

**DOCTRINAL STATEMENT**

**OF**

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## BIBLIOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

**REVELATION:** I believe that God has intentionally revealed himself to man in two main ways: through general revelation and through special revelation. General revelation, or natural theology, is God's making himself known to all mankind through his creation. The creation displays God's glory (Ps 19:1-6) and goodness (Acts 14:17), and it renders man accountable by revealing to them his invisible attributes and making them "without excuse" (Rom 1:18-23). God has also created man with a conscience that accuses him when he violates God's law (Rom 2:14-16). The content of general revelation, however, is insufficient to bring man to salvation. That requires special revelation, which is God's revealing himself verbally and propositionally to man. In the past, God revealed himself through dreams (Gen 20:3), visions (Ezek 1:1-3), theophanies (Gen 18:1), angels (Dan 9:21-22), and prophets (Judges 6:8). The incarnation of Jesus Christ was the culmination of special revelation as he "explained" the Father (John 1:18). Today, God has preserved his special revelation to man in the Bible (2 Tim 3:15-17).

**INSPIRATION:** I believe that *inspiration* is God's sovereignly moving human writers to pen the words of Scripture so that what they wrote are the very words of God (2 Pet 1:20-21). I believe that the Scripture is inspired because it claims to come from God himself (2 Pet 1:20-21). In addition, the early church in Acts testified that God spoke by the mouths of the prophets (Acts 3:18). The Old Testament repeatedly claims to have its source from God himself (Isa 16:13). Inspiration extends to only the canon of Scripture (the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament) in the *autographs*, the original manuscripts on which the biblical writers penned their writings. Neither copies of the autographs nor translations of the autographs are inspired.

I believe in *verbal-plenary* inspiration. *Plenary* means that every part of the Bible and every subject with which it deals is equally inspired (Matt 4:4). *Verbal* means that the exact words that the human authors of Scripture wrote are the words that the Holy Spirit himself selected (Gal 3:16). The Holy Spirit, however, did not dictate his words to the biblical writers, except in those places in which the text clearly indicates that he does so (for example, Ex 20:1). The Holy Spirit usually used the background and personality of each of the writers of Scripture in the recording of his words, thus giving each book of the Bible unique and idiosyncratic styles and vocabulary. All of Scripture is God's propositional revelation of himself to mankind.

**INERRANCY:** I believe that because Scripture is the inspired word of God, it is also *infallible* and *inerrant* in its entirety, not only in matters of faith and practice but also in matters of science and history (John 10:35). Because the Bible contains no errors, every alleged discrepancy in the Bible has a satisfactory solution, although we may not always be able to discern the correct answer due to a lack of information or because of the limitations of the human mind. Because Scripture is the word of God it also has *authority* over us and *sufficiency* for us (2 Pet 1:3). The words of God in the Bible have the only right to tell us what to believe and how to obey, and they alone have ultimate authority in instructing us how we may "glorify God and enjoy him forever." Although the Bible is limited in what it communicates, it is completely sufficient and contains exactly what God has seen fit to convey to us.

**THE CANON:** I believe that God's words to his people today have been preserved in the 66 books of the Old and New Testament canons, those books recognized to be inspired and authoritative. Jesus indicated that he recognized the entire *Old Testament* as part of the canon during a conversation with the Jewish religious leaders when he notes that the leaders are guilty of shedding the blood of the prophets, "from the blood of Abel [Gen 4:8] to the blood of Zechariah [2 Chron 24:21]," from the first book to the last book of the Old Testament, according to the book order in the Hebrew Bible (Luke 11:51). After his resurrection, Jesus affirmed that the entire Old Testament ("the Law of Moses," "the Prophets," and "the Psalms") authoritatively predicted his ministry, and he calls it "the Scriptures," that is, the authoritative "writings" (Luke 24:44-45). The New Testament regularly quotes from the Old Testament, assuming its authority, citing every Old Testament book except for Esther, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon (e.g. Matt 9:13 quotes Hosea 6:6).

In the *New Testament*, the biblical authors recognized their writings to be "Scripture." The Apostle Paul quotes from Deut 25:4 and Luke 10:7, and he introduces his quotations with "the Scripture says," putting New Testament writing on par with Old Testament revelation (1 Tim 5:18). Paul himself claimed that the words he wrote had the authority of "the Lord," "Christ," and "God" (1 Thess 2:13). Peter, one of the Twelve, also includes Paul's writings in the category of "the Scriptures" (2 Pet 3:15-16).

Each of the 66 books of the Bible has been part of the canon of Scripture ever since they were written. Man's role in the process of canonization is *recognition*. Christians have not decided which books are part of the canon, but they have acknowledged which books belong. The canon is closed, and there are and will be no additions to inspired Scripture. Jesus Christ himself is God's final revelation to man in these "last days," and God has chosen those who witnessed and heard

Jesus to testify to the salvation that comes through him (Heb 2:1-4). With the death of the final witness of Jesus' life and teaching, the New Testament canon has been closed.

**PRESERVATION:** I believe that God has providentially *preserved* Scripture for man. Multiple places affirm the permanence of God's words (Matt 24:35). The testimony of history also attests to God's preservation of his word, and we possess thousands of hand-copied manuscripts of Scripture. To the extent that the copies and translations faithfully reflect the autographs, they can be called the word of God. I believe that the Masoretic textual tradition of the Old Testament is generally reliable. For the New Testament, I believe that we should consider textual evidence from all families of manuscripts, including the Byzantine or Majority Text and the Alexandrian Text, with older manuscripts receiving preference. Thus, I prefer an eclectic or critical Greek text of the New Testament over the Textus Receptus.

**BIBLE TRANSLATION:** I believe the most helpful approach to the translation of Scripture is the *formal equivalence* approach in which the translator attempts to retain both the form and the thought of the original as much as possible without obscuring the author's meaning or intention (e.g., KJV, NKJV, ESV, NASB). Translations from a *dynamic* or *functional equivalence* approach (e.g., NIV, NET, HCSB) may be helpful for a reading that aims for understanding the big ideas of Scripture, but they lose their helpfulness for more detailed study on the grammatical level.

**INTERPRETATION:** I believe that because Scripture is God's inspired word to us, he intends for us to understand it. Thus, I believe in the *perspicuity* of Scripture, meaning that it is clear and understandable in all it says. Full and accurate understanding of the Bible, however, requires the Holy Spirit's work of *illumination*, in which he opens the minds of believers to comprehend his word (John 16:13).

We should interpret the Bible according to the principles of *grammatical-historical hermeneutics*, sometimes called "literal" hermeneutics, in which we read the Bible as normal human communication, seeking for the inspired author's original intent. This method of interpretation considers the language, the context, and the genre of each passage ("grammatical"), as well as its historical background and context ("historical"), a process called *exegesis*. I believe that God's revelation has not come to man all at once, but God has revealed himself *progressively* over hundreds of years, beginning with God's message through Moses and ending with his words through John the apostle (*progressive revelation*).

