Satan's power and his kingdom. The only thing a man can do is to choose and receive the offer of deliverance by Him who has bound the strong man and plundered his house, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. (Mark 3:27).

We believe that no man by his own striving or good works can earn God's grace. The entire work of salvation from beginning to end is the result of God's lovingkindness and love. "It is only by the work of Satan that man comes to the conclusion that he is something. Neither are we anything, even as a saved person, for even then Christ is our life."<sup>32</sup>

We believe, like James and Peter, that true grace is bestowed according to this law of the Spirit: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (1. Peter 5:5, James 4:6). The intention is that we should grow in humility. The way of humility starts when man, in his helplessness, surrenders to the Saviour to receive His help. Then one is justified without merit by His grace. The way forward is to follow in the footsteps of He who humbled Himself, and was meek and lowly in heart. The Spirit of truth led Paul to such a degree of humility that he described himself as the least of all the saints. (Ephesians 3:8). "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." (Ephesians 4:7). We believe that there are differences in the amount of grace each person receives. Paul writes, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Corinthians 15:10). Humility is, therefore a paramount

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<sup>32</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter.1920. Created for Good Works (Epistle to the Ephesians).

prerequisite to partake of God's grace, and we believe that the greater the humility a person has, the richer the work of grace will come over that person's life.

### 5.3.1 Grace – Receiving Grace

Paul uses strong words to describe the consequences of The Fall for mankind in the third chapter of Romans. There is not one who is righteous, all have become unprofitable. On Calvary's cross, One who was righteous died for the unrighteous. It was the righteous deeds of one man that brought the justification of life to all men. (Romans 5:18). Paul speaks of the same salvation in Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." But here, too, grace and truth follow each other. God justifies the unprofitable. Forgiveness and reconciliation with God are obtained by God's grace, by the recognition of the truth that one has been a slave to sin. (John 8:31-36).<sup>33</sup>

We believe that all of God's creation is sustained by God's mercy and grace. "Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty.'" (Exodus 34:5-7).

When Jesus came to Earth, the apostle John writes: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14). Through Jesus Christ, this combination of grace and truth came in perfect harmony.

### 5.3.2 The Chastening Work of Grace

The law came into being so that the fall would be great, so that the Jews could come to an acknowledgment of sin. "But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more." (Romans 5:20). Jesus made promises of a new life, and these promises are available to the greatest sinner. Abraham received the promise by faith, that it might be by grace. So, too, with the one who wants to be Jesus' follower. (Romans 4:20). This grace is not to be turned into licentiousness so one continues in sin through thinking that there is grace enough in God. (Jude verse 4). Paul asks, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Romans 6:1-2). "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." (Titus 2:11-12).<sup>34</sup> We believe that in true grace there is forgiveness of sin, and that grace should also lead the believer into the process of sanctification. The Spirit of truth will show and convict us of our depravity, of the lusts of the flesh, and of the lack of righteousness and godliness. In this acknowledgment of the truth, grace will come to our aid with faith and power to be crucified with Christ. We believe this will foster a new life in us, and that this is the life Christ gives us through the resurrection. Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead to share in a new, righteous life.

We believe with Paul that grace will lead us to this: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain." (Galatians 2:19-21). But Christ did not die in vain. He lived in Paul, and we believe that when we receive Him who came full of grace and truth, then this work will take place in us as it took place in Paul. This is chastening by grace, to be conformed to the image of the Son. The apostle exhorts us in Hebrews 12:15 not to fall short of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness spring up causing harm, and by it many become defiled. "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and

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<sup>33</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1926/05. Judge what is right.

<sup>34</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1935/07. Sin and Grace.

scourges every son whom He receives." (Hebrews 12:6). This is grace and help for further growth in the life and virtues of Christ. We believe that this is the instructive aspect of God's grace, where grace and truth work together to produce divine life in a forgiven sinner.

We believe that once the heart has been cleansed by faith, God will send the Holy Spirit as a strength and as a helper. He is also called the Spirit of grace and supplication, and He is also the Spirit of truth to guide the believer to the whole truth. (John 10:10, John 16:13-14). Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and it is on this path that the Spirit of truth will lead the believer to live the life of Jesus.

"Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance." (Romans 5:2-3). Paul considered himself the greatest of all sinners. "And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 1:14). The abundant and enormous grace of this led him into a whole new and victorious life. (2 Corinthians 2:14). Through these tribulations, he was empowered to take the kingdom of heaven with force.

We believe that the tribulations the believer faces are not barriers, but "gates" where grace and truth meet each other. Man is allowed to see his shortcomings, but the Spirit of truth makes the Word alive and accessible, so that it can be grasped. This takes place by grace and being conformed into the image of the Son, who came that we might have life and abundance of life. (John 10:10). The whole work of salvation is the grace of God from beginning to end. It all takes place by faith. Therefore, our boasting is excluded (Romans 3:27) at any stage and step. In the tribulation and in the weakness that Paul found himself, he received this comfort: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9).

### **5.3.3 Grace in the Revelation of Jesus Christ**

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." (Philippians 3:20-21).

"Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:13). The believer who is under the influence of the Spirit of truth and grace will see, in this light, his shortcomings and imperfections. Our poverty in spirit and our sorrow over our inadequate care and love will work in us a greater godly fear and prayer for grace and help to make right choices in thoughts, words, and deeds. There is a long way to go: to become like the Master, to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:48).

We believe that when Jesus returns, His grace will be shared by the disciple, and this word will be fulfilled: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when that which is corruptible has put on incorruption, and that which is mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" (1 Corinthians 15:53-54). Therefore, we must take Peter's words to heart as He exhorts us to grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18).

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (1 John 3:2-3).

## **5.4 Doctrinal Summary**

We believe that grace denotes the mercy and goodness that has been given to man without merit. We believe that all of God's creation is sustained by God's mercy and grace, and that man depends on God's grace all his life. Only by grace can a man be justified before God.

All who come to faith in Jesus and ask Him for the remission of sins and repent of their sin are forgiven without merit by grace. A man cannot accomplish anything by himself in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins. God gave His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Jesus is willing to receive every soul that calls upon His name, even if it is only in the last minutes of their lives. He has the authority to forgive sins; He died for the children of men while we were still sinners, wicked, and enemies. God wants all people to be saved and come to the acknowledgment of the truth.

We believe that a natural consequence of God's calling and drawing upon us, taking on a new mind and knowing the joy of the forgiveness of sins, is that one wants to do the will of the Father. God has become one's Father, and one is reconciled to God and has made peace with God. Man is then justified by faith. We believe that the Holy Spirit plants the Word which is a seed in heart of man, and a new creation is born as a result. The sign of a new birth is that the believer begins to see the glory of God, and Christ begins to live in the believer.

We believe that God, by His grace, raises us up as followers of Christ to deny wickedness and worldly lusts. (Titus 2:12). This fosters a new life in us, where grace and truth work together to produce divine life in a forgiven sinner. Thus a purification and conformation takes place. All the virtues of Christ, the fruit of the Spirit, appear through the workings of God when we are obedient to them. The tribulations that the believer faces, are not barriers, but gates where grace and truth meet one another. The whole work of salvation is a grace of God from beginning to end, which takes place by faith alone. Therefore, our boasting is excluded at every stage.

We believe, like James and Peter, that true grace is bestowed according to this law of the Spirit: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (1 Peter 5:5, James 4:6). The intention is that there is to be a growth in humility. The way of humility starts where man, in his helplessness, surrenders to the Saviour to receive His help. Then one is justified without merit by His grace. The way forward in humility is to follow in the footsteps of He who humbled Himself, and was meek and lowly in heart. Paul writes, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Corinthians 15:10). Humility, therefore, is of paramount importance for growth by grace, and we believe that the greater the humility of a person, the richer the work of grace that will take place in that person's life.

Our poverty in spirit and our sorrow over our inadequate care and love will work in us a greater godly fear and prayer for grace and help to make right choices in thoughts, words, and deeds. Therefore, we should strive to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

# Chapter 6 – The Cross – Discipleship – A Victorious Life

## 6 The Cross – Discipleship – A Victorious Life

### 6.1 The Cross

The cross for us is one of the most important New Testament words and concepts. Jesus and the apostles speak about the cross, and the cross as both the symbolic construct and message which underpins the gospel we preach. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Jesus was the first person to use the word 'cross' as a symbolic image of self denial, losing one's life, suffering and dying. (Matthew 16:24). He experienced this for Himself physically on Calvary, but we also believe that it is descriptive of the battle and suffering He endured throughout His mortal life, when by death He destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Hebrews 2:14).

The cross is referred to in different ways and in a variety of senses:

- That Jesus died for us on Calvary's cross
- That our old man was crucified with Christ
- That a disciple must deny himself and take up his cross every day.

#### 6.1.1 Jesus' Death on Calvary's Cross

On Calvary's cross Jesus Christ died, God's own Son, He whom God, in His great love, had given to mankind that we might not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16). He was the righteous who died for the unrighteous. Through this great salvation, all people can have peace with God, and Christ has become our atoning sacrifice. Jesus has once and for all presented Himself as an unblemished sacrifice, forever making them perfect who are sanctified. (Hebrews 10:10-14). There is no need for multiple animal sacrifices for sin, which in the old covenant, each year, had to be brought before God for the remission of sins.

All men, no matter how deeply they have fallen into sin, can, by faith in Him, receive the forgiveness of sins without merit and by grace. When we confess our sins and repent of them, the Father, in His faithfulness and righteousness, will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9).

#### 6.1.2 Crucify the Old Man

Paul uses the phrase "the old man" to refer to the man who, against his better knowledge, lives according to the lusts and passions of the flesh. This is how everyone is to begin with, and we must, therefore, put off this old mindset. Not to do this puts us in league with the world and the god of this world, who by his spirit reigns and has power over men through the will that dwells in the flesh.

Paul describes how the old man must be put out of action, because he is deceived by the deceiving lusts. He writes both about putting it off, crucifying it, and burying it with Him in baptism to death. (Ephesians 4:22. Romans 6:3-7). This cross on which the old man was crucified with Him becomes in fact is a very real cross and a real death, when the believer truly considers himself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:11-12). "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8). This is the basis for a new life, in that, by faith, one considers oneself crucified with Christ.

Paul describes the works of the flesh as manifest, and makes it clear that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21). These deeds have their roots in the lusts and passions of our flesh. We believe that when these passions and desires remain crucified, we will know fellowship



with the sufferings of Christ. Our hearts and minds unite by faith with God's will, and we receive grace to develop as a member of the body of Christ.

We believe that if one has not put off the old man, one serves sin with one's mind and continues to live in conscious sins. (Ephesians 2:3). We believe that when the old life is put off, and one is resurrected with Christ to a new life, the born-again man will begin to long for and seek for the kingdom of heaven. "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on The Earth." (Colossians 3:1-2). Just as a new-born child is nourished with the natural pure milk, the believer who nourishes himself with the pure milk of the word will come to spiritual growth in Christ. One must put on a completely new man who is created according to God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:24).

### **6.1.3 Take up your Cross Daily**

We believe it is absolutely necessary for a disciple to follow Jesus on the new and living way, "...let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me". (Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23). For it is not only deliverance from the manifest works of the flesh that this applies, but it concerns a deep understanding of the salvation that will lead to the transformation of our inner man, to be conformed to the image of the Son. (Romans 8:29). We believe that we are in need of this cross that Jesus speaks of, every day, in order to be cleansed from the sin that dwells in our flesh.

Jesus goes on to say, "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 16:25). This life we find on the narrow way. There are few who find it, Jesus said. (Matthew 7:14). We believe that the reason there are so few is that there are few who are willing to lose their lives for Jesus' sake. People are nourished, sustained, and satisfied with the honour of men, by self-assertion, self-admiration, and self-centeredness, etc. This wisdom comes from below, it is Earthly, sensual and demonic. (James 3:14-15). By denying this self-life, taking up the cross, and following in Jesus' footsteps, we partake of the new life and wisdom that descends from above. (James 3:17).

We believe that it is through love for Jesus Christ and by denying oneself and taking up the cross that our souls can be cleansed to a sincere brotherly love, that we may love one another fervently from the heart. (1 Peter 1:22). Then we are freed from accusations and our own selfish thoughts, and united by the power of the cross into the oneness that Jesus prayed for. We are set free as those who are wise and understanding and through good conduct can show our works are done in the meekness of wisdom. (James 3:13).

Paul gives a personal testimony when he says, "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:19-20, Norw.). We believe that the cross set aside all his self-interest. Christ lived in him, and he no longer lived for himself, but counted himself as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:11).

Paul describes the end times as difficult times when people love their lusts more than God. (2 Timothy 3:1-5). We believe that it is only by living a crucified life with Christ that we partake of the power of God that can redeem us from all the sins which are often hiding under a superficial form of godliness.<sup>35</sup>

### **6.1.4 The Death of Christ – Carrying about in the Body the Dying of the Lord Jesus**

We believe that the believer is called to bear fruit for God, and that the life of Christ can be manifested by and in our bodies. Paul revealed the way to this life, writing it in part as follows: "Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." (2

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<sup>35</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1932/09. Having a Form of Godliness but Denying its Power.

Corinthians 4:10). We believe that this is the master key to a life of constant development and growth. Through temptation, some of the evil in our flesh is awakened. When the disciple denies himself and takes up his cross, sufferings will arise that, through perseverance and faithfulness, result in a death to the sin of his flesh, because the lust of the flesh does not receive nourishment. Paul always carried about with him this death in his body, and was continually delivered to death for Christ's sake. (2 Corinthians 4:11). We believe that Paul describes this as the death of Christ, because Christ, as the firstborn among many brethren, was the first to carry about with him this death in His mortal body. He denied Himself every day and took up His cross. The result of this was a mortification of the lust that dwelt in the flesh that He had partaken of for our sake. This desire was never given the slightest quarter in His conscious life. We believe the cross was the necessary tool at work in Jesus in the days of His flesh. This death brought an eternal peace. It is Jesus' peace; the result of Jesus' obedience and the work God did in Him in the days of His flesh.<sup>36</sup> In parallel with this, His human spirit was brought to life until He cried out from the cross, "It is finished!" (John 19:30).

We believe that the life Paul lived after his conversion, in which he always carried about with him the dying of the Lord Jesus in his body, is the life that a disciple of Jesus is to live. He who draws back from salvation in Jesus Christ and fellowship with Him in His sufferings cannot personally partake of the life of Christ.

#### **6.1.5 The Foolishness of the Message Preached**

It will always be foolishness to a man that the flesh should die on the cross, and that no man, because of his power and greatness, endowment, or wealth, has anything to glory in in God's presence. "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21). "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things that are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus." (1 Corinthians 1:26-30).

We believe that God reveals His strength and wisdom in that which is weak and base in this world. That which for men is a folly. "For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Corinthians 2:11-13). Only God's Spirit can reveal the depths of life and abundance of life hidden in His Word. This is revealed to those who love Him. Thus, the life of Christ comes forth once again in people who used to be slaves under the power of sin and darkness, but have become members of His Earthly body. Paul lived this life in all its details during the greatest tribulations, so he summed it all up with these words: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Death was swallowed up in life. "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17).

## **6.2 Being a Disciple of Jesus**

The word disciple means pupil or apprentice. Our calling is to be a disciple of Jesus. He is the Master and we are His apprentices.

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<sup>36</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1934/01. God working.

### 6.2.1 The Master

Jesus was God's Only Begotten Son from before all worlds. He was in the form of God and like His Father in all things. Man was created in the image of God, and Jesus had His delight in the children of men. (Proverbs 8:31). The harmonious relationship between man, the Father, and the Son broke down when the devil deceived man in Paradise, thereby gaining control over the life of mankind. Jesus' desire was to have brothers and sisters, someone to share the heavenly inheritance with.

"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in all things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." (Hebrews 2:17). "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant." (Philippians 2:6-7, Norwegian). This was Jesus' mind as He descended to mankind and shared their plight. And He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens to fill everything. He taught His disciples what true greatness consists of. "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave." "He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs be as he who serves." (Matthew 20:26. Luke 22:26).