I believe that the *theme of the Bible* is the kingdom of God. It recounts God's work of restoring his kingdom and its citizens to the full end for which they were created, his own glory (Eph 1:7-14). Thus, the purpose of the Bible is to reveal to man God's person, character, and ways and his plans to redeem man for God's kingdom and glory. I approach the Bible from a generally *dispensational* interpretational framework. Within the spectrum of dispensational viewpoints, I would most closely align myself with the position commonly known as progressive dispensationalism, sometimes called moderate dispensationalism. In contrast with covenant theology, I believe that there is a distinction between Israel and the church, that God still has a plan for national Israel, and that the many promises made to Israel that are still unfulfilled will be fulfilled during the Millennium. In contrast with classical and traditional dispensationalism, however, I believe that Christ has already inaugurated the new covenant, that he has inaugurated the Messianic kingdom, and that right now he is ruling in heaven as the promised Davidic King. The new covenant and the Messianic kingdom will find their full and ultimate fulfillment when Christ personally returns to earth to rule in the Millennium.

## **THEOLOGY PROPER: THE DOCTRINE OF GOD**

**THE EXISTENCE OF GOD:** I believe that God has sufficiently proved his existence to man through the conscience (Rom 2:14-16), through creation (Rom 1:20), and through history (Dan 4:35). In addition to the general revelation of God's existence, however, theologians have developed five major "proofs" for God's existence, although these are of only very limited value in apologetics. Logical proofs for God's existence will not ultimately convince unbelieving man of God's reality and of his authority. Only the Holy Spirit can convince man by working in his mind and in his heart. Proofs can, however, be useful in strengthening a believer's faith.

**THE NATURE OF GOD:** I believe that God reveals his nature through his *attributes*, those essential characteristics and qualities that belong to God and help define who he is and distinguish him from all other beings. Some of God's attributes emphasize his *greatness*. God is *sovereign* and is the supreme ruler of the entire universe (Ps 115:3). God is infinite in multiple ways. He is *eternal*, having no beginning and no ending and having no prior cause (Ps 90:2). He is *omnipotent*, all powerful and able to do anything that is in harmony with his nature (Matt 19:26). He is *omnipresent*, meaning that he is completely present everywhere all the time (Ps 139:7-12). He is *omniscient*, knowing all things: past, present, and future, actual or potential (Ps 139:1-4). God is *immutable*. He does not and cannot change but is always consistent

(Mal 3:6). Instances in which God seems to change reflects a shift, not in God, but in man's moving into a different relationship with God (Jer 26:3).

Some of God's attributes emphasize his *goodness*. God possesses *holiness of purity*, meaning that he is separate and free from all that is sinful, evil, or unclean (Hab 1:13). God is *righteous*, always doing what is right as defined by his own character (Deut 32:4). God is *just*, meaning that he rules the world according to his righteousness (Ps 99:4). This means that he repays wrongdoers with punishment and wrath (Rom 1:18) and those who do right with reward (Ps 58:11). God is *truthful*, always speaking what is accurate, and he does not and cannot lie (Num 23:19). Because God is truthful, God is also *faithful*, which means that he proves true, and he always keeps his word (1 Thess 5:24). God is *loving*, and his love expresses itself in his pursuing our good (1 John 4:8-10). God pursues our good by being *merciful*, by extending compassion and forgiveness to us in our need (2 Cor 1:3), and by being *gracious*, by showing us undeserved and unmerited favor (Ex 34:6).

I believe that God is a *person* in that he possesses all the characteristics of persons, such as self-awareness, will, feelings, and relationality (Gen 3:8-14 – relationship with Adam and Eve). God's personality is a demonstration of his *immanence*, his presence with and involvement with his creation, to the extent that he is the one responsible for holding the world together (Col 1:17). Although he is immanent, however, God is still *transcendent*, distinct and separate from his creation. Although God is a person, he is *spirit*, not corporeal or physical (John 4:24). Despite his spirituality, however, Scripture often speaks of God as having "hands" (Isa 59:1), "eyes" (2 Chron 16:9), "ears" (Ps 34:15), a "face" (Ps 11:7), etc. This use of human body parts applied to God is commonly and traditionally called *anthropomorphism*, portraying God in human terms in order to explain God's actions and responses, although God does not actually have those body parts. I would differ, however, from this traditional understanding. I believe that God, as spirit, can and does have literal, although not physical, "hands," "eyes," "ears," and a "face." The literal reality of these entities does not require that they have physicality.

I believe that there is only one God (his *unity*) and that he is an indivisible being (his *simplicity*; Deut 6:4; Isa 43:10-11). The Bible also teaches that God exists in three persons (2 Cor 13:14), and it clearly identifies each of these persons as God: God the Father (John 6:27), God the Son (John 1:1), and God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4). This is the doctrine of the *Trinity*, which affirms God's *triunity*, his being three in one. I believe that the Bible distinguishes these three persons by their personal interactions with one another (*ontological Trinity*, sometimes called "immanent Trinity"; see Heb 1:8-10 and John 15:26) and by their separate works (*economical Trinity*; see Eph 1:3-5; 1 Pet 1:18-19; Tit 3:5; Acts 1:8; and Gal 5:22-23). Although they are three separate persons, they still constitute one, indivisible being (John 10:30), and as part of one unified being, they are the same in substance or essence, and they are equal in power and glory.

**THE DESIGNATIONS OF GOD:** I believe that God the Father is the *Father* of the Lord Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, whom he gave to be the Redeemer of the world (John 3:16). God becomes the Father of those who trust in his Son, Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins (1 John 2:1, 12). The Father sends the Holy Spirit as our "Helper" (παράκλητος – Advocate, Comforter, or Counselor), whom he sends in the name of his Son (John 14:26).

I believe that God's personal name is *Yahweh* ("Jehovah"; יהוה), typically translated "the LORD" (Ex 3:15). This name highlights God's self-existence and eternity (Ex 3:14-15) and his covenant relationship with Israel (Ex 24:7). Combinations of this name include "Yahweh God" (Gen 2:4) and "Yahweh Sabaoth," a name that identifies God as the Yahweh of "armies" (1 Sam 15:2).

The Bible uses many titles for God. The word "*God*" is technically not a personal name but a designation that identifies deity. It is very often used in combination with his personal name, identifying Yahweh as the one true deity (Gen 2:4). *God* often combines with other adjectives to form titles such as *El Shaddai*, which means "God Almighty" and portrays God as omnipotent and all powerful (Gen 17:1). *El Elyon* means "God Most High" and highlights God's transcendence and sovereignty (Gen 14:18-22). *El Olam* means "Everlasting God" and emphasizes God's eternity and infinitude (Gen 21:33; Isa 40:28). The word *Lord* is a title identifying God as Master (Judg 13:8). It often occurs in conjunction with *Yahweh* (1 Kgs 2:26).

## THE WORKS OF GOD

**Creation:** I believe that God worked through Christ (Heb 1:2) to create the universe in six literal days, just as it is described in the book of Genesis (Gen 1-2). See "Anthropology" below.

**God's Preservation and Providence:** I believe that the present existence of creation is due to God's providential act of *preservation* (Col 1:17). God protects his creation from harm and destruction, and he also provides for the needs of what he has created. I believe that God directs his creation and governs the course of history to fulfill his purposes (Dan 4:35). I

believe that part of God's providential work includes *miracles*, remarkable events that seem to contradict the normal laws of nature. God works miracles through simple acts of declaration (the flood, Gen 7:4, 10-12), through human agency (Elisha cleansing bad water, 2 Kgs 2:19-22), and through Christ (feeding of the 5,000, Matt 14:15-21). Although miracles serve many other subordinate purposes, the ultimate purpose of miracles is to glorify God (John 2:11) and to authenticate God's revelation (Heb 2:3-4).

**God and Prayer:** Although God is sovereign and omniscient and directs the whole of creation and history according to the good pleasure of his will, God still commands man to pray (1 Tim 2:8). God uses prayer to accomplish his purposes (Jas 5:16), and he may choose not to act if humans do not play their part in prayer (Jas 4:2). Prayer is a demonstration of our submission to God's will and our reliance on him for everything.

**God and Sin:** Although God is not the cause of sin (Jas 1:13), the sinful actions of humans still lie within his governing activity. Many times God prevents sin, but other times he permits sin to occur. Sometimes God limits sins. Sometimes God so orchestrates events so that good comes out of the sinful actions of human beings. An illustration of this aspect of God's governing work is apparent in the story of Joseph in Genesis (Gen 37-47).

## CHRISTOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

**DEFINITION:** I believe that God the Son is Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father. Scripture describes him as "the only begotten from the Father" (John 1:14) and "the radiance of his glory and the exact representation of his nature" (Heb 1:3). The Father sent the Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14).

**HIS DEITY:** I believe that Jesus Christ is fully God. *First*, Scripture repeatedly calls Jesus "God" (Tit 2:13). *Second*, Scripture applies to Christ Old Testament references to Yahweh (compare Isa 6:1-10 with John 12:39-41). *Third*, Jesus receives designations that identify him as God. On several occasions, Jesus identified himself as the "*I Am*" (ἐγὼ εἰμὶ), echoing God's name for himself in Ex 3:14 (John 8:28). *Fourth*, the New Testament ascribes to Jesus divine attributes such as eternity (John 8:58), omnipotence (Matt 8:26-27), omnipresence (Matt 28:20), omniscience (John 2:23-25), and sinlessness (Heb 4:15). *Fifth*, the Bible credits Jesus with the works of God, such as creation (John 1:3), physical preservation (Col 1:17), ability to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-12), working miracles (John 20:30-31), and judgment (John 5:22-23). *Finally*, Jesus receives worship appropriate only for God to receive, and he even asserts that not honoring him is to not honor the Father (John 5:23).

**HIS HUMANITY:** I believe that Jesus Christ is fully human. *First*, the Bible plainly and explicitly states that Jesus is human (1 Tim 2:5). *Second*, Jesus receives designations that identify him as human, such as "the Son of Man." This title, while it strongly argues for Jesus' deity by its reference to Dan 7:13, it also clearly alludes to his nature as a "man." *Third*, Jesus possessed physical, human lineage, as demonstrated by the genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 and by his identity as the "son of David" (Matt 9:27). *Finally*, Jesus underwent all of the experiences of humans. He grew and developed as a man (Luke 2:52), he experienced emotion as a man (John 11:35), and he suffered and grew weary as a man (John 4:6). Those around him clearly perceived him to be a man (Matt 13:54-58).

**HIS INCARNATION:** I believe that Jesus Christ was *born of a virgin*, Mary, a woman who had never been married before conceiving (Luke 1:26-27, 34-35). The Bible teaches that her conception of Jesus came from the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18). Christ did not come into existence at his birth nor at his conception, for he has always existed as God. The conception of Christ, rather, marks the *incarnation* of God the Son, the point at which he took on human flesh (John 1:14) and received the name "Jesus" (Matt 1:21).

I believe that ever since his incarnation, Jesus Christ has possessed *two natures*, divine and human, but he remains one undivided person (the *hypostatic union*; 1 Tim 2:5). The hypostatic union means that Jesus is the God-Man, the Theanthropic Person, fully God and fully man. I believe that Christ's incarnation involved *kenosis* ("emptying"; Phil 2:7). When Christ emptied himself by taking on "the form of a servant" and "being born in the likeness of men," he did not surrender his deity but rather laid aside his position (John 17:5) and prerogatives (Matt 4:3-6) as God, voluntarily giving up the rights that belong to deity. I do not believe that Christ emptied himself of his attributes of deity but only of the independent use of those attributes. I believe in the *impeccability* of Jesus Christ, his complete and total sinlessness (Heb 4:15). Christ was inherently free from sin and irreversibly holy (Heb 7:26). It means that not only was Christ able not to sin, but he was not able to sin, in keeping with Jesus's identity as God incarnate. His temptation by the devil was real and genuine (Matt 3), but there was no possibility that he would succumb. This is part of the mystery of Christ's dual natures in one person.

## HIS WORKS

**Preincarnate Works:** I believe that before his incarnation, Christ worked with the Father to create the world (John 1:3). Before his incarnation as Jesus, Christ was also involved in the work of revelation as the *Angel of Yahweh* (Gen 22:11). The Angel of Yahweh distinguishes himself from Yahweh, speaking of Yahweh in third person (Gen 16:11), but at the same time the Angel is identified as “Yahweh” and “God” (Gen 16:13). These preincarnate appearances of Christ are called “Christophanies.”

**First Advent Works:** I believe that Christ’s first advent, that is, his first coming, involved both humiliation and exaltation. Christ’s *humiliation* refers to his birth and life as a human being, his suffering under God’s wrath, his death, and his burial. Christ’s *exaltation* refers to his resurrection, ascension, and session at the Father’s right hand, and his future role in the eschatological events at the end of the age. I believe the primary purpose for Christ’s incarnation is the salvation of the world (1 John 4:14), a work which he accomplishes through the mediatorial (1 Tim 2:5) offices of prophet, priest, and king to which he has been anointed by the Father. Jesus is the *Christ* (Χριστός, from χρίω), meaning “Anointed One.” The Hebrew equivalent of “Christ” is “Messiah” (מָשִׁיחַ, from מָשַׁח). Jesus’s work as a *prophet* means that he reveals to us the will of God (Heb 1:1-2). As a *priest*, Jesus offers up himself as the once-for-all sacrifice to satisfy God’s wrath and reconcile us to God and to make intercession for us (Heb 7:24-27). In Jesus’s office of *king*, he successfully rules over his kingdom, not only over those who have submitted to his rule but also over those who continue to rebel (1 Cor 15:24-26).