We believe that if this is to become true in us, sin must be conquered in our lives. We believe that the Sermon on the Mount can be lived in the same faith and the same Spirit as Jesus lived it. He began with both doing and teaching. (Acts 1:1). Jesus' exhortation, "Judge not," must be followed so that we may be equipped and ready to serve our fellow man. In the same way with all other words that Jesus lived and passed on to His disciples. Jesus lived His life before God and did not receive honour from man. This He wants to teach us, lest we practice our righteousness before men, to be seen by them. Only then can we serve our fellow man for their eternal benefit according to God's will and not according to man's will.

Our Master was born in a stable and laid in a manger far away from Herod's palaces. The Prince of God and the Saviour of mankind was born in a lowly and inconspicuous place. He went down to the lower parts of The Earth. We believe that the Master will teach His disciples to follow Him on the way of humiliation and to lose their lives in this world. (Matthew 16:25-26).

### 6.2.2 The Apprentice

Jesus invites people to become His disciples and serve an apprenticeship to become His brothers and sisters. "For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: 'I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.'" (Hebrews 2:11-12).

Jesus clearly conveys the terms under which we can become His apprentice (disciple): "Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.'" "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:25-27 and 33).

When Jesus was found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became a servant. (Philippians 2:5-8). We believe that if we are to be His disciples, the same mind must be in us. We then come to the narrow gate, which is the truth, where everything must be sacrificed for Jesus' sake. (Matthew 10:39). Then begins the narrow way to life, the life of a disciple in Jesus' footsteps, where, through the obedience of faith, we shall learn from Him daily. The way to life is found by losing our own life according to the flesh. It is a walk in the light where the disciple goes from light to light. "This is the judgment that light has come into the world." In the light, the disciple can practice godly fear and be trained to put to death the

deeds of the body by the Spirit. This takes place by judging oneself and continuing in self-acknowledgment. For such, there is no condemnation.<sup>37</sup>

Paul became a disciple, walking through the narrow gate: "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss." (Philippians 3:7-8). He lost his life in this world as he writes to the Galatian church: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Galatians 2:20 and 6:14).

We believe that just as there are terms and conditions attached to becoming a disciple, there are also great promises. One of them is this: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." The believer has no cause for concern, as God knows about everything he needs. (Matthew 6:32-33). "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life!" (Matthew 19:29). Jesus here clearly expresses His love and promises to His disciples.

The Holy Spirit empowers the disciple to overcome the works of the flesh and guides the disciple in cooperation with the Master. We believe that in this work Jesus is the Mediator, the High Priest, who lives to intercede for us. We believe that in this cooperation the disciple is closely followed by the Master in order that no temptation is beyond His ability. (1 Corinthians 10:13). The Master is our sanctifier, and He knows us from before the foundation of the world. He has compassion for the apprentice's infirmities and shortcomings, but works purposefully with chastening and comfort in order for the Master's image to be manifested in him. The Master watches over the disciple to give help in due season. "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." (John 14:13-14). We believe that God's entire storehouse is open to the disciple when his longing is to do God's will on Earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35). This love is poured out in the disciple's heart by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 5:5). We believe that the new commandment gives the disciple a new life when it is lived. The qualities of love are manifested in the disciple's life, including patience, kindness, faith, hope, perseverance, and not seeking one's own. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

We believe that the disciple has been freed from the law and its curse, and has entered the perfect law of liberty. (Galatians 3:13, James 2:12). The Sermon on the Mount is for the disciple the perfect law of liberty, whereby he builds his house on the rock. The Sermon on the Mount is full of spirit and life, the life that the disciple longs for. Here the disciple can take the kingdom of heaven by force. Unless one denies oneself every day and takes up his cross, it is impossible to live the new life. (Luke 9:23).

Jesus loved His disciples and was united with them. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5). We believe that the same life that is in the stem is also in the branches. When the works of the flesh come to an end (Galatians 5:19-23), the fellowship of the new life of Jesus continues to increase in the disciple. This creates fellowship and a foundation for Jesus' high priestly prayer to come true: that we should be one just as the Father and the Son are one. (John 17:13-23).

### 6.2.3 The Life of a Disciple

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17). So it was with Paul after he had met Jesus on the road to

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<sup>37</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1936-02. The Sanctification Chapter. Rom 7.

Damascus. A disciple named Ananias laid hands on him, and he regained his sight and was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 9:17). He truly became a disciple and a brother of Jesus. He himself says that he became an example for those who would come to faith in Jesus Christ for eternal life. (1 Timothy 1:16).

We believe that it was a reciprocal love for Christ that was the driving force in Paul's life. Through his encounter with Jesus, his spiritual eyes were opened. He was shown how much he had to suffer for Jesus' name's sake, but no tribulation could separate him from the love of Christ. (Acts 9:16). He says, "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ." (Philippians 3:7). He had truly given up everything to follow his Master. He was blameless according to the law before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, but he, like everyone else, had to be delivered from the power of darkness. He who previously breathed threats and murders against the Lord's disciples put off the old man, and put on the new man. (Ephesians 4:22-24). He was a chosen instrument of God, and an example to the believers. We believe that the same God who worked in Paul can bring about the same inner transformation in anyone who, through obedience, abides in God's Word. (John 8:31). These are true disciples.

"Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God." (Romans 7:4). Then we belong to Christ, who is the head of the body; the body in which every disciple is a member. The apostles expressed the concept of discipleship, among other things, as a stone in a spiritual house or a member of his body.<sup>38</sup> We believe that this is true discipleship in which, by dying to that which ensnared us, we become members of His body. Those who are members of the body of Christ are called to do God's will on Earth as it is in heaven. "Set your mind on things above, not on things that are on The Earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:2-3). Jesus' words to His disciples about taking up their cross daily became true in Paul. The fruit of the Spirit, the life of Christ, became like living streams of water through the life and ministry of this disciple.

We believe, with Paul, that by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the disciple's mind can be delivered from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2). When the eyes are opened at the new birth, the disciple beholds the glory of the Master and is transformed into the same image. When one does good, one will experience that evil is present with one, and that we have a flesh in which nothing good dwells. When one denies oneself and takes up his cross, there will arise sufferings in which one is delivered to death.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:3, and 6). The life-giving doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount is at the heart of the gospel message to the disciples. We believe that through the Master's guidance, chastening, and comfort there will be growth and progress. In this way, there is also a strong unity between disciples. They are knit together by eternal laws in the warmth and refreshment of love into a body, to a house of God, and grow together into a holy temple in the Lord. (Ephesians 2:20-22). Jesus says of one of the laws of the Spirit of life: "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13). Paul likewise exhorts us: "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another!" (Romans 12:10). God's will for us as expressed here will not become a reality for us without the cross and fire. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were 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." (Ephesians 4:4-6). We believe, like Paul, that such a work can take place in Jesus' disciples.

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<sup>38</sup> Eph. 4:15-16. Eph. 2:13-16. 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 2 Cor. 5:14-15.

### 6.3 A Victorious Life

We believe that there is a difference between having sin and committing sin, as the Apostle John writes about in his First Epistle, and this is a necessary and fundamental concept in order to understand what God's Word means by living a victorious life. Living a victorious life<sup>39</sup> is not the same as being perfect or having been perfected in sanctification. But it means one is faithful in the light one has been given by God, and that one walks in the light even as He is in the light. (1 John 1:7). Even though one still has sin in one's flesh, one has ceased from committing sin - the manifest works of the flesh. When God gives a greater light, one begins to hate the sin that one has been allowed to see and acknowledge, but which one will no longer accommodate in one's consciousness or have room for in mind and heart. Then Christ's blood will cleanse to a deeper degree. By always proceeding in that way, one lives a victorious life. We believe that Romans 7:14-25 is an honest description of the battle between flesh and Spirit in the life of a disciple, where the longing is to become like one's Master.

We believe that sin is unbelief and tears us away from God's will, from His laws and commandments. (1 John 3:4). It was the devil's haughtiness, his deeds, and his unrighteousness that brought sin into the world. Sin is always in opposition to God, and is always against God's will. Sin leads to a separation between God and man, causing man to open himself to the wisdom of this world, which is folly before God. (1 Corinthians 1:19-21). Man's mind and will are influenced by the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. The believer is to become strong in the Lord and in the power of His might and by putting on the full armour of God, he can resist on the evil day, and after overcoming all things, to stand. (Ephesians 6:13).

God's thoughts for man have always been that he should have dominion over sin. God said to Cain, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." (Genesis 4:7).

Paul expresses his enthusiasm at the possibility of always overcoming sin when he writes, "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place." (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Death came with The Fall, but victory over sin and death came with Jesus. Paul quotes from Isaiah and Hosea in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55: "'Death is swallowed up in victory'. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" We believe that the victory Jesus won over sin and death opened a new way for us. In Him, we, too, can overcome sin and death. "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57).

#### 6.3.1 Various terminology regarding Sin

BCC uses various expressions concerning sin, both in our literature and when we minister with the word. The term "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19) is used to refer to "doing or committing sin" (1 John 3:4, 8); that is, giving in to one's own lust—one's own desire—when one is tempted. Theologically, this is often referred to as "Actual sin", which is an active sin of commission e.g. sinful thoughts, words and deeds.

Furthermore, the expression "having sin" is used (1 John 1:8) as a term for the fact that we are all born with sin in the flesh, the evil desire. The "deeds of the body" (Romans 8:13) are works that come from our corrupt and fallen nature since The Fall. Theologically, this is sometimes referred to as habitual sin (unintentional sin).

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<sup>39</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1932/02. Christ manifest in flesh – Jesus Christ as High Priest.

The New Testament uses various spiritual words and phrases. Examples of this include: "the body of sin" and "the body of the flesh", the "works of the body" and "the works of the flesh", the "old man" and "the new man", or, as it is also called, "the man of God".

The word "flesh" is used in the Bible and has several different meanings. The Greek word for flesh is "sarx" and essentially it means "meat", but the word also has a spiritual meaning. In the Bible, the word is used both to refer to man as being a corrupted being, and to man separated from God and in conflict with the Spirit on account of the Fall. Another meaning of the word 'flesh' is the human body. When man lives according to his sinful nature, then, as Paul says, he lives according to the will of the flesh and mind. One believes in one's own thoughts and the desires of one's flesh, and is compelled according to the spirit of this world (Ephesians 2:2-3), darkened in one's thought, alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that is in them. (Ephesians 4:17-19). In such a life, God's mercy is prevented from helping that person with the grace and mercy that will make them alive in Christ.

### **6.3.2 The Body of the Flesh and the Works of the Flesh – “to commit sin”**

We believe that the body of this flesh is the body that, through temptation, presents itself as an instrument for the sin that dwells in the body. (Romans 6:19). "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren." (James 1:14-16). The works that are the result of giving in to the fleshly lusts are the works of the flesh. The mind serves the law of sin.<sup>40</sup> Paul gives us examples of the works of the flesh in the Epistle to the Galatians. (Galatians 5:19-21). The works of the flesh must be cleansed through the remission of sins. If one does not cleanse oneself and repent of one's sin, one will harden oneself and sin will eventually become full-grown and lead to spiritual death.

The "old man" is the man whose spirit, soul, and body are bound to sin in the flesh. It makes use of its body—the body of the flesh—in the service of sin. We believe that the body of this flesh, through faith in God's power, must be put off by the circumcision of Christ and be buried with Him in baptism. (Colossians 2:11-12). When the old man with his body is crucified/put off, the new man will emerge. Sin in the flesh receives its judgment and death with Christ on the cross.

"But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:20-24).

The "new man" serves God's law with his mind and presents his body as a sacrifice well-pleasing to God, and as an instrument of righteousness, as Paul writes: "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." (Romans 6:12-13). It is when one gives in to carnal desire that sin begins to reign in our bodies, whether in thoughts, words, or deeds. But when, through Christ's death, one has been made alive with Him, we can also present our bodies as weapons of righteousness to God.

### **6.3.3 The Body of Sin and Deeds of the Body – “to have sin”**

We believe, as John writes, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8). Paul puts it this way: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells." (Romans 7:18). Within the flesh, the entirety of The Fall dwells in what Paul calls, "the body of sin". When a person is born again and has received the Holy Spirit, a battle ensues in which the Spirit lusts against the flesh

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<sup>40</sup> Smith, Johan Oscar. Skjulte Skatter 1915/11. The Corruptible Body under God's Spirit or the leading of sin.

and the flesh lusts against the Spirit. (Galatians 5:17). Here the body of sin is most active. Where we lack knowledge, light, and our spirits are not made alive to God, our human spirit is animated by sin, and we manifest what the Scripture calls the deeds of the body. God who works, to will and to do, gives power through the Holy Spirit, that we may put them to death by the Spirit. They manifest themselves despite our better will and against our better mind, which serves God's law. We believe that it is about such works that Paul says: "But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me." (Romans 7:17).

These deeds are not initiated in my mind, but from the sin in my members that takes me captive, and I do what I hate. (Romans 7:15). When we see these works in the light of the Spirit and the Word, they must be acknowledged, crucified, and put to death. Thus, the believer will judge himself and increase from light to more light, and so come to growth in Christ. The body of sin, the inherent sin, will, during the walk in the light, gradually be eradicated. We believe that there is no condemnation for the deeds of the body. (Romans 8:1). They are performed apart from my conscious self, and are a result of the sin that dwells in me. Paul thanked God through Jesus Christ, saying, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God - through Jesus Christ, our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." (Romans 7:24-25).

#### 6.3.4 What are Temptations?

James writes in his epistle that to be tempted is to be drawn away and enticed by one's own lust. (James 1:12-16). That is to say, our minds are drawn and enticed into giving in to the lusts of our flesh, lusts that are in opposition to God's will. We believe that the behaviour of others may seem like the temptations themselves, but it is the sin that dwells in one's own flesh that is awakened by the circumstances into which one comes.

We believe that temptations are a test of our faith. Both Apostles James and Peter exhort us to count it only joy when we come into all kinds of temptations. (James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:6-7). Through love of the truth, these lusts and desires can be brought into the death of Christ by mortifying them on the cross. (2 Corinthians 4:10). One then receives grace to overcome sin.<sup>41</sup> "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place." (2 Corinthians 2:14).

James writes of how happy he is who perseveres and does not give in to the temptations of the flesh. Being tempted is not sin, but if one is drawn away and gives into temptation, it gives birth to sin. (James 1:12-15). We believe in God's promises for a victorious life over conscious sins.<sup>42</sup> This doesn't mean to say we believe we can, at any time, become sinless like Jesus. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:6-8). We will, therefore, always be dependent on the forgiveness of sins even after we have entered into an advanced stage of sanctification.<sup>43</sup>

We believe that in the time of temptation, through the Holy Spirit, we have power to overcome sin and the devil. Satan would try to influence us to act against God's laws and against His will, as he did with Adam and Eve. We call these influences, 'temptations'. Through His life, Jesus has opened up the opportunity for people to follow Him. He suffered in His flesh and prevailed. Here Jesus is our example, and God is faithful and watchful that no one is tempted beyond what they are able, but gives us the power to overcome sin. (1 Corinthians 10:13). We believe that this victory produces the life of Christ; that even in temptations and tribulations a fragrance of goodness and love may emerge from the new man of God who is being born forth.

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<sup>41</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1934/09. The Joy of Victory in temptation.

<sup>42</sup> Gal 5, 19-21. 1. Joh 5,4. Rom 8,37. 2. Cor 2, 14. Rev Ch. 2 and 3.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, Johan O. Letters. April 30, 1907.



### 6.3.5 To Fall in Sin

Again, we make a distinction between living in sin and falling in sin. Although a disciple with all his heart has become a follower of Jesus, he may be overtaken by a sin. If one falls, the penitent will repent of his sin, and ask God for forgiveness. His will was not to sin, and his desire and longing was to obey His Word. "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1). Because the intention of the mind is to do the good, the experience of falling in sin makes one more alert and attentive in order not to fall in sin again. (2 Peter 1:10).

Jesus is our Helper and Redeemer. He intercedes for us and gives us light and power to overcome. "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit." (1 Peter 3:18). It is therefore important to preserve a hatred against sin and everything that separates us from God.

### 6.3.6 Victory over Sin

Sin came into the world through one man, as Paul describes it: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." (Romans 5:12). But the free gift of grace in the one man, Jesus Christ, has become abundantly great for the many, in that Jesus overcame sin, and by it has made it possible for us to overcome. We believe in the abundance of grace by which we can live and rule over sin in practice and reality. (Romans 5:15-17).<sup>44</sup>

Jesus was with the Father in Heaven, but at the appointed time God sent Him to Earth as the Saviour for us. He came into the world to reconcile men to God and to save them. Paul explains to us what a fortunate position mankind has now found itself in through Jesus Christ. Adam sinned, and it had incalculable negative consequences, and was the cause of countless suffering for all who became subject to the judgment and consequences of death. As a consequence of the flesh taking control, everyone was now under the dominion of sin. The Only Begotten Son of God came to our aid and by His sacrifice could lead to the justification of the many.

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus is the Christ, come in flesh, is of God, (1 John 4:2) and those born of God overcome the world: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4-5). We believe that it is only through a living faith in Jesus Christ as Lord in our lives that we can overcome the world and its lust. (1 John 2:15-17). Our human power is too weak to withstand the spiritual forces of evil. But the power of the Holy Spirit is available to those who belong to Him and who live and walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:24-25). Only they can overcome and be witnesses of Jesus' greatness, grace, and power in this world. (Acts 1:8).

The battle against sin is fought in our inner man. "Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts." (Romans 6:12). All who live a crucified life with Christ will, in the time of temptation, choose to suffer with Him, so that the life of Christ may be revealed in their mortal flesh. (2 Corinthians 4:11). Such people will one day also be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:17).

We believe that Jesus, our Lord and Master, has left an example for all those who want to live as His disciples. "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." (Hebrews 2:18). Peter speaks of footsteps in which we shall walk. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth'; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself (who)

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<sup>44</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1916/06. Living and Reigning.

bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed." (1 Peter 2:21-23, Romans 6:1-2).

We believe, as John writes, that sin loses its power over the man who walks in the light, even as He is in the light. (1 John 1:7). He was revealed to take away our sins. He never did sin, but consecrated a new way for us to be done with sinning. "And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him." (1 John 3:5-6). We believe this takes place through a living, active faith in God's Word, which is the seed. When this seed abides in man and is active as a counterforce against sin, one ceases from sin. "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." (1 John 3:9).

Peter presents Jesus' sufferings in His flesh as an example to us. "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." (1 Peter 4:1-2). We believe that, through faithfulness in the covenant of discipleship with Jesus, the believer can be delivered from being enslaved to sin by not giving in to it in the time of temptation.

Paul thanks the friends in Rome that those who had previously been slaves of sin had become obedient to the doctrine to which they had been delivered (Romans 6:17-18). We believe that Romans chapter 6 contains key doctrinal concepts that help us understand the gospel. When by faith we are obedient to the form of doctrine to which we are delivered, we will be saved from the power of sin and darkness. By the power of the grace of Jesus Christ, we can live the life of Jesus, an upright life in fellowship with the resurrected Saviour.

## 6.4 The Blood of Jesus

We believe that the practice of divine service of the old covenant was a shadow of things to come in the new covenant. (Hebrews 9:9-10). "Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.' And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words.'" (Exodus 24:7-8).

We believe that this is what Peter is referring to when he reminds believers in the new covenant that they are "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:2). At the sacrifices, the animals were slaughtered, and the blood was carried into the sanctuary by the high priest to atone for the sin of the people. Unless blood was shed, sin was not forgiven. (Hebrews 9:22). Yet it was impossible that the blood of oxen and goats could take away sins. (Hebrews 10:4). Therefore, God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. Jesus became the Mediator and High Priest of the new covenant. The new covenant He made became a reality by the will He expressed when He entered the world: "Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God." (Hebrews 10:7). He offered His body as a sacrifice.

We believe that the Father and the Son were united with each other in an eternal covenant. The Son has carried out all God's will from before all worlds. This covenant was firmly established, for our sake, when He emptied Himself and became a man with a man's will and soul. God condemned sin in Jesus' flesh, and Jesus sacrificed Himself by virtue of an eternal Spirit.<sup>45</sup> In this Spirit lay a power and a lust against the flesh He had voluntarily partaken of - a flesh like His brethren. By obedience to the Spirit, He sacrificed His own will, taking up His cross daily. We believe that the Spirit requires blood in order to be able to produce life

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<sup>45</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1915/05. Has Christ come in the flesh?

and peace. (Romans 8:6). The cross was the crucible of war where the Spirit and blood were united, and through the blood of this everlasting covenant God could raise Jesus from the dead.<sup>46</sup>

The life that results from a man living in accordance to his own will and understanding is not the life that Jesus lived. His desire was to do the will of the Father. He lived the life of the Father, and eternal life came forth by the Father's commands. There was a daily sacrifice and slaughter that took place, that culminated in His death on Calvary. The blood was sacrificed by an eternal Spirit, and by virtue of this sacrificial blood, Jesus entered into the sanctuary, into heaven itself, to eternal redemption. (Hebrews 9:11-12 and 13:12). We believe that through Jesus' suffering and death for mankind, man can be freed from the power of darkness and be sanctified by His blood. The time for animal blood and sacrifice had passed once and for all.

Through Jesus' perfect sacrifice and perfect faithfulness, which He exercised when He sacrificed Himself by virtue of an eternal Spirit, it was possible for the Father to raise our Lord Jesus up from the dead through the blood of an everlasting covenant. (Hebrews 13:20). Thus Satan's head was crushed, and death was destroyed.

We believe that on this basis the world was reconciled to God, and Jesus has power to forgive all the sins of the world. With the precious blood of Christ, as the blood of a spotless and blameless lamb, mankind can be redeemed from the aimless conduct which they inherited from their fathers. (1 Peter 1:18-19). In order for us to have fellowship with the blood of Christ and be part of the body of Christ, we must be willing to follow in His footsteps on the new and living way that leads into the sanctuary. In the blood of Jesus, we have the boldness to enter in. Through the suffering and death of the cross, we can resist unto bloodshed in the fight against sin as we say "No!" to our own will in order to do God's will. Thus, by fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings, in the blood of Jesus, we can enter the sanctuary. (Hebrews 12:4). By overcoming as He overcame, Jesus' resurrection life will be manifested in our mortal body, that is, while we live here on Earth. We believe that this is what it means to walk in the light. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7).

On this walk, the blood of Jesus will bring forth the life of Jesus, so that we will be equipped for every good work. Where sin is cleansed away, there is communion in one body, and this life fellowship is maintained by the power of the Holy Spirit and the cleansing of the blood. We believe that the blood of Christ is the prerequisite for the generation of all divine life that man can possess. By the blood of Jesus there is the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, and by the blood of Jesus there is a gradual process of being cleansed from indwelling sin and, thereby, growth in the fruit of the Spirit, which is sanctification.

### **The Flesh and Blood of Jesus**

Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me." (John 6:53-57). We believe that the flesh and blood of Jesus is an outpouring of nourishment and power through which the believer can personally experience all the promises that are in Christ Jesus and that they become life in the disciple. It is the life of Christ by the Spirit of Christ.

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<sup>46</sup> Smith, Johan O. Letters. 10 Aug 1910.

Jesus was the bread of life that came down from heaven to give life to the world. (John 6:33-35). In this bread lay eternal life. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He became God's Word and will personified, and it was God's will that all His fullness should dwell in Him. (Colossians 1:19).

By walking in the light, by being doers of the Word, and thereby eating His flesh, the power which lies in Jesus' blood will cleanse away the indwelling sin that God's light reveals to us. On this way, the life, the fullness of God, will dwell in us. (John 6:53, Colossians 1:19). So the disciple abides in Him, and He abides in the disciple. Such shall not hunger and never thirst again. This is the way of sacrifice in the footsteps of the Lamb where we have fellowship with Christ in His body and blood. We believe this is what Paul expresses his deep longing to experience in Philippians 3:10, namely that by Christ's sufferings he would become like Jesus in His death. We believe that there are eternal powers hidden in the blood of Christ, "and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." (Revelation 12:11).

### **6.5 The Spirit, the Water and the Blood**

"For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.'" (Hebrews 9:19-20). Jesus was clothed with a scarlet robe before He suffered unto death on Calvary. (Matthew 27:28). "But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe." (John 19:34-35).

We believe that everything points toward the salvation brought about through Jesus Christ. Water and blood played a central role in worship in the old covenant. And there are three that bear witness on Earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. "This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth". (1 John 5:6-8). We believe that when a man is born again by water and the Spirit, he can see the kingdom of God (John 3:3), and with his body washed with pure water, he has been cleansed from his sins. (Hebrews 10:22).

We believe that the Christian will enter into development and growth by walking on the new and living way. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7). We believe that here John is speaking of an inner cleansing from indwelling, hidden sin, which we gradually gain light over by walking in the light. God's Word reveals the depths of The Fall. Then, by walking in obedience, we come to the third witness, where the blood testifies together with the Spirit and the water.

We believe that we gain fellowship with the blood of Christ as we are united with Christ in His sufferings and death. It is a union with Christ in the blood of His covenant, and in this way the believer receives the testimony of God in himself. (1 John 5:10). The Spirit testifies with the water and the blood, for the Spirit is the truth and knows all things. When we have this testimony in us, Christ and His life are in us, and we can overcome the indwelling sin that the light reveals to us during our walk.<sup>47</sup>

### **6.6 The Promise of Life**

We believe there were two crucial tasks Jesus accomplished while on this Earth. He saved people from perdition by reconciling them to God on the cross, and His gospel message was of a new life. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." (2

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<sup>47</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1912/10. The Spirit, the Water and the Blood.

Timothy 1:1). Jesus told His disciples that He came so they should have life and have it more abundantly. (John 10:10). When John conveyed the message from Jesus to the seven churches in Asia Minor, there were two churches that walked perfectly before God's face and had kept God's Word. There was an open door set before them that no one could close, and they were to be pillars in God's temple forever. (Revelation 2:8-11 and 3:7-13).

Paul wrote to the Colossians, reminding them that they were buried with Jesus in baptism and in which they were also resurrected with Him by faith in the power of God. Those who had been dead in their trespasses and sins, were now made alive with Christ as He forgave them all their sins. (Colossians 2:12-13). To these he writes further: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on The Earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:1-4).

Just as Paul was raised up with Christ, all disciples will live a risen life with Him, and seek what is above. "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21). "But I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me." (Philippians 3:12). It was the promise of the new life in Christ Jesus that gripped Paul.

John begins his First Epistle by expressing his enthusiasm for the new life revealed through Jesus. It was a life he had seen, handled, felt, and known—it was the Word of life. John had fellowship with the Father and the Son in this life, and we believe that it was this life that was the only basis for inviting readers to fellowship with him. In this life, joy becomes perfect. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." (1 John 1:1-4).

We believe that the kingdom of heaven is increasing in such people as this, and in their hearts righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit will abide. We believe that God's wisdom is embedded in all of God's laws and commandments, and that he who is obedient to the Holy Spirit will bear abundant fruit, just as Jesus promises. (John 15:4-5).

### 6.6.1 Works of Faith

We believe that man is justified before God by faith without works, by the grace of Jesus Christ. Man's boasting is excluded. No man is justified by works of the law. We who were dead were made alive with Christ and seated with Him in heavenly places. (Ephesians 2:5-6). Then we are His workmanship, created in Jesus Christ for good works that God has prepared for us to walk in by faith.<sup>48</sup>

Abraham was justified by faith without works. (Romans 4:3). As a result of this faith he received the son of promise, Isaac. His life became a walk of faith and, through God's effectual working and His will, he was able to present Isaac as a sacrifice to God. The apostle James says that by this work of faith Abraham was "... justified by works ... that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect" (James 2:21-22).

We believe that all works which are worked by God through faith are to the glory of Christ. The works come out through the sacrifice of love for the Saviour, who is the head of the church. Abraham loved God

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<sup>48</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1926/01. Faith and reasoning.

with all his might, with all his soul and all his mind. It was through this love and will that Abraham received the promise when he sacrificed Isaac, and the angel of the Lord cried from heaven, "Because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – blessing I will bless you." (Genesis 22:15-17).

We believe that when Christ was risen from the dead to be Lord, and the believer by faith has become a member of the body in which Christ is the head, the intention is that we should walk in Jesus' footsteps in the works that God has prepared for us. Then we are freed from the law. This is the new and living way Jesus consecrated for us. The works come forth as God works in us both to will and to do for His pleasure. These are works of obedience to faith. In this way the believer presents his members as slaves of righteousness—this leads him to sanctification. (Romans 6:19).

These works of faith lead to spiritual development, to sanctification, and to growth in all good works. Without sanctification, no one shall see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14). Thus we partake of God's kingdom, His righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, and faith is perfected by works.

Christ died for all, therefore are all dead, and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again. As we live for Him, new life and new works are born forth. The growth of the new life is sanctification, and Christ lives in us. The works which emerge from those who live a crucified life are the fine linen which it is given to the bride to wear, the righteous deeds of the saints. (Revelation 19:8).

#### **6.6.2 The Obedience of Faith**

Paul was given the task by Jesus Christ to work for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name." (Romans 1:5-6). He also expressed his joy that a great many of the priests had become obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7). We believe that faith and obedience cannot be separated from each other and are two sides of the same coin.

Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount as follows: "Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of My Father." (Matthew 7:20-21). James also emphasizes that without works, faith is dead. "But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect." (James 2:20-22). We believe that it is only through the obedience of faith that one partakes of the true life.

We believe that the 12th chapter of Romans with all its exhortations become streams of living water for all who follow them. We believe that when the life of Christ proves effective, fellowship is created between people, which can be developed into the same kind of fellowship that exists between the Father and the Son. "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." We believe that obedience to the laws of the Spirit of life will free us from bad and destructive thoughts and instead expand our hearts to have compassion and care for others.

We believe that humbling oneself in obedience to God's will is God's wisdom. For he who humbles himself shall be exalted. (Matthew 23:12). Through self-acknowledgment in Jesus Christ, God's power becomes active, and we partake of the wisdom that comes from above. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." (James 3:17). This way to life is open to whoever is willing. God is rich enough for all who call upon Him: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7). Through the obedience of faith and walking in the Spirit, one comes to spiritual growth and development.

### 6.6.3 The Beginning and Progress of Faith

"The Mighty One, God the Lord, has spoken and called The Earth from the rising of the sun to its going down. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth." (Psalm 50:1-2). God's ways of leading a person to faith are inscrutable. We believe that God sees the longing and hope that lies in every human heart, which may also be hidden from man himself. We believe that man, by his own free will, can receive or reject this calling. Jesus says, "For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:14). By the work of faith, we must make our call an election sure. (2 Peter 1:10).

"But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed." (Galatians 3:23). Here a person is "kept under guard" despite being a believer. Their faith is a legalistic faith, and thus not the ultimate faith.<sup>49</sup> God wants to lead man on the path that leads to a living faith. We believe it is completely possible that man, through an inner conviction and by seeking it, can find and be filled with living faith and thereby achieve a life in connection and in fellowship with God and Christ Jesus without the help of intermediaries. However, it is most often the case that God has made help available through other believers who have had this faith planted in them and thereby can be of help to others. Paul was an instrument of God for leading people to faith in order for them to know the truth of Godliness. He was a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. (1 Timothy 2:7, Titus 1:1). Such ministers can portray Christ's work and doctrine of life in a form of doctrine that strengthens the longing and hope of a man who wants to be delivered from the power of sin and darkness. His eyes become opened to the possibilities that the gospel promises through the grace in Christ Jesus.

Christ's faith is born when man decides to fulfil the terms and conditions described by God's Word for a life of peace and joy through the leading of the Holy Spirit. We believe that in this Spirit there is a faith that makes it easy to receive God's Word in mind and heart. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17). By faith one can receive and be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is how fellowship with God comes about, with the heavenly invisible world and fellowship with other people in love and care. "Now faith is the *full assurance* of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1, Norwegian). This is a living faith by which a person's deeds and actions are derived from God. People come through faith into a relationship of obedience to Christ. This faith is not derived from the wellspring of human achievement and intellect, but is a gift from the God of hope.

We believe that when God's word by faith melts together with a man, the life of Christ is born in a his heart. This faith is dynamic, and through the fight of faith one can lay hold of eternal life and the invisible heavenly substance of God's kingdom: righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself says: "All things are possible to him who believes!" (Mark 9:23). This is the victorious faith that has overcome the world. (1 John 5:4). We believe that this faith is the faith of Jesus, the faith that lived in His heart while he was a sojourner and pilgrim on The Earth, He who is also referred to as the Author and Finisher of the faith. (2 Peter 1:1, Hebrews 12:2). This faith cannot be destroyed, for its roots are in God and remain for all eternity. (1 Corinthians 13:13).