I believe that through his death, Jesus Christ accomplished the priestly work of *atonement*, the righteous reconciliation of sinful man to God to rescue them from his just wrath and judgment (Rom 5:8). I believe that Christ’s death is a *ransom* (Mark 10:45), but it is a ransom paid to God to appease his wrath. I believe that Christ’s death was a one-time, once-for-all sacrifice to compensate for sins committed by mankind (*expiation*; Heb 10:5-18) and to appease God’s wrath against sin (*propitiation*; Rom 5:9). His death is a *vicarious* or *substitutionary* atonement, a death provided for us (ὐπέρ; Rom 5:6-8) and in our place (ἀντί; Matt 20:28). Thus, Christ’s death is a *penal substitutionary* death, meaning that in his death, Christ took the penalty that sinners deserve, as their substitute, dying in their place (Matt 20:28). Christ’s death makes possible the *reconciliation* of God and man (Rom 5:10). See “Soteriology” below.

I believe that on the third day after Christ was crucified, God raised him from the dead in an actual, physical, *bodily resurrection* (Acts 3:15). Without Christ’s resurrection, our faith would be vain, we would have no forgiveness of sins, and there would be no future resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12-19). Forty days after his resurrection, Christ ascended to heaven to the Father, and one day in the future Christ will return to earth in the same way that he left (Acts 1:3, 9-11).

**Present Works:** I believe that after his ascension into heaven, Jesus Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father, where he still remains today (Eph 1:20-23). This “sitting” is called Christ’s *session*, and it signifies the completion of his justifying work and the authority he exercises over all things. I believe that Christ continues to sustain the creation he brought into being (Heb 1:3). Christ’s ministry in his three offices continues today. As king, he is presently active as the head of the church, which is his body (Col 1:18). I believe that right now, at the right hand of God the Father, Christ is interceding as a priest for believers (Rom 8:34). He is presenting his righteousness to the Father for our justification, our sanctification, and for protection from the accusations of Satan. As our prophet, Christ continues to speak to us in the Bible.

**Second Advent Works:** I believe that when Christ returns to earth at his second advent, his works will involve judging (John 5:27-29) and ruling the world as its king (Rev 19:11-21). See “Eschatology” below. As the one who is “the radiance of the glory of God,” Christ forever reveals the Father as a prophet (Heb 1:3). As a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, he remains a priest sitting at the right hand of God (Heb 7:21; 10:12).

## PNEUMATOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

### HIS PERSONALITY

I believe that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person in that he possesses *personal attributes*. He listens as a person (John 16:13), he communicates as a person (John 15:26), and he experiences emotion as a person (Eph 4:30). The Holy Spirit possesses *personal characteristics* such as intelligence (John 14:26) and will (1 Cor 12:11). It is possible to sin against the Holy Spirit by lying to him (Acts 5:3), testing him (Acts 5:9), resisting him (Acts 7:51), quenching him (1 Thess 5:19), or insulting him (Heb 10:29). It is also possible to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, and the person who does so, “never has forgiveness” (Matt 12:31). I believe that *blasphemy against the Holy Spirit* is ascribing to Satan the work of

the Spirit. A person who reaches the point of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit rejects God's saving power through the Spirit and will never receive the forgiveness of sins that comes from true repentance.

The Holy Spirit's *personal works* also argue for his personality. The Holy Spirit teaches (John 14:26), testifies about Christ (John 15:26), guides into all truth (John 16:13), convicts (John 16:8), regenerates (Tit 3:5), intercedes (Rom 8:26-27), and commands (Acts 8:29). The Holy Spirit also possesses *personal designations*. The New Testament uses masculine pronouns (ἐκεῖνος) to refer antecedently to the Spirit (πνεῦμα, πνεύματος, τό), rather than using neuter pronouns (ἐκεῖνο) as normal grammar usage would require (John 16:13), thus attributing personality to the Holy Spirit. Jesus uses the personal designation "Helper" (παράκλητος) when he speaks of the Holy Spirit to his disciples (John 14:16).

### **HIS DEITY**

I believe that the Holy Spirit is fully God because the Bible uses *divine designations* in referring to him. Acts 5:3-4 uses "Holy Spirit" and "God" interchangeably. First Cor 3:16 speaks of believers being "God's temple," but they are indwelt by "God's Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19). Rom 8:9-11 refers to the Holy Spirit as both the "Spirit of God" and as the "Spirit of Christ." The Holy Spirit also performs *divine works*. He is involved in creation (Job 33:4), inspiration (2 Pet 1:21), the virgin conception (Luke 1:35), regeneration (Tit 3:5), and resurrection (Rom 8:11). The Holy Spirit possesses *divine attributes*. The Holy Spirit is omnipotent (Rom 15:19), omniscient (Is 40:13-14), omnipresent (Ps 139:7-10), and eternal (Heb 9:14). Finally, the Holy Spirit has *divine relationships*, equal to the other members of the Trinity (1 Cor 12:4-6).

### **HIS WORKS**

I believe that in Old Testament times, the Spirit was involved in *creation* (Ps 104:30). Second, he was responsible for *inspiration* of Scripture (2 Sam 23:2). Third, the Holy Spirit *anointed* or *empowered* people for certain tasks, such as leadership (Joshua, Num 27:18) or self-defense (Samson, Judg 14:5-6). I do not believe that the Holy Spirit permanently indwelt Old Testament believers (Joel 2:28-29), but he most certainly worked *sanctification* in their lives (Neh 9:20).

I believe the Holy Spirit was active in a special way in the life of Christ. First, the *conception of Christ by the virgin* Mary was a direct act of the Spirit (Matt 1:18, 20). Second, the Holy Spirit *filled* Jesus to direct him in his ministry (Luke 4:1). Third, the Holy Spirit *anointed* and *empowered* Jesus for ministry (Luke 4:14-21).

In the life of the Christian, the Holy Spirit works in accordance with the promises of the new covenant by teaching and transforming the heart, resulting in forgiveness of sins (Jer 31:31-34). First, the Holy Spirit works *conviction* (John 16:8-11), convincing man of his sin and awakening his consciousness to his guilt. The Spirit grants spiritual life (*regeneration*) to believers, setting them free from sin and death (Rom 8:2). Third, in the *baptism of the Holy Spirit*, Jesus Christ baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit, which results in the coming of the Spirit upon believers (Acts 1:5) and in union with Christ and his body (Rom 6:4-5). Fourth, the Holy Spirit permanently *indwells* all those who belong to Christ (Rom 8:9). By indwelling them, the Holy Spirit also *seals* believers (Eph 1:13), marking them as his own possession, and his very presence in them is a *down payment* (2 Cor 1:22), guaranteeing their future ultimate redemptive inheritance in the full expression of Christ's kingdom (Eph 1:13-14). Sixth, the Holy Spirit *teaches* believers, opening their minds to comprehend his words (1 Cor 2:9-16). This is his work of *illumination*, an "anointing" from the Holy Spirit which actually is the Spirit who provides knowledge and teaches us about everything (1 John 2:20, 27). The Holy Spirit also *sanctifies* believers, setting them apart as belonging to him (2 Thess 2:13), and then he continues to work in them to make them more holy in character and lifestyle (Rom 8:13). Another work of the Holy Spirit is his *interceding* in prayer for the saints in their weakness according to God's will (Rom 8:26-27). The Holy Spirit *empowers* believers, energizing them with the ability to minister (1 Cor 12:11).

A final work of the Holy Spirit is his granting *spiritual gifts* (1 Cor 12:11). I believe that spiritual gifts are special abilities of service given by the Spirit to believers for the benefit and edification of the body (1 Cor 12:4-7). The Holy Spirit has granted to each believer a spiritual gift (1 Pet 4:10). Some of the gifts, such as teaching (Rom 12:7), are permanent and are still employed in the church. Other gifts, such as the working of miracles and healing (1 Cor 12:9-10), sometimes called *sign gifts*, were temporary and are no longer in use. I believe that sign gifts are temporary because, *first*, a major purpose of miraculous gifts seems to have originally been the authentication of new special revelation, particularly through the apostles (Heb 2:3-4), and since God's revelation to us is complete for the current age, there is no longer any need to authenticate any additional revelation. *Second*, there is very little evidence throughout church history that believers have commonly practiced the miraculous sign gifts.

## ANGELOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

### ANGELS

**The Creation and Nature of Angels:** I believe that angels are beings *created* (Ps 148:2, 5) before the earth (Job 38:6-7), who serve “those who will inherit salvation” (Heb 1:13-14). Angels are *immortal*, for Scripture indicates that people who “cannot die anymore” are “like angels” (Luke 20:36). They are also *personal* beings, with intelligence (1 Pet 1:12), emotion (Rev 12:17), and will (Jude 6). They can understand and communicate with humans (Zech 1:9), with each other (Zech 1:11), and with God (Zech 1:12-13). Scripture describes angels and their fallen, demonic counterparts as *spirits*, in contrast with flesh and blood (Heb 1:14). I believe that angels are *superior to man* in their knowledge and power (2 Pet 2:11). One single angel who glowed as bright as lightning single-handedly rolled away the stone from the tomb after Christ rose from the dead (Matt 2:2-5). The demonic angels that possessed the men of Gadara supernaturally empowered them to break any chains or shackles with which they were bound (Luke 8:29) and made them so fierce that no one could come near (Matt 8:28).

Despite their power, however, angels possess neither omniscience nor omnipotence. Angels “long to look” into God’s plan of the outworking of the gospel (1 Pet 1:12), and they learn of God’s wisdom through his work with the church (Eph 3:10). They do not act unilaterally but are submitted to God’s authority (Jude 9). Someday, we ourselves will judge angels (1 Cor 6:3). I believe that all angels were originally holy. Jude 6 seems to teach that God originally gave all angels positions of authority under him, but when some angels rebelled by leaving those positions, God bound them and promised judgment (2 Pet 2:4). The angels who have retained their original holiness are perhaps the “elect angels” of which Paul speaks (2 Tim 5:21).

**The Classifications of Angels:** I believe that there are a vast number of angels, described as “myriads” (Heb 12:22). The Bible identifies different rankings of angels, such as the angel Michael, identified as “the archangel,” perhaps the highest angelic ranking (Jude 9). He is “one of the chief princes” (Dan 10:13), along with perhaps the angel Gabriel (cf. Dan 9:21). Among the host of angels, good and bad, there are “rulers,” “authorities,” “world-rulers of this darkness,” and “spirit-forces of evil” (Eph 3:10; 6:12). Apparently, some angels have influence over earthly governments, such as the evil angel of the kingdom of Persia who opposed Gabriel and Michael (Dan 10:13). The Bible classifies some angels as “cherubim” (Ezek 10:15-20) and others as “seraphim” (Isa 2:6-7), and each seem to play different roles. Rev 4:6-8 mentions four angels it calls “living creatures” which are similar in appearance to the cherubim Ezekiel saw.

**The Ministries of Angels:** I believe that angels perform a variety of ministries. *First*, they continually praise, worship, serve, and glorify God (Job 38:7). *Second*, they reveal and communicate God’s message to humans (Acts 7:53). Angels *also* are involved in the governance of nations. The angel Michael stands over the Jewish people (Dan 12:1), while Gabriel strengthened Darius the Mede (Dan 11:1). *Fourth*, angels minister to believers (Heb 1:14). Specifically, God uses them to answer believers’ prayers (Acts 12:5-10), to protect them (Ps 34:7), to encourage them (Acts 27:23-25), to guide them (Acts 8:26), and to accompany them at death (Luke 16:22). A *fifth* function of angels is executing judgment on the enemies of God (2 Kings 19:35). *Finally*, they will be involved in Christ’s second coming, appearing with him in glory (Matt 25:31).

### SATAN

I believe that Satan is an angel (Job 1:6) who became puffed up with pride (1 Tim 3:6) and fell and who seeks to “devour” Christians (1 Pet 5:8). Ezek 28:11-19 and Isa 14:12-14 may describe Satan’s fall as they speak of the evil energizing force behind the kings of Babylon and Tyre. I believe that Satan was created a perfectly good being (Ezek 28:15). He perhaps inhabited heaven with God (Isa 14:12) as “the guardian cherub” (Ezek 28:16) and “the morning star” (Isa 14:12; KJV, “Lucifer,” from the transliteration of the Latin Vulgate translation of לְלִיָּהּ), but God cast him out when he sinned (Ezek 28:15-17). Satan was present in the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent and was responsible for tempting Eve, which led to the introduction of sin into the human race (Rom 5:12).

Through the death of Christ on the cross, God destroys Satan and his works (Heb 2:14). During the Tribulation, Satan will be cast down to the earth (Rev 12:9), but when Christ returns at the beginning of the Millennium, an angel will lock him in the abyss where he is bound with a chain for 1,000 years (Rev 20:1-3). When the 1,000 years are ended, Satan is released from the abyss and is allowed to gather an army from the nations of earth to stage a confrontation with the saints (Rev 20:7-9). God sends down fire from heaven to consume Satan and casts him into the lake of fire where he will remain for eternity (Rev 20:9-10). See eschatology below.