### 6.6.4 Living Faith

"We have the same Spirit of faith," Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:13, and in this Spirit of faith he knew that Jesus had overcome the devil and that the flesh had lost its power. He could triumphantly exclaim, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Romans 8:37).

The new covenant established by Jesus instituted an entirely new age on Earth. He began and He completed the tremendous task of destroying him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. He glorified the Father through His life on Earth and consecrated a new and living way back to God. Only through Godly fear and by the Spirit of faith can a man understand something of the battle of faith Jesus

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<sup>49</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1912/10. The obedience of faith.

fought in the days of His flesh. The resurrection of the dead proved that the work had succeeded. He is the Author and Finisher of the faith. Since the law could not lead anyone to perfection, it was God's will that this work of salvation should be completed in us by faith. (1 Corinthians 1:21).

When Joshua and Caleb, in the Spirit of faith, were to bring the people of Israel into the Promised Land, the devil, through unbelief and doubt, managed to destroy an entire generation, so that the Israelites wandered around in the desert for 40 years due to their unbelief, and they did not enter into the land. (Hebrews 3:19). The Spirit of faith has lifted people out of the miry clay and set their feet upon a rock. (Psalm 40:3-4). By the Spirit of faith, they have become members of the body of Christ, and have come into communion with Him who is able to do... above all that we ask or think. By faith in Him, what was impossible for man can become possible. (Mark 10:27). The sin to which they have been enslaved loses its grip, and a new life emerges by the Spirit of faith.

### 6.6.5 Prayer and Worship

We believe that through prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit, man is able to communicate with the Creator. Throughout history, there have been people on Earth who, through their prayers, have been able to exert great influence on God's actions. When God had thought to destroy Israel on account of their rebelliousness, Moses interceded, and God heard his prayer.

God's dispensation is all-encompassing; He loves His creation, and wants to show us mercy. God follows every man closely and pays attention to his words and deeds, and to Him every man must give an account. We believe that the most precious words that came out of the mouth of one of the thieves on Calvary were the words and prayer at the end of his life: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." (Luke 23:42). He acknowledged his sin and turned to his redeemer. Jesus' answer to his prayer was of eternal significance for him: "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Verse 43). We believe that any person who similarly turns to Jesus for help and salvation will meet the same mercy.

We believe that in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, we can let all our requests be known to God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7). We believe that John, who was the disciple Jesus loved, knew the heart of God and Jesus well when he confidently writes in his letter: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." (1 John 5:14-15). "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." (1 John 3:22).

We believe in healing through prayer. Jesus healed many people when he was a sojourner and pilgrim on The Earth. His care for us encompasses the human spirit, soul, and body. We pray for the sick, but healing is in God's hands. God, who in His providence sees everything from an eternal perspective, acts on what is best for every man. A healing can take place instantaneously or over time. We also believe that God can use the hands of a doctor to bring about a successful outcome. We believe James' exhortation: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven .... The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:14-16).

Believers are exhorted to be active and participate in prayer in order to be preserved from evil. (John 17:15) "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:1-4).



We believe that prayer for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is a central prayer for all who will press into the kingdom of God and the world of the Spirit. (Ephesians 1:17). There, the spiritual horizon expands and the eyes and ears of the heart can better see and hear what is going on in our heavenly homeland. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philippians 3:20). The Spirit of expectation promotes prayer. "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" (Galatians 4:6). God would gladly give this Spirit when we ask for it. Jesus exhorts us, "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:6). We believe that many of the most important prayers, both for one's own life and for other people and the church of God, have been fought out precisely in the secret place, alone before God's face. "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." (John 14:13-14).

We believe that great forces can be unleashed through prayer. Women and men of prayer, the co-workers of God, can pray blessing and revival down upon people and countries. Revivals often occur as a result of a continued ministry of prayer over a long period of time. We believe that the ministry of the Word of God is the most important ministry, and is infused with great power when it is unified with prayer. The Apostles made this decision: "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." (Acts 6:4). We believe that love and unity advances our prayers being heard while the opposite to this is an obstacle to prayer.

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23-24). We believe that worship is different from regular prayer. Prayer is a request for help from God for the needs one has in one's own life or the lives of others. Worship is a prayer in which all admiration, all honour, power, and blessing is apportioned to the Father and the Son. The believer's sensory apparatus matures to be able to see and comprehend the works of God, so that in thankfulness and praise one admires God's greatness and majesty.

We believe that the apostle expresses some of this in Hebrews 13:15: "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." This prayer life is fully expressed in heaven when the Lamb takes the book from Him who sat on the throne. "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." (Revelation 5:8). "Then the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever." (Verse 14).

## **6.7 From Being Born Again to Living a Life of Victory**

Paul's letter to the church in Rome is very central to BCC's understanding of the gospel. Below is a summary of how we understand the doctrinal part of the letter, which is specifically discussed in the first eight chapters of the letter. Several themes are written in different chapters in this *Statement of Faith*, but here it is described in its context.

Paul had planted many churches, and he worked for a long time to establish a basic understanding of the gospel. There is no transcript of the teaching he gave in these churches, other than what he reminds them of in his subsequent letters. Therefore, it is especially instructive to read his letter to the church in Rome, which he had not planted. In this epistle, he lays out to this church what is at the heart of God's gospel concerning His Son who, according to the flesh, had come of the seed of David, and who, according to the Spirit of holiness, is declared to be the mighty Son of God by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Lord. (Romans 1:1-4).

The first 8 chapters of Romans provides BCC with an important source for our understanding of the development of the life of a believer, from justification without merit by grace, to a life of victory, yes, even more than victory.

After reminding us of man's lost condition due to The Fall (Romans 1:18-32), Paul emphasizes, in chapter 2, that the law given to the Jews gave them more knowledge of God's will than the Gentiles gained through following their conscience. If one does not obey the law and is not obedient to the light one is given about the truth, there is no reason to boast of it and to claim that one is any better in God's eyes. Jews and Greeks are, therefore, placed on an equal footing as people who are subject to the dominion of sin (Romans 3:9-18) and cannot be justified by the works of the law. Where is our boasting then? It is excluded (Romans 3:27) and it is only by faith, without works of the law, completely without merit and by grace, that we can be justified.

Our sins are forgiven us, and righteousness is imputed to us because we believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. It is He "who was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification". (Romans 4:23-25). God has become our Father, and we are reconciled to God and have made peace with God. Chapter 5 describes Jesus' mighty work of salvation, assuring us that where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might also reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:20-21). We believe that on such a solid foundation, by the grace of God, after being reconciled to God through the death of His Son, we can also be saved by His life. (Romans 5:10).

What this salvation by His life means, Paul clearly states in chapter 6. The fact that we are reconciled without merit by grace should in no way lead us to want to continue in sin. Far from it. (Romans 6:1-2). We will walk in a new life! We are no longer to be slaves to sin (Romans 6:6), but to reckon ourselves alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11) and to become servants of righteousness. (Romans 6:18). We believe that therein lies a rich and positive opportunity for life to develop in the good, where we serve God and His righteousness, and have our fruit to holiness. (Romans 6:22). There is in truth an eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23).

We believe that what Paul explains further in the 7th chapter of Romans is precisely the experience a born-again believer has during this development in the good, and speaks about people who are born-again Christians. Paul writes that he is speaking to those who know the law. (Romans 7:1). As long as one lives according to the lusts and passions of the flesh, the law has dominion over man. One is confined under the law that sets limits and deprives people of their freedom. When one is freed from the law, one understands that the intention and purpose of the law is to make sin alive. We believe that the law is there to help to lead man to Christ and to freedom from the dominion of sin. Only then do you know the law. When a person lives for himself, then the flesh has dominion and one does one's own will. One is, therefore, under the law which acts as a brake and acts to restrict that person; one belongs to oneself. When one gives up ones self-will and one desires to do God's will, as He who said, "Behold, I come to do Your will," then one is freed from oneself and freed from the law. Then one belongs to Christ.

Paul speaks of the time when they were in the flesh and bore fruit unto death. (Romans 7:5). Then he speaks of new situation: "But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter." (Romans 7:6). He thereby describes the entire process from the time he was in the flesh until his redemption came. Paul does not blame the law and the commandment, but he saw that the problem lay in the sin that clings to his own body. He came to the realization that in him, in his flesh, there dwelt nothing good. (Romans 7:18). The commandment was for life, but the result of the work of the law and the commandments was that Paul recognized that, as a man, he could not please God. The sin that dwelt in his flesh hindered him. He acknowledged that, as a human being, he was the person he himself had described in Romans 3:9-19. His mouth was shut and he was guilty before God. (Romans 7:19).

We believe that it was from this position he could see the law and the commandment with new eyes. (Romans 7:12). At a new birth, an inner man had been created whose delight was in God's law. His mind and heart were in Christ, and he wanted to live the life of Christ. But with great honesty, he recognized that he who wanted to do good, whose whole desire was to be a servant of righteousness, and who made every effort to do God's good, acceptable, and perfect will, repeatedly encountered another law in his members. (Romans 7:23).

"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do." (Romans 7:15). The exercise in Godliness that the disciple experiences when he tries to do God's perfect will can be compared to a student of music whose objective is to play the finest piece of music. It doesn't end up sounding as he had imagined and his mind and heart had intended, and some of the notes ended up being off-key. Paul experienced similar discords from his nature and being, which he says he hated.

"Now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me." (Romans 7:17). We believe that here Paul describes his condition as someone who lived a victorious life with a mind that loved God's laws and commandments. But at the same time, he knew that indwelling sin had an impact and it became a disturbance so that in life and ministry he could not carry out the God's will as perfectly as God had intended. Paul was by faith justified in Christ, but in spite of that he was so honest that he wrote what he saw in his members - a different law from that which was in his mind. This other law warred against the law in his mind and brought him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members. (Romans 7:23).

Under the chastening of grace, a disciple will sense they lack in wisdom and the fruit of the Spirit. Like Paul, he will say, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). But here, Paul further describes in chapter 8 how a disciple can live a life of victory and joy, despite having this body of death. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1). Therefore, there is reason for thankfulness, even if one knows one's shortcomings. "I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." (Romans 7:25). We believe that the impact and disruption that comes from the inherent sin, and which we get light over step by step, is what Paul called 'the deeds of the body'. These deeds of the body can be put to death by the Spirit. (Romans 8:13). We believe that freedom in Christ will increase as God's Word gains power and becomes life in us. To a similar degree, the law of sin in our members will lose its grip over us. Those who experience this will know that the Holy Spirit testifies with their spirit that they are children of God, and thereby heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, provided they suffer with him. (Romans 8:16-17). It is the revelation of these heirs of God, and the glorious freedom in which they experience and develop, which the whole of creation waits for in eager expectation. (Romans 8:18-22).

We believe that we experience this development when we accept that all things, everything that takes place in the lives of those who love God and who are in this process, work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose to be conformed to the image of His Son. (Romans 8:28-29). Then one can say with Paul: If God is for us, who can be against us? No accusation or condemnation can befall God's elect; nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of Christ. This is truly a life of victory, indeed more than victory. (Romans 8:37).

## 6.8 Doctrinal Summary

The cross is one of the most important New Testament words and concepts. In Scripture it is referred to in a variety of ways and with different meanings; both Jesus' death on Calvary's cross, living a crucified life with Christ, and daily taking up one's own cross.

Through His death on the cross of Calvary, Jesus Christ became our atoning sacrifice once for all. He was the righteous who died for the unrighteous. All men, no matter how deeply they have fallen in sin, can, by

faith in Him, receive the forgiveness of sins without merit by grace, when they confess their sins, ask for forgiveness, and turn from them.

We believe that after such repentance, it is natural for a man to turn away from Satan's power to God, and from darkness to light. This then becomes the basis for a new life, as one faithfully regards one's old life, "the old man," as crucified with Christ, so that it is put out of action. The lusts and passions of human nature, that which dwells in the flesh, shall not be allowed into our hearts and minds; they are to be kept crucified, and our hearts and minds then unite by faith with the will of God.

Jesus exhorts His disciples to deny themselves every day and take up their cross. It is not just about the manifest works of the flesh, works that are manifestly sinful, but about the transformation of our entire inner man, our thoughts and intents, to be conformed to the image of the Son. We believe that by denying our self-life, taking up our cross, and following in Jesus' footsteps, we partake of the new life and wisdom that comes from above. We believe that the believer is called to bear fruit for God and that the life of Christ can be revealed by, and in, our mortal bodies. When the disciple denies himself and takes up his cross, there is a suffering that will take place that results in a death to the sin in his flesh, because the lust of the flesh does not receive nourishment. This death leads to the peace of Jesus and to the unfolding of His life and virtues in the mortal body of the disciple.

We believe that temptations are a test of our faith. Being tempted is not sin, but if one gives in to temptation, this will give birth to sin. We believe that we can overcome sin in temptations by the power of the Spirit, and, thus also, over Satan's power. This is a battle that takes place in our inner man, after we have come to faith in Jesus Christ and His life. To this victorious life, Jesus has left behind footprints for us to walk in and follow His example.

Our calling is to be disciples of Jesus. He is the Master, and we are his apprentices. The disciple follows in the direction of the Master, who debased Himself and became a servant. This life of a disciple in Jesus' footsteps is the narrow way to life, where the disciple learns from Him through daily obedience. (Matthew 7:13-14). We believe that on this way we as disciples have nothing to be anxious about, as God knows everything we need and makes sure we get what we need. The Holy Spirit guides the disciple, and the Master Himself, Jesus, lives to intercede for us so that we receive help in due season. We believe that when we walk in the teaching of the Master and receive guidance from Him, instruction, and comfort, this turns into growth and progress, so that the qualities of love manifest themselves in the disciple's life. The fruits of the Spirit, the life of Christ, come forth as streams of living water through the life and ministry of such disciples.

We believe that faith should produce action in the form of good works. Therefore, we place great emphasis on walking in the obedience of faith, so that we obey God's commandments and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this way, God's wisdom and power are acquired. Such a life creates fellowship and unity, and gives power and wisdom from God, which excludes evil, and it becomes a source within us that springs forth into eternal life. (John 4:14).

Living a victorious life is not the same as being perfect or having completed one's sanctification. But it is that one is faithful in the light God has given one; that one walks in the light just as He is in the light. (1 John 1:7). In this amplified light, one begins to hate the sin that dwells in one's flesh but no longer has a place in one's heart and mind.

We believe that prayer and the effectual working of the Holy Spirit allow man to communicate with His Creator. We believe that in all things we can, with boldness, take petitions before God in supplication and prayer with thanksgiving. Then His peace will keep our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus. We believe in healing through prayer. Believers are also exhorted to be active participants in prayer in order to be kept from evil.

We believe that praying for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is a central prayer for all who want to take God's Kingdom and Spirit realm by force. Many of the most important prayers for one's own life, for other people, for God's church, and for countries and peoples have probably been fought out in the secret place, alone before God. Worship is an essential part of a disciple's prayer life. It is a prayer in which all admiration, all honour, power, and blessing apportioned to the Father and the Son.

BCC draws strongly from the first 8 chapters of Romans in order to understand the development of the believer, from justification without merit by grace, to a life of victory, yes, more than victory. This implies that we believe that what Paul explains in the 7th chapter of Romans is the experience of a born-again believer in the course of his development in what is good. Paul acknowledged that he who relied on doing God's good, acceptable, and perfect will was taken captive by the law of sin that was in his members.

We believe that a disciple will sense a poverty of wisdom and lack of the fruit of the Spirit, yet can live in victory and joy and serve God with his mind. We believe that liberty in Christ will continue to increase to the degree that God's word, which is the truth, gains dominion and becomes life in us. To the same degree, the law of sin in our members will lose its dominion.

## Chapter 7 – Sanctification

### 7 Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is a lifelong process after we are justified without merit, without works, by the blood of Christ. Of this process, Paul writes that we will "much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10). We believe that salvation through His life means that Jesus' life will increasingly come to light through the disciple's life.

Through repentance and faith in Jesus, one is delivered from the power of darkness and placed in the kingdom of His Beloved Son. At the new birth, man is delivered from the law and becomes a disciple as he has passed through the narrow gate. At baptism, the old man is buried with Him, and the believer is raised up by faith in God's power to live a new life.