**Satan’s Works:** I believe that Satan works to *oppose* God. His very name “Satan” means “adversary.” As “the great red dragon,” he opposed the birth of Christ (Rev 12:3-4). As “Belial,” Satan has no shared interests, no agreement, with Christ

(2 Cor 6:15). His name “Beelzebul” identifies him as the prince of the demons, whom Satan uses to oppose God’s work (Matt 12:24-26). Not only is he the prince of the demons, but Satan is also the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph 2:2) and the “ruler of this world,” the world order that is opposed to God (John 12:31). Satan accomplishes his work of opposing God largely by deception, often counterfeiting God’s work (John 8:44). Satan and his servants often disguise themselves, Satan appearing as an angel of light and his servants appearing as servants of righteousness (2 Cor 11:14-15). He is able to demonstrate supernatural power and perform false signs and wonders to deceive the wicked (2 Thess 2:9-10). In addition to opposing God, Satan exerts considerable influence in the world by *blinding* and *energizing* unbelievers (2 Cor 4:4). He also seeks to “devour” and hinder believers (1 Pet 5:8) and to *tempt* them to sin (1 Thess 3:5). Satan’s name “Devil” highlights his role as the “*accuser*” of believers before God (Rev 12:9-10). Although Satan is presently allowed to work evil, Christ has won complete victory over him (Heb 2:14-15), and in the end Satan will finally be cast into the lake of fire for eternity (Rev 20:10).

## EVIL ANGELS

I believe that many angels, perhaps one third of the original number of angels (Rev 12:3-4), fell with Satan when he sinned (Jude 6). These fallen angels are *demons* (Matt 8:31), evil (Luke 7:21) or unclean spirits (Matt 10:1). I believe that, as angels of Satan (Matt 25:41), demons carry out his work in engaging in all the forms of temptation and deception he employs. Like Satan, they are intent on opposing God. They inflict disease (Matt 12:22), they oppose God’s people (Eph 6:12), and they deceive (1 Kings 22:22), often promoting false religion (1 Tim 4:1-3). Some demons completely possess some people, something frequently recorded in the gospels (Matt 8:16). I do not believe, however, that demons can possess believers. God promises that he protects his own from being harmed by Satan (1 John 5:18), and Scripture teaches that our body is a temple for the Holy Spirit to indwell (1 Cor 6:19). God, in his good and omnipotent sovereignty, is in control of the activities of demons (Col 2:15) and will eventually sentence them to eternity in the lake of fire with Satan (Matt 25:41). Although spiritual warfare is a reality (Eph 6:12), Scripture does not authorize us to “bind” Satan or exercise authority over demons. Not even the archangel Michael presumed to personally pronounce judgment on Satan (Jude 8-9). Our responsibility is to clothe ourselves in the armor of God (Eph 6:13-18) and to resist the devil as we submit to God and draw near to him (Jas 4:6-8).

## ANTHROPOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

### THE ORIGIN OF MAN

**God’s Creation of Man:** I believe that God created man by a direct act, creating Adam on the sixth day from “the dust of the ground” and creating Eve from one of Adam’s ribs (Gen 1-2). This view, sometimes known as *fiat creationism*, is fully compatible with true science (*fiat*, from the Latin translation of Genesis 1, meaning “let there be”). I believe that with the biblical data we possess, a reasonable estimate of the age of creation would be around 6,000 to 10,000 years.

**God’s Creation of the World:** I believe that God created the universe in six literal days *ex nihilo* (Gen 2:2). That is, he created it by his spoken word (Gen 1:3) without the use of preexisting materials (Rom 4:17). The use of the word אֵרָא supports the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, for it never appears with an object that God works on to make something new. I believe that there is nothing that exists that God did not have a part in (John 1:3). I believe that all three persons of the Godhead participated in the work of creation, with the Father planning the work of creation (1 Cor 8:6), and with the Son (John 1:3) and Spirit mediating and carrying out creation (Ps 104:30).

### The Nature of Man

I believe that God originally created man in his own image (Gen 1:26) and that even fallen man still possesses this image (the *imago dei*; 1 Cor 11:7). It would appear that the “image” and “likeness” of God in man would refer to any way in which man is like God. The image of God in man includes, first, elements of man’s *personality*, such as knowledge (Col 3:10). Second, the image of God in man involves man’s *moral nature*, his endowment with an understanding of what is right and wrong (Eph 4:24). Third, it involves man’s *spiritual nature*, his possession of an immaterial aspect to his person (1 Cor 2:11). Man is also a *relational being*, meaning that he is capable of fellowship with other beings who bear God’s image (Gen 2:20-24). Finally, the image of God in man includes even the *physical aspect* of man (Gen 5:1-3). God created man to be able to produce offspring after his image and likeness, just like God produced man after his image and likeness (Gen 5:3). Damaging man’s physical body damages in some way the image of God in man (Gen 9:6).

I believe that man’s being consists of a material part (the body), and an immaterial part (soul/spirit; 1 Thess 5:23). The immaterial part of man is *multi-faceted* in nature, involving more terminology than simply the soul or spirit, which are

general terms. Man's immaterial essence includes a *heart*, which refers to man's intellect (Matt 15:19-20) and volition (Deut 4:29). Man also possesses a *conscience* which discerns between right and wrong, although fallibly (Tit 1:15). Man has an immaterial *mind*, responsible for understanding and feeling (Luke 24:45), that is defiled in unbelievers (Tit 1:15) but is renewed in believers (Rom 12:2). Man's *flesh* is that non-physical part that is opposed to the will of God (Gal 5:17). Finally, man possesses a *will*, which sometimes motivates good behaviors and sometimes motivates sinful behaviors (Rom 7:15-25). I believe that at death, man's immaterial being continues to exist without the body (Matt 10:28), but at the resurrection he will take on a physical body once again (1 Cor 15:35-55), some destined for eternal reward (Luke 14:14) and others destined for eternal torment (Matt 10:28). Just as God uses secondary means (the parents) to produce the material body of man's offspring, I believe that he also uses this same secondary means to produce their immaterial part as well.

**Man as Male and Female:** I believe that God created man male and female, the two and only two genders which God created (Gen 1:27) and which in some way reflect his image (Gen 5:1-2). God created men and women equally in his image, and they are equal in value, nature, and spiritual status before God (Gal 3:27-28). Both are dependent on and honor each other (1 Cor 11:11-12), and God grants spiritual gifts to both men and women (Acts 2:17). I believe that God has, however, created men and women with different roles. God has ordained a man to be the "head" of his wife, as God the Father is the head of Christ (1 Cor 11:3) and as Christ is the head of the church (Eph 5:23). As the head, the man exercises leadership with a love that reflects the love that Christ has for the church (Eph 5:25-33), showing honor to his wife and living with her in an understanding way (1 Pet 3:7). God has ordained the woman to submit to her husband (Eph 5:22) and to be a helper for her husband (Gen 2:18). This submissive behavior is "fitting in the Lord" (Col 3:18), it functions to help in winning over an unbelieving husband (1 Pet 3:1-6), and it is modeled by the submission that the church has to Christ (Eph 5:24). In the context of the church, the submission of the woman to the man means that women should not exercise authority over men nor engage in a public teaching ministry that involves men (1 Tim 2:11-14).