Then His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, will begin a work in the disciple who has given up everything. (Luke 14:33). As a disciple, one enters the narrow way to life, the new and living way Jesus consecrated. This is a way in the obedience of faith in which the works of faith are revealed through the workings of God and the execution of His will. Thus, the life of Jesus comes forth in a body that was previously subject to the power of sin. Thus, the body of sin will gradually be brought to naught.

When God's will is carried out in the disciple's life, it brings forth fruit for God. This is sanctification. This life in Jesus' footsteps on the new and living way is the way of sanctification. This is a life of faith in which our boasting is excluded, because we are the work of God.<sup>50 51</sup>

#### 7.1 A Life in the Leading of the Spirit

We believe that when Jesus died for our sins on Calvary, taking the punishment for our iniquities upon Himself, He had received power over all flesh. Then He had completed the work He had been given by His heavenly Father: "I have glorified You on The Earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." (John 17:4). This work and this conclusion, followed by the resurrection from the dead, made it possible for Christ to be laid as a foundation in the lives of believers. It represented a new day with entirely new possibilities for a fallen human race. "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures." (James 1:18). After the new birth, we are supposed to come to spiritual growth and not remain babes in need of milk. In Scripture the word of righteousness is called solid food. (Hebrews 5:13-14). This growth up to Him, who is the head of the church (Ephesians 4:15), the Scripture calls 'sanctification'.

We believe that sanctification is a process, leading to the fruit of the Spirit and the life of Christ. "But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit in sanctification, and the end everlasting life." (Romans 6:22). We believe that our minds are to be freed from the power of sin, and constantly renewed so that we are transformed according to the image of Christ. Such ones serve God's law according to their mind, presenting their bodies to serve as weapons of righteousness before God. "I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for *sanctification*." (Romans 6:19, Norwegian).

We believe that sanctification is possible by the Holy Spirit who was sent to the church on the day of Pentecost. Jesus' life will appear in and by our bodies as the fruit of the Spirit. The church in Thessalonica

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<sup>50</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1929/04. Resurrection power.

<sup>51</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1929/03. God's way – Sanctification.

had received the Holy Spirit. They then became followers of Jesus and Paul by receiving the Word joyfully in the Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 1:6).

We believe that it is only by receiving the Word and living according to it that the believer can come to spiritual growth. When the Spirit reminds us of God's Word and Jesus' commandments, and we take heed to Him, we receive nourishment and growth in our spiritual life.<sup>52</sup> This is the result of living crucified with Christ. We believe that those who live like this belong to Christ as members of His body. The fruits of the Spirit are the substance and attributes of the divine life and include the greatest and most precious promises spoken of by Peter. (2 Peter 1:4). It is the promise to partake of the divine nature by growth in all the virtues of Christ. (Verses 4-9). Then Jesus' life will be revealed in our mortal bodies while we are still alive. (2 Corinthians 4:11).

We believe that this was the life Jesus specifically invited us to when He said, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30). Through the forgiveness of sins, we receive rest in our conscience and peace with God. Jesus' intention for us is that we are to enter into a learning process as apprentices and as His disciples, and that by obedience we should devote ourselves to Him and learn to keep God's commandments. It is this hidden life with Christ in God that leads to sanctification.

## **7.2 The Mystery of Godliness Manifested in us**

We believe that having a longing to do God's will is a characteristic of true godliness. This longing causes one to depart from evil. The mystery of godliness will then be gradually revealed and provide crucial help comfort. In the days of His flesh, Jesus' prayers were heard because of His godly fear. (Hebrews 5:7). Jesus' and the apostles' teachings pertained to godliness. (1 Timothy 6:3). Jesus Himself stated when He was on Earth that His teachings were not His own, but those of the Father. He does His will, experiences and receives the full assurance that Jesus' teachings come from God.<sup>53</sup>

We believe that the truth that Jesus was revealed in the flesh is a great mystery of godliness. A person's godliness will make him want to take up his cross and follow Jesus. We know that one will then face opposition from one's own flesh that is not obedient to God's law, nor can it be. (Romans 8:7). There is a struggle when the flesh goes against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. In this struggle, this secret will be revealed; that Jesus, too, was revealed in flesh, as in all things He became like His brethren and a partaker of the same flesh. He suffered as He was tempted. He was empowered by the Father to overcome. We believe that we become partakers of Christ's sufferings and Christ's death as we walk in His footsteps. (Philippians 3:10). In this way, the life of Christ will also be revealed through our mortal body. This is a great mystery that is revealed to the godly and is the source of great joy and comfort in the daily battles of faith.

We believe that everything that pertains to life and godliness is contained in this doctrine. (2 Peter 1:3). Based on this doctrine of life, Jesus is also now working in His post-existent state, where He sits as high priest and advocate with the Father, to strengthen us with faith and power to resist sin and deliver us ever more deeply from its power. (Hebrews 12:4).

## **7.3 You have Purified your Souls**

We believe that purifying one's soul means that by walking in the light, one acknowledges, hates, and puts to death the impurity and selfishness that came in through The Fall and defiled the soul life of man. In this process, a person is transformed from being Earthly-minded to becoming spiritual.

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<sup>52</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1912/02. The Leading of the Spirit.

<sup>53</sup> Smith, Johan O. Letters. 10 June 1933.

By the precious blood of Christ, we were redeemed from our aimless conduct inherited from the fathers. (1 Peter 1:18-20). We believe that Peter's exhortation in 1 Peter 1:22 is a prerequisite for further growth and development on the narrow way to life: "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart." This is how the believer comes to a deeper insight into salvation in Jesus Christ. This is a deeper purification, such as the gold being purified by fire. (1 Peter 1:7).

We believe that Hebrews 4:12 describes the same process: "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." In this cleaving process and judgment upon the thoughts and intents of the heart, the senses are exercised to divide between good and evil. Unless self-pity, self-defending, self-righteousness, etc. are overcome, the senses will not be trained to hear the guidance of the Spirit and to find God's will. Then a man will go astray in his soul and create turmoil by thoughts, words and deeds that do not come from above. "Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator." (1 Peter 4:19). By walking in the footsteps of Him who did not sin, He who did not revile in return when He was reviled, and did not threaten when He suffered, but committed Himself to him who judges righteously, by taking up his cross every day, one will enter into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ and experience the glory of Christ. Then we also come to the end goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls. (1 Peter 2:21-23). It is only by the purification of the soul that a man can come into God's rest.

#### **7.4 Conformity with Christ**

We believe that when Paul writes in Romans that we are to be formed according to the image of the Son of God, it is another way of describing sanctification. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30). We believe that in this process of being conformed is a process of sanctification that takes place after we are reconciled to Christ, where we partake of the same life that was in Jesus, who said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10).

The Son came full of grace and truth. We believe that through the help of grace, He can transform a man from being of The Earth, Earthly, to becoming a spiritual man, a man of God, fully capable of all good works. (1 Corinthians 15:47-49, Hebrews 13:21). In order for this to take place, there must be a daily cleansing from all that the Spirit of truth gives light over, so that there is a walk in the light, even as He is in the light. (1 John 1:7). We believe with John that whoever has the hope of seeing Jesus as He is, cleanses himself even as He is pure. (1 John 3:2-3). This work is carried out by Jesus as High Priest with the complete affirmation and devotion of our will.

We do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be contained in words. (Romans 8:26). What we do know is that the tribulations and temptations that we face are not beyond our capability. (1 Corinthians 10:13). These are like doors into a deeper salvation and to being conformed into the image of the Son. Everything that those who love God meet along the way, works together for their best. (Romans 8:28). Thus, a man is formed by God's word to be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:17).

We believe that this conformation occurs when we have it as Paul writes: "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." (Philippians 3:10). Paul experienced fellowship with the sufferings of Christ as he bore Christ's death in his body, so that Jesus' life might be manifested in his body. (2 Corinthians 4:10). This growth in God also



rests entirely on Jesus' atoning work. The death that Paul bore in his body led to sanctification in that sin in his flesh was condemned and put to death by the Spirit.

We believe that it is by living crucified with Christ in daily life that He dwells in us and His image will come forth in thoughts, words, and deeds. (Galatians 2:20). Paul had to give birth to the Galatians with pain until Christ was formed in them. (Galatians 4:19). Christ cannot be formed in them through the law or by works of the law, but by being born again and set free through the law of the Spirit of life in Christ. (Romans 8:2). Then we have received the Spirit of adoption, and the Word has become the perfect law of liberty, which gives us opportunities for growth and development, as the power of love is at work in us.<sup>54</sup>

We believe that by being faithful to the truth in love, we shall in every way grow up to Him who is the head, Christ. Paul expressed his thankfulness for the people who had accepted this call. " But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

It is obedience to God's Word and God's Spirit that brings forth the fruit of the Spirit. It requires love for the truth and for the teaching of the Spirit of truth. Then there will be a deeper understanding of salvation and a real cleansing from the demands of the self. We believe that it is to people who are in this growth and sanctification in their life of faith that Paul writes, "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:4). The glory of Jesus, His life and image, already dwell in their bodies during their sojourning and pilgrimage here on Earth.

## 7.5 The Sermon on the Mount – and a New Life

We believe that the Sermon on the Mount is at the heart of Jesus' message, and that we partake of the gospel by being doers of the Word, according to Jesus' own words: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Matthew 7:24). Christ is then laid as the foundation, and by building his life according to the Word, God's building is revealed. (1 Corinthians 3:11).

We believe that through Christ a new era came after the law had had its time and accomplished its work. We believe that the Mosaic law was part of God's will and preserved Israel as a nation. But the law was only a shadow of the good things to come and was not the good thing itself. (Hebrews 10:1). Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil." (Matthew 5:17). He also said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless them who curse you, do good to those who hate you." (Matthew 5:43-44).

Because of the lust in the flesh, the law was powerless and could not lead anyone to perfection. But God did so by condemning the sin in Jesus' flesh. (Romans 8:3). By the law of the Spirit of life, there is power to transform a man into the image of God. The righteousness of the law was an outward righteousness written on stone tablets. Jesus came with the righteousness of God, and He revealed this kingdom of God consisting of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. He was the first to have within Himself the kingdom of heaven, the new life and the inner divine worship.

We believe that God condemned sin in Jesus' flesh, and that Christ, by an eternal Spirit, offered Himself as a blameless sacrifice for God, until He cried out upon Calvary's cross, "It is finished!" Thus, the law was fulfilled, and He could thereby release us from the law and its curse. (Galatians 3:13).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1935/11. To deceive oneself.

<sup>55</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1931/04. The Laws of the Spirit and the Spirit of the Harlot.

We believe that the Sermon on the Mount was in every part the life Jesus lived. We also believe that Paul lived according to the Sermon on the Mount when he wrote, "I am crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." (Galatians 2:20). Christ in him was the life and power of the Sermon on the Mount. It was this power that Paul wanted the Ephesians to come to understand: "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places." (Ephesians 1:19-20). In the power of love, it is possible to live the gospel as presented to us – see paragraph below in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus said that everyone who hears these saying of Mine, and does not do them, builds his house on the sand. It fell on the day of testing. (Matthew 7:26-27). It is like building the foundation of your life with wood, hay and straw. That work will one day be consumed by fire, as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:15.

We believe that the beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-14 describe true disciples who want to live by the words of the Sermon on the Mount. We believe that it is associated with the greatest happiness and the greatest promises to be children of our Father in heaven, who makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. "Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48). This is a perfection as far as one has received light, which is to grow and increase in sanctification. "But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day." (Proverbs 4:18).

#### **"The Lord's prayer"**

The Sermon on the Mount can only be lived by disciples in close fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus notes that fellowship in prayer should not be characterized by vain repetitions, as God is not concerned with many words, because He who knows what we need before we ask Him. He is Spirit, and those who worship Him should worship in Spirit and truth. We believe that "The Lord's prayer" is Jesus' example of prayer and contained within it is the focus, the longing, and the Spirit that is the driving force of a true disciple. When one of the disciples said to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples", Jesus answered:

*"Our Father in heaven  
Hallowed be Your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done  
On Earth, as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
As we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from the evil one.  
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever. Amen."*

We believe that "The Lord's prayer" is a great help in fixing our vision on the heavenly calling and not drifting away from the goal, away from a poverty of spirit and humility that is necessary to walk properly as a follower of Jesus. In the poverty of this spirit, words are formed that unite with the Spirit, which intercedes for the saints with groans that cannot be contained by words. (Romans 8:26). The disciple's dependence on He who is in heaven, who has the complete oversight, sees everything and hears everything is reflected in the strong Spirit of Godly fear that is the lifeblood of "the Lord's prayer."

We believe that, although the desire of discipleship is to carry out God's good will on Earth as it is in heaven, he will reach his limitations to a great extent and discover his imperfections and discover his

debts. What he has not yet discovered is expressed in anguish by these words: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matthew 6:12).

We believe that the "The Lords Prayer" contains within it the Spirit and seriousness necessary to preserve the disciple in a harmonious and trusting relationship with God, who is in heaven, and with the people with whom he associates with on Earth during his apprenticeship. The relationship with his fellow man is emphasized by Jesus in Matthew 6:14-15. God is only willing to forgive us our debts when we forgive our debtors.

## 7.6 God's Divinity

Jesus, the Son of God, says of His Father, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24). As such, He is not available to the human intellect, being the living, almighty, and invisible God, who is before all worlds, containing all the perfect, harmony and beauty that is contained in an indefinable composition of creativity and power that is continually at work in unlimited love for the preservation and development of His creation, the visible and invisible. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth." (Psalm 50:2).

Paul says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20). "Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honour and everlasting power. Amen." (1 Timothy 6:16). Compared to this Almighty Majesty, a man has small thoughts about himself and similarly large thoughts about Him who can do more than anything, exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, (Ephesians 3:20). Paul became, through this perception, nothing in himself. John says, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18).

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created." (Colossians 1:15-18). It was God's will to let all His fullness take up residence in Him. (Verse 19). Power and glory belong to God, and He is a God of vengeance. (Psalm 94:1). This is a characteristic that He never shares with any man. "'Vengeance is Mine I will repay,' says the Lord." (Romans 12:19).

When John wanted to express who God is, he says, "God is love." (1 John 4:16). We believe that this is the core of God's nature and being, the part we as man can best understand and relate to.<sup>56</sup> In this love, Jesus was fully united with His Father even in His mortal life, saying, "I and My Father are one." (John 10:30). Jesus prayed on the last evening with His disciples before His suffering and death: "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26). We believe that by His grace, after we have become citizens of His kingdom consisting in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17), this kingdom will grow and unfold in us.

We believe that the wisdom that is from above is the essence of the new creation and the glory of the invisible God to be revealed and radiate from us. (James 3:17). Paul describes the nature of love as follows: "Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; it does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, does not become bitter, does not remember the evil [Norw.]. It does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). He exhorts us to pursue love. (1 Corinthians 14:1).

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<sup>56</sup> Smith, Johan O. Letters. 13 Dec 1905.

The same Apostle exhorts us to "... be imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma." (Ephesians 5:1). It is this consensus from Jesus Himself and from His Apostles that lays the foundation for faith and assurance that we here on Earth can be reformed and transformed into the image of God and Christ. We believe that His nature and being can radiate from us, without ascribing to these attributes the same fullness and efficacy that only God Almighty has by virtue of His Majesty, that which no man is even capable of describing.<sup>57</sup>

## 7.7 The Greatest and Most Precious Promises

We agree with the Apostle Peter that a follower of our Master and forerunner, Jesus Christ, has already in this life received promises to share in the divine nature of Jesus. "As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:3-4). Peter further exhorts us to give all diligence into adding to our faith the right life, and that there is growth in virtues which shows that one is not barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8). Thus, the attributes of a divine life come forth in our bodies.

We believe that the greatest and most precious promises are associated with terms and conditions. Peter writes about fleeing from the corruption that comes from lust, and Paul exhorts us to "flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart!" (2 Timothy 2:22). We believe that obedience to Peter's and Paul's exhortations in practice means crucifying the flesh with its lusts and desires. (Galatians 5:24). "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:11). The only way to flee from corruption is to reckon oneself dead to sin and stand firm in the fight against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.