**Divorce and Remarriage:** I believe that God is clear in Scripture that he hates divorce (Mal 2:14-16), and he commands that husbands and wives must not divorce (1 Cor 7:10-11), for the bond of marriage is broken only by death (1 Cor 7:39). Spouses who are already married to an unbeliever must be willing to stay in that union unless the unbeliever is determined to leave (1 Cor 7:12-16). Marriage to another person while a previous spouse is still living, even though divorced, constitutes adultery (Mark 10:11-12). Any marriage to a divorced individual also constitutes adultery (Matt 5:32). Paul commands spouses who divorce not to remarry (1 Cor 7:10-11). Their only option is to be reconciled with their spouse (1 Cor 7:11). Reconciliation with a first spouse after marriage with a second spouse which is ended either by divorce or death, however, is an abomination to God (Deut 14:1-4). Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:9 seem to perhaps permit divorce in cases involving immorality (cf. Matt 1:18-20). It is ambiguous, however, whether remarriage is allowed in such cases. Personally, I will not participate in or encourage divorce, and I will not perform or encourage remarriage after divorce.

## THE FALL OF MAN

I believe that God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, located in the middle of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:16-17). The purpose of this prohibition was apparently a test to allow them to choose to obey God and eventually to rightfully gain an experiential knowledge of the difference between good and evil, thus "confirming" them in the holiness with which they were created. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God and to gain the knowledge of good and evil illegitimately by eating the fruit that God had commanded them not to eat (Gen 2:6). I believe that because of the fall and disobedience of Adam and Eve, sin has come into the world, and death has spread to all men (Rom 5:12). The introduction of sin has disrupted God's created order of the world (Gen 3:14-19). God cursed the serpent to go on his belly (Gen 3:14), he multiplied the pain of women in childbearing (Gen 3:16), and he cursed the ground so that it produces thorns and thistles and only by pain and sweat will man eat of its produce.

## HAMARTIOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF SIN

### THE SOURCE OF SIN

I believe that man, not God, is responsible for sin and that man's sin arises from within (Jas 1:13-14). Man possesses natural, legitimate, God-given desires, but when he seeks to fulfill those desires in a manner that is contrary to God's will, he sins.

### THE NATURE OF SIN

I believe that sin is any lack of conformity to the will of God in thought, word, action, or nature. Sin is placing anything else, including a man's own will, in the supreme place that belongs to God alone (Jas 1:14-15). The Bible uses numerous

terms to describe sin such as, first, *missing the goal* or way (1 Sam 26:21). In morality, men are not like the stone slingers of Benjamin who could not miss (שׁוּטָוּ; Judg 20:16) their targets, for everyone sins by missing God's goal of what is right (Deut 9:16). Second, sin is *transgression* of God's law or covenant (Rom 4:15). As rulers may break the covenants between them (1 Kgs 15:19), so man is guilty of breaking God's commandments (Ezra 9:14). Third, sin is *crookedness* or *iniquity* (1 Sam 3:14). Even as a person's path may be "crooked" (Lam 3:9), deviating from a straight line, so a person's actions may be crooked, deviating from the straight standard of God's character. Fourth, sin is *lawlessness* or *rebellion* against God (1 John 3:4). Sin is also *godlessness* (Isa 9:17). Finally, sin is *evil* (1 Tim 6:10). Even as God brings down the "evil" of physical destruction on evildoers (Amos 3:6), so sin is a destructive evil (Esth 9:25).

### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

I believe that, despite the presence of evil in the world, God is completely good and is totally sovereign. It would seem that God's goodness would cause him to be willing to prevent evil and that God's omnipotence would give him the ability to eradicate evil, but evil continues to wreak havoc every day. God has allowed evil to continue to exist (*permissive will*), although man's evil actions violate his *directive will* (also known as *preceptive will*). There is no contradiction between these three concepts ([1] God's goodness, [2] God's sovereignty, and [3] the existence of evil), and the Scripture affirms all three.

I believe, *first*, that evil is the result of man's sin, which produced a negative effect on creation, including the existence of death (Gen 2:17), pain in childbearing (Gen 3:16), painful labor (Gen 3:17), and thorns and thistles (Gen 3:18). All of God's creation has thus been enslaved to corruption and waits for the day of its redemption (Rom 8:19-23). *Second*, God created humanity with a free will, without which they would not be genuinely human. Man has the freedom to choose to do evil, which brings untold suffering into the world. Some of this suffering is due to the natural course of sin, such as the physical, psychological, and emotional pain inflicted on both the perpetrator and the victims of murder or rape (e.g. the havoc in King David's family as a result of his sin, 2 Samuel 11-19). Other suffering is due to the reality of living in a fallen world infected by sin, which brings pain on all. *Finally*, we must realize that we are ultimately ignorant of the vastness and incomprehensibility of God's ways (Rom 11:33-36). God can use even evil to work for his ultimate glory (Rom 8:28-29). God's goodness means that he is not the source of evil, nor does he approve of evil, but his omnipotence does not mean that he would or should eradicate evil now. In the end, Christ will abolish death (1 Cor 15:24-26), and he will resurrect his own with glorious, imperishable bodies, unaffected by sin (1 Cor 15:51-57). God will one day create a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Pet 3:13) and that is free of tears, death, mourning, crying, pain, and sinful individuals (Rev 21:1-8).

### ORIGINAL SIN

I believe that *original sin*, also known as *inherited sin*, the *sin nature*, or *indwelling sin*, means that everyone born into the world, with the exception of Jesus Christ, is by his very nature a sinner, with a natural inclination toward sinful behavior (Eph 2:1-3). Man's state of inherited sinfulness affects his entire being (*total depravity*), negatively affecting his intellect (Eph 4:18), his emotions (Rom 1:26), and his will (Rom 6:20). Total depravity does not mean that man is as wicked as possible or engages in every kind of sin, it does not mean that man is unable to perform good or noble deeds (Isa 64:6), nor does it mean that man has no conscience of moral wrong (Rom 2:15). It does mean, however, that man's whole nature stands condemned before God, and he is unable to save himself. Men receive their sinful nature through their parents (thus, "inherited" sin), going all the way back to Adam and Eve and their first sin (Rom 5:12).