We believe that God's being is reflected and expressed in every detail in God's Word. We believe that to the extent that the Word becomes flesh, and to the extent that sin in the flesh is destroyed, to the same extent divine life will become truth in us, and that truth will be with us forever. (2 John 2). Therefore, Peter exhorts that the spiritual virtues, the distinctive qualities of the divine life, must grow and develop so that one is not unfruitful in one's knowledge of Jesus. " But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins." (2 Peter 1:5-9).<sup>58</sup>

We are to pursue the divine life that Jesus Christ allows us to partake of and to exercise ourselves in godliness until it permeates our lives. (1 Timothy 4:7). We believe that the divine power vested in the Holy Spirit has made this possible. From being like a new-born babe, we are to grow up in every way to Him who is the head, Christ. (Ephesians 4:15). As we carry about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, we are partakers of the sufferings of Christ, and there is a gradual death to sin. The knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ will radiate from us. (2 Corinthians 4:6). This new life enables us to bow down and bear the burdens of others, and to minister to people in Christ's love and gentleness. It is the result of having come to Him and learned from Him in whom the whole fullness of the Godhead came to dwell. (Colossians 2:9). It was He who gave the invitation, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in

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<sup>57</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1920. The work praises his Master. (Letter to the Ephesians).

<sup>58</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1914/03. Love.

heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28-29). We believe that divine life gives us a share in God's rest.

## **7.8 Doctrinal Summary**

We believe with the Apostle Peter that a follower of our Master and forerunner, Jesus Christ, has received promises to partake of His divine nature while one is still alive. It is growth in the virtues that shows that one is not barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. But these greatest and most precious promises are associated with these terms and conditions; we must crucify the flesh with its lusts and desires. We are to pursue the attributes of the divine life and practice godliness until they become our nature, our life.

We believe that sanctification is a lifelong process, which involves bringing forth fruit for God. We believe that salvation through His life means that Jesus' life will come forth in, and by, our bodies as we daily deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow in Jesus' footsteps. We believe that this is the life Jesus has specifically invited us to. His intention is that we should enter a learning process as His disciples, where we learn to keep the new covenant laws and commandments. It is this hidden life with Christ in God that leads to sanctification.

We believe that longing to do God's will is a characteristic of true godliness. The Spirit brings to mind Jesus' words, and when we take heed to them, they lead us into spiritual nourishment and growth. Then we find God's will, which is our sanctification. We are called to be transformed and partake of Jesus' heavenly image by His Spirit.

This is, in the deepest sense, salvation in the life of the Son after we are reconciled. In this process of sanctification, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us; it works to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, through this persistent cleansing from man's selfish demands.

We believe that the Sermon on the Mount is at the heart of Jesus' message, and that we partake of the gospel by being doers of the Word according to Jesus' own words: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock." Christ has been laid as the foundation, and by building his life according to the Word, and from this God's building arises. (1 Corinthians 3:11). We believe that the wisdom that is from above is the essence of the new creation and the glory of the invisible God which shall be revealed through us.

## Chapter 8 – The Church – The Body of Christ

### 8 The Church – The Body of Christ

#### 8.1 The Church

The church is the body of Christ on Earth today.<sup>59</sup> (Ephesians 1:22-23). We believe it had its beginning on the day of Pentecost when God's love was poured out in the hearts by the Holy Spirit. It was founded on the rock, which was the revelation Peter received about who Jesus was, and even the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. "He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.'" (Matthew 16:15-18).

We believe that the body of Christ consists of all who believe in Jesus and live in a faithful covenant of discipleship with Him, regardless of which assembly one belongs to here on Earth. It is by the church that God will declare His manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This was His intent from time immemorial, which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:10-11).

Paul speaks in Ephesians 5:32 of a great secret or mystery, expressing the following: "I speak here concerning Christ and the church." This secret is described in God's Word in several different ways using different imagery.

- One image is of a body, the body of Christ, where Christ is head and the church is composed of each member of the body with various functions. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Ephesians 5:30 and Colossians 1:18).
- Another image which is used in 2 Corinthians 11:2 is the beautiful relationship between bride and bridegroom where the church is the bride and the bridegroom is Christ.
- A third image is a building of various stones where Christ is the chief cornerstone and the church are the stones which are joined together to be a spiritual house, a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22 and 1 Peter 2:4-6).
- Jesus speaks also about the sheep and Himself as the Good Shepherd. (John 10:11).
- He also presents us with an image of Himself as the true vine and the disciples as the branches on the vine. (John 15:1).

God loves all His creation. We believe that God's great interest is the church, God's gift of love to the Son. The church shall at last be presented to Christ in glory, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but shall be holy and blameless. (Ephesians 5:27).

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20). This is a church. Being gathered in Jesus' name means that one's own person, own name, and own honour are insignificant. These are those who have given up everything to become a disciple. (Luke 14:33).

The church has a mission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20).

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<sup>59</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter. 1921/10. The Church of Christ and the Lord's people.

### 8.1.1 Those who Belong to Christ - The Body of Christ

We believe that God who is rich in mercy can make people alive with Christ, even if they have been dead through their sins and transgressions. (Ephesians 2:1-5). Paul writes in Galatians 5:24 that those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. These belong to His body. The crucified life gives power to overcome the manifest works of the flesh, which destroy peace and which creates unrest and division in the body.

The church is God's work of love, and He has worked and works with people, to bring together the elect from different ages, cultures and peoples. Christ is the head of the body, which is the church, and all these people who, through Christ, are reconciled to God in His Earthly body through death, are members of His body. He wants to present them holy and blameless and without reproach in His sight. (Colossians 1:21-22).

The church is in Christ a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22). The kingdom of God is not an organization, so one could say here it is or there it is, for God Himself is present wherever He is worshipped in spirit and truth.<sup>60</sup> Paul writes to his young co-worker Timothy: "But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15). Those who are upright and love the truth will, through the teaching of the Spirit, expose the sin and impurity that dwells in man which shall be put to death and cleansed out.

We believe it is crucially important that in every church there are people who have an ear that can hear what the Spirit has to say to the church. "Give ear to Me, O My Church." (Isaiah 51:4 Norwegian). We see that several of the leaders of the churches in Asia Minor had not taken heed to this, and to everyone it was said: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Revelation chapters 2 and 3.) We believe that truth liberates, and that by being faithful to the truth in love, one will in every way grow up into Christ, the head of the body. (Ephesians 4:15).

### 8.1.2 Growth in the Body of Christ

"... from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." (Ephesians 4:16). We believe that the church should grow and develop as each member grows, and that this is how the fellowship becomes richer and more fervent. This mutual love is also the sign that we are disciples of Jesus. The new commandment Jesus gave His disciples, to love one another as He had loved them, is the life-blood of a disciple's life. (John 15:12). This commandment causes the prince of darkness, the accuser of our brethren, to be rejected. We are to grow in goodness, kindness, mercy, and all other virtues. When we walk in the light as He is in the light, then we constantly see something to cleanse ourselves from, and then the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7). If we have love, our talents and gifts of grace come into the work and into their own, and we reach out for the spiritual gifts that make us fit to partake of the saints' inheritance in the light and be built up into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Jesus, our Saviour and Sanctifier, head of the body, descended to the lower parts of The Earth. (Ephesians 4:9). He humbled Himself and took on Himself the form of a servant. "Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors'. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.'" (Luke 22:24-26). We believe that Jesus was the greatest example in humbling Himself. The lowest level was when He finished His work on the cross. Further down

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<sup>60</sup> Smith, Johan O. Skjulte Skatter 1926/04. The Easter Conference.

can no one come. There, too, He served. The robber was saved, and Jesus' mother was given a home with John.

We believe that the body of Christ functions and grows when we, with the same mind of a servant, can serve and esteem the others better than ourselves, rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles." (Acts 2:42-43).

We believe that when believers come together, it is natural that they come to serve one another in this fellowship, and that everyone has something from heaven to share with each other. "How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." (1 Corinthians 14:26). We believe that it is in this way that the body of Christ becomes a living organism in which blessings go out to the members and those around them.

God chose the foolish things of the world, those who were nothing; not many mighty, and not many noble. (1 Corinthians 1:26-27). By His creative hands and with Jesus as the head, we believe there is a transformation. The church is preparing for the rapture to be united with the Bridegroom when He Himself descends from heaven with the voice of the archangel. After this union, Jesus will always be with His brothers and sisters. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

### **8.1.3 Unity - The Body of Christ**

We believe that the unity of Jesus' disciples takes place through obedience to God's Word, and the unity testifies that they believe in Him. Living a crucified life with Christ, suffering and dying from all our desires and the demands of the flesh to one's fellow man is the path to unity. By the life and fellowship that then develops in the spirit of unity, the world will know that the Father has sent Jesus to bring about peace and unity. On the basis of this struggle and victory, Jesus' high priestly prayer can come true, "that they all may be one." (John 17:21). We believe this is the basis for Christ's headship of the body of Christ and for His disciples as members.

We believe that Christ is the head of the body, and God composed the body according to His purpose. (1 Corinthians 12:14-27). All members are baptized with one Spirit to be one body. We should, in love to one another, submit to God's will and accept the way He has composed the body. The younger should submit to the elder and everyone should clothe themselves in humility toward one another. (1 Peter 5:5). Faithful to the truth in love, the individual members grow in every way up to the one who is the head, Christ. (Ephesians 4:15). Then there will be fellowship and harmony in the Spirit. We believe that it is through godly fear that the relationship with Christ and each other is maintained and deepened. God's workings in each individual member brings about a melting together so that we may be made perfect in one. (John 17:23).

Jesus promises that where two or three are gathered in His name, there He is in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20). We believe it underlines the importance of coming together. We come together to be edified, to serve one another, and to receive one another just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. (Romans 15:7). We are not to think of our own glory, but to seek the glory of God (1 Peter 4:11), and pursue the things which make for peace and mutual edification. (Romans 14:19). We must not despise anyone, but esteem others better than ourselves. (Philippians 2:3). We do that by serving each other.

## **8.2 Ministry in the Church**

### **8.2.1 The Members' Ministry and Mutual Help**

"But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased." (1 Corinthians 12:18). We believe that every member of the body of Christ has accepted the exhortation of Paul in



Romans 12:1. By God's mercy, one presents one's body as a living and holy sacrifice for God's pleasure. This is our spiritual, divine service. He goes on to say that it is a matter of transformation and renewal to find and judge what is God's will: the good, the acceptable, the perfect. (Verse 2).

When Jesus came into the world, He said, "Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God." (Hebrews 10:7). This will was his food. The Word became life, and the Word became flesh. We believe that this is how every member of the body works and serves. When all the members of the body have the same longing, a church will grow up in the sense of the Word. Peter describes such a church as a royal priesthood and a spiritual house. (1 Peter 2:9).

Priests in the old covenant were responsible for the sacrifices. Now, in the new covenant, our bodies are to be a living and holy sacrifice to God's good pleasure. (Romans 12:1). We have a flesh where nothing good dwells; this is to be sacrificed as we get light over it. In Romans chapter 12, Paul gives many good exhortations, including: "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another." (Verse 10). In this way, all the members come into a good work and find their place in the body, according to God's will. We do not believe it is the role of any man to determine who is a member of the body of Christ. Everyone personally knows what he believes and what relationship he has with God. With a body that is sacrificed and put into God's service, one can offer spiritual sacrifices that are pleasing to God. (1 Peter 2:5). "Therefore, by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." (Hebrews 13:15).

In a church there are many ministries that are performed, and all members should be active and participate with the talents and gifts of grace that the individual possesses. It is necessary that there are people who live the Word of God and have spiritual food to give. "Let all that you do be done with love." (1 Corinthians 16:14). Only those who love Jesus with all their heart have the right attitude to Him. They can hear the voice of the Chief Shepherd and nurture the church. "So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs!' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My sheep!' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed My sheep.'" (John 21:15-17).

We believe that in a church of God-fearing people, "... sons may be as plants grown up in their youth", and "daughters may be as corner pillars, sculptured in palace style." (Psalm 144:12 margin). They are servants who are gripped by Jesus of Nazareth and the life He lived. They love the good and love to serve. Love compels them, without payment or profit. They are willing to suffer loss of honour and reputation and Earthly gain, and God puts them in the ministry. They are pillars in the church, and by faithfulness will be for all eternity. "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name." (Revelation 3:12).

### **8.2.2 Overseers – The Elders**

Paul writes to Titus what an overseer should be like: An elder must be "blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For an overseer must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict." (Titus 1:6-9).

Peter exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock of God, "serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, nor for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being

examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:1-3). We believe that it takes time to become a pattern and role model. Therefore, Paul also says that an overseer should not be a new convert. (1 Timothy 3:6). Timothy had demonstrated faithfulness that had been tested over time, and Paul judged him as someone who did not seek his own. (Philippians 2:20-22).

When Paul visited the church in Ephesus and knew that it was his last visit to them, he gave the elders this exhortation: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28). His heart beat with love and respect for God's work. We believe that the exhortation to "take heed to oneself and the doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:16), is a primary concern for anyone who is given the grace to build a spiritually vigorous church.

### **8.2.3 Servants who are Gifts to the Church**

We believe that all members of the body of Christ have an important ministry to help and bless their brothers and sisters. Although all believers are called to share in the same life, there is a difference between personal faithfulness, gifts of grace, and acts of service. We believe, like Paul, that it is God who places His servants in the church. They are placed there to serve and help believers grow and develop in the life of Christ. "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors [shepherds] and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-12).

They have, by the confidence they have gained through their lives, along with the gifts of grace God has given them, a special ministry to perform for the edification of the body of Christ. Such servants must, in godly fear, stand firm in their ministry before God, without wanting to please people or to gain vain glory from them. (Galatians 1:10). They have seen the greatness of Jesus in the likeness of a servant where the greatest is to be as the least, the servant and slave of all. This training by the Spirit has been experienced by all those whom God has given as gifts and placed into the church. They have walked through the valley of tears and they make it a blessing. (Psalm 84:7). They have known the Lord's chastening and have humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God. (Revelation 3:19, 1 Peter 5:6).

#### **Apostles**

Apostle means messenger, and they are called of God and sent by Him. It is first and foremost an apostle's task to birth a church, nourish and help the individual members in varying circumstances of life. In order to accomplish this difficult task, he must possess some of the qualities of an evangelist, teacher, shepherd, and prophet. He will, by his life and personal faithfulness, instruct each one in Godly fear, and he will teach them to relate with one another in the love of Christ. In order to fulfil this task, he must be able to hear what the Spirit says to the church.

The apostle can nurture people who are both new beginners and mature believers in Christ and be a guide at every stage of development. He can install elders (Titus 1:5), and also place others in the ministry as the various members emerge. He can wisely give advice to create balance and harmony in the various ministries. He shall act without prejudice and without bias. (1 Timothy 5:21). An apostle sets aside his own benefits for the good of the church, without disregarding the responsibilities of his own family. Like Paul, he must fill up in his flesh that which is lacking in Christ's sufferings in order for the body of Christ to develop in fellowship and unity. (Colossians 1:24-25). An apostle is an instrument of God who can bind and loose accordingly, inline with the promptings of the Spirit and the laws of the Spirit. (Matthew 16:19).

#### **Teachers**

A teacher in Christ has the gift of grace to make God's word understandable to people. Such a person labours both in preaching and teaching. Christ and His doctrine of life, along with the teachings of the apostles, are their most precious possession. "For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light." (Proverbs 6:23). By this light, the way becomes clear, and the empty and false teachings of the world are exposed so that the sheep do not go astray. They are well acquainted with the doctrine that was given to

the church in Rome (Romans 6:17), and have experienced first-hand that it is by obedience to this doctrine that man is freed from sin. (Verse 22). They can present the doctrine in Spirit and in power, and not just as learned knowledge. We believe that a teacher whom God has placed in the church is in his very essence a gift, who does not make demands, but seeks the glory of God and gives God glory. Their most important work is in fellowship with the others God has placed in the church, to teach the disciples to keep the New Testament commandments and exhortations. We believe that a teacher himself must be a doer of the Word and guard his words so that he does not come under the judgment that James warns against: "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment." (James 3:1).

### **Pastors**

A pastor's ministry is to be likened to a shepherd's care for his sheep. It is a ministry comparable to a tender mother attending to her child. This service is often performed in the hidden place, and is, therefore, not highly regarded by those who seek their own. For God, the shepherd's pastoral ministry is of great value. "So I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock. I took for myself two staves: the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bonds; and I fed the flock." (Zechariah 11:7). We believe that a good shepherd has both of these "qualities" in his shepherd's staff. Such have care, an eye and an ear for people's needs and can be supportive at the appropriate time.

They know the sheep, have fellowship with them, and are gripped by Jesus Christ who owns the sheep and gave His life for them. They put their own needs aside in order to help, direct, and bear burdens. "And some you correct, because they have doubted; but others save, pulling them out of the fire. And on some show compassion with fear, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh." (Jude verses 22-23, Norwegian).

We believe that the true shepherds know the way of the flock and the way of humiliation, and have it as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 11:29: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?" A true shepherd has fellowship with the Chief Shepherd and hears what the Spirit says to the church. Thereby, a shepherd can bring food at an opportune time and lead the sheep to the green pastures. A shepherd daily faces Jesus' urgent question to Peter: "Do you love Me more than these?" (John 21:15). They do not rule over the flock, but are a role model for them and do not serve for dishonest gain. (1 Peter 5:1-4). They work to release the sheep from the bonds of unrighteousness so they can be an adornment to the teachings of God, our Saviour. (Titus 2:10-14). The Lord was the shepherd of David and led him on the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. (Psalm 23:3).

Jesus was the Good Shepherd, and He watched over His sheep. (John 10:11-15 and 17:12). He warned against the hireling who does not own the sheep and who leaves the sheep and flees when he sees the wolf coming, he then catches the sheep and scatters them. He exhorted His disciples to guard against the false prophets who came in sheep's clothing, but inside were ravenous wolves. They were to be known by their fruits. (Matthew 7:15-18). He warned against the Pharisees who devoured widows' houses and carried with them the leaven of hypocrisy. He exposed the false teachings and life, and the wolf felt the power of the shepherd's staff applied with the zeal of love. Those who were evil and the false were chased away, so that the sheep could know safety and fellowship. We believe that this is how the shepherds that the Master has placed in His church should be.

### **Evangelists**

We believe that God's entire saving work is a gospel, but the evangelist has a special mission. He is helpful in bringing man from darkness to light, from Satan's power to God. God has put the evangelist in the church and has endowed him with gifts of grace to speak to sinners. The evangelist preaches the love of Jesus, loves people, and brings out the light and hope of the gospel. Their speech exposes the devil's lies and deceptions when men are set free by the atonement in Jesus Christ.

An evangelist can clearly state the first principles in God's Word, so that it awakens the longing for freedom from sin. Where a new birth occurs, the evangelist can give the spiritual and unadulterated milk.

(1 Peter 2:2). An evangelist loves people, and his message consists of faith, hope, and love, and can thereby stir the finest strings of the soul. They know how to find the right words to say to a person according to their state of mind. An evangelist's ministry is an outward ministry. When a man has passed from darkness to light and had his sins forgiven, he has to be led further into Christ. Therefore, the evangelist's work must take place in fellowship with apostles, shepherds, prophets, and teachers who can provide help for further growth and development.

### **Prophets**

A prophet is a person whom God reveals Himself to and equips to proclaim what God wants to say in certain situations. True prophets live close to God and are separated in their spirit from the surrounding world and from men so they can hear God's voice. Abraham was a prophet, and was consecrated into God's thoughts and counsels concerning Sodom before calamity came. Moses was a prophet to whom the Lord spoke face to face.

A prophet knows God and His laws, and can prophesy of things to come, he knows, to a certain extent how God will act in various situations. He has experienced that whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. They have nothing in themselves, but everything in God. God's prophets are well-acquainted with suffering and know what it is to be misunderstood. A prophet is often able to help a person find God's will and inheritance in Christ, based on the gifts of grace and qualifications that particular member possesses.

## **8.3 The Life of the Church**

### **8.3.1 The Great Commission**

Then He said to His disciples: "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest." (Matthew 9:37-38). We believe there is a great work given to the disciple: to bring the gospel, the good news, to people. "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on Earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Paul was gripped and focused on this task. When he visited the Ephesian church for the last time, he expressed himself as follows: "...nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24). Paul also puts it this way: "I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also." (Romans 1:14-15). To the church in Corinth, he also writes about that which was a burning and heartfelt issue for him: "But everything I do is for the sake of the gospel, that I may be a partaker of it." (1 Corinthians 9:23, Norwegian).

Jesus Himself began by both doing and teaching. (Acts 1:1). We believe it is absolutely necessary for an apprentice to do the same. We believe that Jesus intended the Sermon on the Mount to be practiced by those who would follow Him. He had built on the Rock Himself, so His words will endure even when heaven and Earth pass away. There was power in the words He spoke, and He taught as one who had authority. We believe this authority is derived from a lived experience and that one as a disciple must really live the life of Christ. Then we can truly say that our house is built on the Rock in accordance with Jesus' own words.

Paul says, "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:11-13). What one has learned oneself, one can teach others and pass on

as the good news. "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:9).

We believe that we should and can learn to keep the new covenant commandments that Jesus has given us. He received them Himself from His Father, and these words, God's will, were His food. He became the bread from heaven, to give life to the world. He says in the Sermon on the Mount: "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:19).

Jesus, our Apostle and High Priest, was the first to preach the gospel of God: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn." (Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:17-19). We believe that even today this is the task of His disciples. There is grace and forgiveness for the grieving sinner. It is a day of vengeance over sin and power to overcome it. It is necessary to preach both of these things, this is the essence of gospel of the cross.

### **8.3.2 Missionary Work**

We believe that one must be a disciple oneself in order to make disciples of others. To be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, means, in addition to the outward action, that one, in one's mind, has turned away from living according to the flesh. One has been delivered from the power of darkness and has experienced redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14).

We believe that by following the teachings of the apostle Paul to the Gentiles through revelation, and by following his example in life, we will receive the grace of God to also fulfil the mission.

It was his love for Jesus that compelled Paul to subject himself to the extreme tribulations and dangers in order to fulfil the commission he had been given by Jesus: to finish his race and the ministry he had received from the Lord Jesus, to testify of the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24). After Paul made disciples of them, he carried out an extensive long-term work with the believers. He taught them to keep all that Jesus had commanded them. He did this by his example and by his persevering work and teaching. We believe that it is in this way that we are to fulfil the Great Commission in our day.

In the church at Ephesus, Paul did not cease for three years to exhort every one with tears. He loved and was loved. This is how churches around the Mediterranean came to be. They were born through pain, and the likeness of Christ was manifested in the believers, so that they came to unity and could edify one another, even in Paul's absence. He could say, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:9). This is how he exhorted his co-worker Timothy in his missionary work: "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." (1 Timothy 4:16).

We believe that if there is to be progress in the missionary work, our life and our teaching must be consistent. This is how the apostles worked selflessly. Paul worked with his hands and helped people in both their spiritual and temporal needs. He didn't crave silver or gold or clothes from anyone. He always recalled Jesus' words: 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' (Acts 20:33-35). We believe that as we work in this Spirit, there will be grace over the work in the mission field. Paul stirred the call to discipleship in men and opened their eyes, so they turned from darkness to light, from Satan's power to God. He worked more than they all, though not him, but the grace of God who was with him. We believe missionary work will succeed when we follow in such people's footsteps.

### **8.3.3 The Tentmaker Mission – Working with both Hand and Spirit**

We believe that the basis for successful missionary work is grounded in both the spiritual work and in the practical material work. Both hand and spirit must work in unison. In practice one will often encounter

very challenging situations in the mission field, encountering peoples and cultures where the essence of Christianity and its message is almost unknown. Jesus Himself took the form of a servant and even took upon himself the menial task of washing His disciples' feet. Paul could testify, "I do all things for the gospel's sake, that I too may partake of it." (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). To the Jews he became a Jew, to those who were without law, as without law. That he by all means might save them.

We believe, like Paul, that it is by labouring in this way, that we must support the weak. In the mission field, one often encounters great poverty, including material poverty. We believe that through love one can find solutions that in the long run can help people so they can stand on their own two feet and carry their own burdens. Learning a trade and making an honest living gives a person a good grounding and hope for the future. People need to be liberated from the bonds of unrighteousness and led into a life of righteousness, so that they may become an adornment to the teachings of God and our Saviour. (Titus 2:10). One must meet people on their own level and there be able to be patient as one serves them and carries them in one's heart. In the mission field, Paul also preached this to his disciples: "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give to him who has need." (Ephesians 4:28). "And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful." (Titus 3:14). It takes time to lead people into a life where they do not demand from others, but rather become givers and bearers of fruit themselves. It is when you learn to be faithful with the unrighteous mammon and in that which is Earthly, that God is able to "give you what is your own". (Luke 16:9-12).

### 8.3.4 Music and Song

Music and Song are an important part of our church gatherings; it helps prepare the ground and enable people to receive God's Word and awakens them to their heavenly calling. BCC has published its own songbooks since the early 1900s. Most of the songs are the fruit of faithful individuals who possessed a tremendous longing to partake of the life of Christ. Both the books, "Ways of the Lord" and "Almond Blossom" are two unique songbooks which contain songs and hymns which will edify the Christian in his faith and encourage him to lead victorious Christian life. The songs are also an important component to the preaching of the gospel message, and we find in each song a message or testimony that can be of great help in various circumstances of life.

Johan O. Smith has written 27 songs in 'Ways of the Lord'. In many of the songs he wrote, he expresses his deep desire and longing to become more and more conformed to the image of his Saviour, Jesus Christ. One of his most well-known songs is reproduced in full below. A selection of other songs by the same author are detailed in the footnote.<sup>61</sup>

Jesus, my Saviour, I pray Thee,  
Let me abide in Thy peace.

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<sup>61</sup> Song book Ways of the Lord, Skjulte Skatters Forlag.

#87: "O come to the rest God will give you."

#108: "I am a sailor, sea navigator"

#109: "From death's dominion my soul is free."

#114: "Each heart is now rejoicing in heavenly accord."

#115: "Forward, warriors, to battle and conquer!"

#139: "Sing, sing of my Saviour! Sing, sing it again!"

#191: "Break right through the wall now, brothers!"

#195: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, in power who's like thee?"

#205: "God's power to awaken the old and the young"

#218: "Here before God's face we stand, youth so full of hope."

#246: "Whet your Sword, assembly glorious"

#312: "Among friends it's so glorious and blest"

#361: "Jesus has become my Head; Without Him I could naught attain"

#362: "Among friends it's so glorious and blest"

All that brings rest and assurance,  
Jesus, within me increase.

*Ref.  
Bend me, mould me;  
Help me Thy Word to obey.  
Bend me, mould me  
Into Thine image, I pray.*

Though in my flesh there's resistance,  
Yet I delight in Thy will;  
And in Thy grace Thou dost draw me,  
Saviour, to follow Thee still.

Laws of Thy body I cherish;  
From sin and death they set free.  
Thy precious love melts my hardness;  
Sweet, then, is suffering to me.

Thou art my Head and my Leader;  
Sweet is my rest, Lord, in Thee.  
All that would burden and hinder  
Thou dost remove far from me.

Walking in light unto bloodshed—  
This is my covenant with Thee.  
Thou didst by this give Thy promise  
That I triumphant shall be.

*Johan O. Smith, Ways of the Lord #242*

### **8.3.5 Voluntary Service (Diaconal)**

Voluntary diaconal service has always been a strong component of our church tradition; volunteers provide a wide range of care on a weekly basis across all age groups. We aim to show people neighbourly love and respect. We support and facilitate volunteering that serves all age groups, from early years to senior years, aiming to meet each of their various needs and challenges.

We believe it is especially important to support and facilitate the care of our children and young people. Everyone should feel seen and recognized for who they are, and have their needs met. The mentoring and training of younger co-workers is crucial in order to be able to provide the support and help that young people need in vulnerable phases of life. Love, care and an interest in the individual is a necessary and important requirement for the work to succeed.

We believe in the importance of taking preventive measures that enable our churches to be open, safe and thriving communities: a place where the individual can grow and develop their contribution in accordance to their interests, talents and abilities. Particular attention is given to measures that prevent harassment, social exclusion, violence and abuse.

There is a particular emphasis on volunteering, which is a valued aspect of our church community, and a great deal of unpaid pastoral care and volunteering work is carried out on a weekly basis in all our local churches. This includes amongst other things; literary translation, simultaneous translation of meetings, caring for the children and young people, Sunday-School work, personal guidance and pastoral care. We believe that a fulness of the Holy Spirit, wisdom, and faith are key to serving with excellence to the

blessing of all our churches, whether ministering with the word or ministering to meet practical needs, in much the same way as we can read in Acts chapter 6 about the early church.

## **8.4 Infant Dedication, Believers Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

### **8.4.1 Blessing and Dedicating the Little Children**

We believe that children belong to the kingdom of heaven. This is what Jesus said before He blessed the children. (Mark 10:13-16). The Gospels are all in agreement in that they tell of how Jesus received the little children, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them. We do not perform any sacramental rituals for the initiation of children, but we endeavour to receive the children and treat them with the respect and love that citizens of heaven deserve. We believe that children belong to the kingdom of heaven from conception, and that a child does not become a child of God solely at the point of baptism.

BCC traditionally invites parents, who wish to do so, to ask the church to bless their new-born children by bringing them before the assembly to be dedicated. In this way, they also affirm that they will care for them and bring them up in Godly fear, in the same spirit that Jesus blessed the little ones. In this way, the whole church can bear the child on their hearts and in their thoughts and prayers. A meeting set aside for the blessing and dedication of the children is, therefore, a good opportunity for everyone to be reminded of the responsibilities we have, whether as parents, caregivers, adults or young people whom the child may have as a role model later in life.

At a child's dedication we often sing this hymn:

We welcome you, child, as guest here,  
A wonderful gift of God's grace.  
We welcome you, child, to His service,  
To run with joy in the race—  
To bless and strengthen your mother,  
Both comfort and help to give;  
To gladden and honour your father,  
And only for Jesus to live.

May God bless your pilgrim days here  
And guide you in all of your ways.  
O may you bear fruit in abundance,  
With thankfulness and with praise.  
The fear of God shall preserve you;  
Christ's Spirit shall be your power,  
Transforming you into His image  
And leading you hour by hour.  
*Olga Olsen, Ways of the Lord #158*

### **8.4.2 Believers Baptism**

Before Jesus departed from this world, He gave us His Great Commission. "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on Earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20). Baptism is a key part of this commandment: (1) to make disciples of all nations, (2) to baptize those who have decided to become disciples, who have made a conscious decision to come to faith in Jesus Christ, (3) to teach them to walk in the obedience of faith to all that Christ has commanded us. In line with this, we practice believers' baptism, that is to say, full immersion baptism in water.



The scriptures refer to the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus Christ.<sup>62</sup> John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. But the baptism of Jesus Christ is associated with the Holy Spirit taking the leading in the life of a disciple. "And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all." (Acts 19:1-7).<sup>63</sup>

A disciple is born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5); the water being symbolic of cleansing from one's old sins through the remission of sins, and is the basis on which the disciple can be born of the Spirit, and to also walk according to the leading of the Spirit. In Acts we see again and again that the Apostles baptized those who had come to faith in Christ Jesus. (Acts 2:41, 8:12; 8:36-37, 10:47-48, etc.) We believe that baptism is a conscious act of the will by someone who has received forgiveness of sins and who now wants to walk according to the leading of the Spirit. Baptism is about both an inner conviction and a decision to become a disciple of Jesus; a strong symbolic and physical testimony (demonstration) for all to see that it is a decision which is both personal and true, that the disciple enters into a "pledge of a clear conscience towards God". "There is an antitype that now saves us – not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the pledge of a clear conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 3:21, Norwegian).

We believe that baptism is an act that signifies the end and also the beginning of something new. Paul describes the baptism that Christ Jesus ordained thus: "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4).

Here, baptism is described as a communion of both death and life with Christ. This demonstrates the salvation aspect of baptism. The body of the flesh, the body that has sinned, is being put off. "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." (Colossians 2:11-12).

The baptized person considers himself dead to sin, but at the same time alive unto God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:11). As one who has become living from the dead, he decides to offer his members as a weapon of righteousness unto God. (Verse 13). The body which is lifted out of the water after baptism is to be led and compelled by the Holy Spirit. Here one takes a position of faith, and this faith will be put to the test. Through baptism one confirms that one will remain faithful to the covenant that one has made, and that it is no longer I who will live, but Christ who lives in me. (Galatians 2:20).

We believe that a personal faith is the New Testament's prerequisite for baptism, we see the evidence for this in Acts 8:12, Acts 8:37, Acts 10:43-48, and Mark 16:16. Baptism is also a declaration of my faith, but never replaces it. We believe that the act of baptism itself is a confirmation that the believer has entered

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<sup>62</sup> Johan O. Smith. Skjulte Skatter. 1938/08. Baptism. "Apollos had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately about Jesus, even though he knew only the baptism of John. Acts 18:25. In other words, there was a baptism that went deeper than the baptism of John."

<sup>63</sup> Johan O. Smith. *ibid.* "This was the baptism of Jesus Christ because the Holy Spirit came upon them. They were baptized with one Spirit to become one body, the body of Christ. It was a simple matter for these twelve because they had already become disciples."

into a personal discipleship relationship with Jesus Christ. We experience Jesus Christ as present at baptism and He affirms His part of the discipleship covenant; that He who has all power in heaven and on Earth will be with us always, even to the end of the age.

We believe that sanctification is the process that will take place in those who believe and have confessed their discipleship covenant with Jesus Christ through baptism. Baptism, therefore, testifies that there has been a clear break with the old life according to the flesh, and that by faith in the power of God, one has been raised up to live a completely new life.

We believe that through baptism into Christ Jesus we are, by divine providence, united with the three divine persons of the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The mind and heart are then purified and cut away from all that The Fall has brought into man's flesh of sin and impurity. This baptism is a decision made and a "burial" for the "old man". (Romans 6:6). A new life begins, and with the help of these powers we can resist sin until bloodshed. (Hebrews 12:4). Through this baptism into Jesus' death, the life of Jesus will be revealed by our bodies. (2 Corinthians 4:10-12). We have personally made a covenant of the conscience before God to live a new life. Baptism, therefore, becomes a help and strength unto sanctification.

#### **8.4.3 The Lord's Supper – The Breaking of Bread**

The Lord's Supper was ordained by Jesus. The Gospels describe the various aspects of this meal. Matthew writes, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'" (Matthew 26:26-28). Luke also expresses Jesus' desire that we should continue to do this in remembrance of the life and work of our Saviour and Redeemer: "And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.'" (Luke 22:19-20).

We believe that the bread is a symbol of Jesus' body, the body that was broken, in which He said, "Not My will, but Your will, God", while He was here on Earth. He gave thanks and allowed Himself to be broken, instead of living according to the flesh that He had voluntarily taken upon Himself while on Earth as a man. The word became flesh, and we saw His glory. (John 1:14). One who was righteous suffered for the unrighteous, to lead us to God. (1 Peter 3:18).

"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all ..." (Isaiah 53:4-6). We cannot follow Him in His atoning work for the sin of the world, but we do believe that Jesus' example is a powerful exhortation to us when we break bread together. We testify that when we partake in the breaking of bread, we have a longing to have fellowship with the Master in this: we allow ourselves to be broken, and submit to God's will, instead of "living for ourselves" according to the flesh.

Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." We can think of the cup in two ways, namely, 1: that His blood was shed for us (that is His cup) and, 2: that according to the laws of the new covenant we battle against sin in the flesh until bloodshed (it then becomes our cup with Him). When we then proclaim the death of Christ, we are simultaneously proclaiming that we will be faithful to the laws of the new covenant until bloodshed, for the cup is a covenant with Him in His blood, and a covenant, by definition, is entered into between at least two parties.

The breaking of bread is a spiritual meal of remembrance. We remember Jesus' battles and sufferings for us. His sacrificed body is a strong exhortation to us. When we participate in the breaking of bread, we

confess without words that our bodies have also been sacrificed to do God's will, and by that we proclaim (by that) the death of the Lord until He comes. The breaking of bread is also a fellowship meal, a meal Jesus Himself was very much looking forward to partaking in with His disciples. It should strengthen fellowship with Jesus and between the believers, and will be an additional reminder of our covenant of discipleship.<sup>64</sup> By breaking a single loaf of bread, we testify that we are all members of one and the same body, and when we drink the wine, we testify that we are partaking of the same affliction that He suffered in His flesh.

We believe that the breaking of bread is a meal which is conducted in the presence of God and should be performed in a deliberate manner. Paul reminds that this is not to be taken lightly. For example, if you have something against another, or there is someone you cannot forgive, you ought to judge yourself and cleanse yourself before the breaking of bread. If Christ's death is not at work in one's body, one participates in the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner, and one will "drink judgment to oneself", as Paul wrote to the Corinthians. "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (1 Corinthians 11:23-29).

We place great emphasis on the significance that the Lord's supper has for a disciple to be able to truly follow Jesus. We have no doctrine of either transubstantiation<sup>65</sup> or consubstantiation<sup>66</sup>, but believe the Lord's supper to be an important meal of remembrance in the presence of Jesus Christ. This meal is of strength and of great significance to Christ's followers.

## 8.5 Our Relationship with other Church Denominations – Ecumenicalism

In 1929, Johan O. Smith wrote the following in the periodical *Skjulte Skatter* where he was editor: *"God is rich and He has enough work for all of us. He is all-encompassing, so His manifold work requires all kinds of labourers. Therefore, do not be haughty, but fear, because not every task has been laid upon our shoulders, as if the labour of others were of no value. When God has given us light, and through that light we see many of our past mistakes, then we can testify in this light, without implicating other people in the mistakes that we ourselves have made. In this way, we become more and more without offence, and it will be easier for those who hear us to examine themselves. Just because some of the elder brothers have received light and grace to expose and tear down some of the sheer folly that is prevalent in our time, and which hinders God's work, this does not mean that everyone else should try to speak in order to tear things down in the same way. Each one must serve according to the grace that God gives them. When we all do this, everything will be in its proper order and the listeners will be blessed"*.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Johan O. Smith. *ibid.* "All baptisms are a covenant between God and an individual. John says to some who came to him to be baptized: "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" If they had been willing to live a life that was worthy of repentance, they could have truly been saved. Then a covenant would have been established between them and God through baptism. That is why those who ask to be baptized should be mature individuals who are fully conscious of what they are undertaking.

<sup>65</sup> Catholic teaching is that during the Eucharist there is a transformation or transubstantiation of the bread and wine, in which, after being consecrated into the elements of the Eucharist, they are transformed into the Body and the Blood of Christ, although they still look and taste like bread and wine.

<sup>66</sup> The Lutheran Church's doctrine of consubstantiation (=co-substance). This holds that Christ is genuinely present in the Eucharist, "in, with, and below" the unchanged substance of bread and wine.

<sup>67</sup> Smith, Johan O. *Skjulte Skatter*. 1929/07. Something to think about during the present revival in Oslo.

The relationship with other assemblies has gone through various phases throughout the history of our church. In the early 1900s, there was extensive cooperation with various God-fearing persons from different denominations within the Free Church movement. As editor of the Christian periodical *Skjulte Skatter*, Johan O. Smith published many articles written by various authors from a variety of Christian movements. The common denominator for all of the contributors was that their writings and their words clearly expressed their yearning to live a godly life. Many of them were connected to the holiness movement. The work was characterized by a respect and gratitude for each other's mutually beneficial service and work.

BCC believes that it is necessary to show solidarity with other church communities and defend the freedom of faith and protect the societal framework that Christianity is able to operate within in our society. We also believe that the other Christian denominations are in need of our support, and will benefit from our solidarity. This does not imply that we agree with, or identify with their theological interpretations and principles. But it is a mutual respect and recognition for each of the communities' uniqueness and the variety of ways in which we each serve the Christian community in an increasingly secularized society.

## **8.6 Doctrinal Summary**

We believe that the Church, the body of Christ, consists of all who believe in Christ and live in a faithful discipleship covenant with Him. This is regardless of any congregational adherence here on Earth. We believe that God has His primary interest in His Church, which is also called in God's Word, the bride of Christ, God's gift of love to the Son, to be presented to Him holy and blameless.

Scripture also describes the Church as a body, where those who belong to Christ are His members. This body is God's work of love, where Christ adds to the church people from different ages groups, cultures, and peoples, to form them into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. In this dwelling it is the Spirit of God who speaks teaching, guidance, and judgment, so that the members may be edified and grow up into Him who is the head, Christ. We believe that the Church will grow and develop as each member grows, in a mutual fellowship and mutual love that becomes an increasingly fervent and many faceted body. Sincere love for all other members is the lifeblood of a disciple's life, keeping accusations and darkness at a distance. It also promotes the talents and spiritual gifts of grace that are exercised for the edification of the whole body.

We believe that the unity of Jesus' disciples is proof that they believe in Him; it is a testimony to those around us, indeed to the whole world. This unity is the result of the cross of Christ, which works in the life of each member. Faith comes through the preaching of the word, so we believe in the importance of coming together to edify and to be edified, to serve one another and to care for one another, as Christ cared for us to the glory of God.

The breaking of bread is also a fellowship meal, a meal Jesus Himself was very much looking forward to having with His disciples. It strengthens fellowship with Jesus and between the believers, and will be an additional reminder of our covenant of discipleship. By breaking a single loaf of bread, we testify that we are all members of one and the same body, and when we drink the wine, we testify that we are partaking of the same suffering that Jesus suffered in His flesh.

We believe that it is essential in the body of Christ to serve one another, without making demands, and to esteem others higher than ourselves. We believe that all members of the body of Christ have an important ministry to help and bless their fellow believers. In this way, the body of Christ becomes a living organism where, through the leading of Christ, who is the head of the body, blessings dispersed to the members and those around us. In a church there are many tasks, and everyone can contribute with their individual talents and their specific gifts of grace, according to the wisdom they are given.

To promote the growth of each member of the body up to the head, Christ has raised up servants who have the same mind as He Himself had to serve and to give. They are those who grow naturally and are gripped by Jesus as Lord and from the life He lived.

They are conformed to be like Him, have passed many tests in life, and have been preserved in the first love to Jesus Christ. In this love, they put their gifts of grace and talents into the ministry to help others grow and connect personally with the head, Christ. These servants themselves stand in personal growth and development in sanctification, and we believe that the exhortation to "take heed to yourself and to the doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:16), is a priority for anyone who receives grace to help build a viable church.

We believe that if we are to make progress in missionary work, then life and doctrine must be consistent. It is a big task to unite different peoples from different backgrounds in the new commandment that Jesus gave His disciples: to love one another as He loved. We believe that when we work in the Spirit it is more blessed to give than to receive, and there will be grace over the work in the mission field. We also believe that the basis for a successful missionary work is both a spiritual and a material work, in line with the way Paul worked.

We practice believers' baptism, which is full immersion baptism in water. We believe that baptism is a solemn testimony before God and man that declares one is entering into a covenant with God, believing in the resurrection power of Jesus. We believe that baptism is an act that denotes when something ends and something new begins. The body of the flesh, the body presented for the service of sin, is to be put off. (Colossians 2:11-12). We believe that baptism is both an inner conviction and a commitment to become a disciple of Jesus, and a physical act that testifies and affirms to all present that this decision is personal and true. Baptism affirms that one will live a crucified life with Him, suffer with Him, and remain faithful in the covenant one has made with Him.

The breaking of bread is a meal of remembrance and fellowship. A memorial to the battles that Jesus fought for us and that which He suffered on our behalf. His sacrificed body is a strong exhortation to us. When we partake in the breaking of the bread, we confess without words that our bodies have also been sacrificed to do God's will, and we proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes. The breaking of bread will strengthen the fellowship between us and serve as a strong reminder of our covenant of discipleship. By breaking a single loaf of bread, we testify that we are all members of one and the same body, and when we drink the wine, we testify that we partake of the same sufferings that He suffered in His flesh. Our interpretation of the Lord's supper essentially corresponds with the Reformed tradition, where the Lord's Supper is a memorial supper with the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ. We place great emphasis on the importance of the Lord's Supper as the true pattern for the believer to follow Christ in their life.

BCC believes that it is necessary to show solidarity with other church communities and defend the freedom of faith and to protect the societal structure that Christianity is able to operate with in our society. We also believe that the other Christian denominations are in need of our support and will benefit from our solidarity. This does not imply that we agree with, or identify with their theological interpretations and principles. But it is with mutual respect and recognition for each community's uniqueness and the variety of ways in which we each can serve the Christian community in an increasingly secularized society.

## Chapter 9 – Christ's Return

### 9 Christ's Return

#### 9.1 The Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ

We believe, as Jesus Himself and the apostles expressed, that He will one day return. (Acts 1:11). The day of Jesus' second coming is a day the saints have looked forward to and found comfort in during the many times of tribulation that have passed over The Earth. Many have tried to predict the day, but Jesus Himself said, "Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming ... Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Matthew 24:42, and 44). He comes to carry away those who are ready, those who belong to Him. Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil in their vessels, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. The parable goes on to say that the wise virgins, who were ready, went in with Him to the wedding; and the foolish virgins arrived at a door that was shut. (Matthew Ch. 25).

In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 Paul describes what takes place when the saints are raptured: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed - in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed." Jesus Himself said while He walked upon The Earth, that He was going away to prepare a place for His disciples at home with His Father. He will come again and receive them unto himself, so that where he is, they can be also. If it were not so, I would have told you, Jesus said. (John 14:2-3). These words of comfort and the Spirit of expectation have borne the saints throughout the ages.

Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will first rise. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). Jesus wants those whom God has given Him to be with Him for all eternity. The wedding of the lamb is celebrated in heaven in glory and in joy. "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." (Revelation 19:7-8).

Then these words will be fulfilled: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." (Hebrews 2:13). Then the prayer that Jesus prayed on the last night with his disciples will be fulfilled: "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24).

We believe that after the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated in heaven, Jesus, who is called Faithful and True, will return to Earth with His bride and will establish a millennial kingdom of peace. (Revelation 19:11-16). This time He comes as king of Israel, and takes dominion over all The Earth, and Satan is bound. (Revelation 20:1-3). Law shall go out from Jerusalem. God cooperates with the saints who govern with Christ, establishing peace and righteousness. When the millennium is over, Satan will be released from his prison, and he will go out to deceive the people who live at the four corners of The Earth. (Revelation 20:7-8).

## 9.2 The Final Judgment

There will be a day of accounting for all mankind. John... "saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it... the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." (Revelation 20:11-15). "Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:31). "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead." (Acts 10:42).

The Father has committed all judgment to the Son, and He shall judge the living and the dead with a righteous judgment, and every man shall receive their just reward according to his works. (John 5:22, 28-29). For of the Son He says He "has put all things under His feet". "But when He says 'all things are put under His feet,' it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:27-28). Such was Jesus' humble mind toward His Father in His pre-existent state, in His incarnation as Son of Man, and He is the same for all eternity. (Hebrews 13:8).

## 9.3 Eternal Life

Eternal life is a life outside of time, without beginning and without end. We believe that the thief who acknowledged his guilt on the cross also partook of eternal life in Paradise, by the remission of sins, through being cleansed by the blood of Jesus on Calvary. Those who are disciples of Jesus and are sanctified by walking in Jesus' footsteps have rich promises of eternal life with the Father and the Son. He who overcomes even as He has overcome shall sit with Him on His throne. Those who share the cup with Him will sit at His table in His kingdom. (Matthew 20:22). Those who suffer with Him shall be glorified with Him.

Now all will see a new heaven and a new Earth, the new Jerusalem came down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying (Revelation 21:1-5). We believe in the restoration of all things, and all that entered in through Satan and The Fall will be blotted out forever, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on Earth... (Ephesians 1:10).

## 9.4 Doctrinal Summary

We believe that Jesus will one day return to carry away those who are ready, those who belong to Him, and carry them away to be with Him. The bride has made herself ready, and the wedding of the Lamb is to be celebrated in heaven. After this wedding, Jesus and His Saints return to Earth to establish a kingdom of peace—a millennial kingdom.

When the thousand years are at an end, the final judgment comes. We believe, as God's Word says, that there will be an accounting on that day for all mankind. The Father has committed to the Son all the judgment, and He shall judge the living and the dead with a righteous judgment, and every man will receive the things done in the body, accordingly, whether good or bad. We believe in the restoration of all things back to the harmony that was from the beginning. Those who, in their mortal life, partook of sanctification by walking in His footsteps and thereby partaking of His life, will be like living stones in God's building. (Revelation 21:9-11).

Now all will see a new heaven and a new Earth, the new Jerusalem came down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying (Revelation 21:1-5). We believe in the restoration of all things, and all that entered in through Satan and The Fall will be

blotted out forever, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ.

"Time" has now past, and eternity continues.



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