### IMPUTED SIN

I believe that, in addition to guilt due to an inherited sin nature, transmitted from Adam through each generation, man is also guilty because of *imputed sin*. Imputed sin is distinct from original sin in that original sin emphasizes sinfulness as being a part of man's nature, while imputed sin emphasizes every man's guilt of Adam's first sin. According to imputed sin, when Adam sinned, all of his descendants shared in his sin and the guilt which it incurred (Rom 5:12-21), the wages of which is death (Rom 6:23). According to the *representative*, or *federal headship*, view of imputed sin, Adam is the representative of all of humanity, and thus his sin is imputed to all of his descendants. Adam acted on the behalf of the entire human race when he sinned against God by disobeying and eating the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. Just as God justly charges (imputes) Christ's righteousness to all believing sinners, so God justly charges Adam's sin to all mankind (Rom 5:12-21).

I believe that those who die before reaching the point of moral accountability by God's mercy escape eternal judgment for the imputation of Adam's sin and receive the benefits of redemption on the basis of Christ's atoning work. This would apply both to those who die in infancy and to those who are severely mentally disabled. The Bible suggests an age of

moral responsibility in various passages, indicating that there is an age before which there is no understanding of right and wrong (Deut 1:39). King David found comfort in the knowledge that he would someday go to and again see the baby whom he lost (2 Sam 12:22-23).

## **PERSONAL SIN**

I believe that any sin makes man guilty before God and worthy of judgment (Jas 2:10-11). There are, however, degrees of sin, in that some sins are more serious than others because of the consequences for the sinner and for others and because of God's especial displeasure with certain sins (Matt 23:23). Scripture speaks of *greater sins* (John 19:11), *least commandments* (Matt 5:19), and *weightier matters of the law* (Matt 23:23). The Old Testament distinguishes between unintentional sins (Lev 4:2) and sins committed "defiantly" (Num 15:30), unintentional sins requiring only a sacrifice (Lev 4:2-35) but defiant sins demanding being "cut off" from the community (Num 15:30). A person's responsibility can have an impact on the seriousness of a particular sin, the sins of those with greater responsibility receiving stricter judgment than those without such responsibility (Luke 12:48).

I believe that the *unpardonable sin*, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, is the most serious sin a person can commit (Matt 12:31-32). Jesus identifies this as the one sin that is never forgiven. Any time a person ascribes the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, he is committing the unpardonable sin. A true believer cannot commit the unpardonable sin, for it marks a person's complete and total rejection of God, even in the light of exposure to the truth. The "*sin unto death*," mentioned in 1 John 5:16, is not the same as the unpardonable sin but probably refers to those who profess to be Christians but persist in non-Christian beliefs and behaviors (1 John 1:6), leading to eternal death. John releases Christians from the obligation to pray for such individuals, although he does not completely prohibit it.

## **SOTERIOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION**

I believe that the *gospel* is the "good news" that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, appearing to many witnesses (1 Cor 15:1-5), and that Christ's death is God's power in salvation (1 Cor 1:17-18). I believe that salvation is God's work of rescuing mankind from the eschatological penalty (Rom 6:23) and temporal power of sin (Rom 6:6-7) in order to restore them to the purpose for which he created man: his own glory (Eph 1:11-12).

**ATONEMENT:** The *atonement* refers to the variety of actions which God accomplishes to bring about the *reconciliation* of guilty man to himself (Rom 9:10). God provides this reconciliation by means of an *expiation* (Heb 10:5-18) which requires *propitiation* (Rom 3:24-26), both of which God effected through the *vicarious* and *substitutionary* death of Christ on behalf of and in the place of sinners (1 Tim 2:6). The deliverance from sin and judgment in this way is called *redemption* (Eph 1:7). Reconciliation, the restoration of a right relationship with God, is necessary because man's sinfulness makes him an enemy of God (Rom 5:10). See the section on Christology above. I believe that Christ died for all mankind (1 John 2:2) so that the atonement is universal and unlimited in its scope, but it is *not* unlimited in its application. Not all will be saved (Matt 25:41), for Christ's death effects salvation only when a person trusts in him (Rom 4:24).

**FOREKNOWLEDGE :** I believe that *foreknowledge* means "to know beforehand" (2 Pet 3:17), but it goes beyond mere prescience or omniscience to also indicate foreordination (1 Pet 1:20) and God's benevolent choice and intimate relational knowledge of individuals (Rom 11:2). Within the realm of soteriology, Scripture is clear that God foreknows *people*, not their faith or actions (Rom 8:28-29). Foreknowledge is the basis of and precedes the believer's election to salvation, for they are "elect . . . according to foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Pet 1:1-2), and the basis of election is God's unconditional love (Eph 1:4-5). I believe that the doctrine of foreknowledge does not nullify man's free will and moral responsibility (Acts 2:23 – juxtaposition of God's foreknowledge and man's free actions).

**PREDESTINATION (FOREORDINATION):** I believe that *predestination* refers to God's predetermining his purpose and destiny for believers. *First*, the Bible teaches that God has predestined believers for adoption as sons (Eph 1:5; see "Adoption" below). *Second*, God has predestined believers to an inheritance (Eph 1:11). *Finally*, God has predestined believers to conformity to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). The Bible does not teach that God predestines to salvation. I believe that the basis of predestination is, *first*, God's unconditional love (Eph 1:4-5). *Second*, predestination is based on the good pleasure of God's will (Eph 1:5). *Third*, God predestines believers in accordance with the purpose of God, who works all things according to the counsel of his will (Eph 1:11).

**ELECTION:** I believe that, in God's sovereign, unconditional choice, before the foundation of the world he has determined to grant salvation to individuals who are known as the *elect*, chosen not on the basis of any foreseen merit or faith but only on the basis of his loving grace and purpose (Eph 1:4). The fact, however, that God has elected individuals for salvation

from the beginning does not release man from the guilt of not trusting in Christ. There is responsibility on man's part, for he is commanded to come for salvation (Acts 17:30). God desires all to be saved (2 Pet 3:9), but his decision to save only the elect is not injustice on his part, for he is not under obligation to save anyone. Man damns himself by his rebellion against God.

**EFFECTUAL CALLING:** I believe that *effectual calling* (also called *irresistible grace*) is the Holy Spirit's enabling the elect to willingly put their faith in the finished work of Christ and to repent from their sin (1 Cor 1:23-24). When the Holy Spirit effectually calls sinners to faith, he works *conviction* in them, giving them a sense of guilt and shame (John 16:8-11). The Holy Spirit also provides *illumination* in his work of effectual calling, opening their minds to understand the gospel (Acts 26:8). The Holy Spirit then *persuades* (his work of *drawing*) man to believe (John 6:44-45) and enables him to embrace Jesus Christ (Phil 2:13).

**CONVERSION:** I believe that *conversion* is man's act of turning from sin in *repentance* to *faith* in God, enabled by the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 1:9).

**Repentance:** I believe that *repentance* is the voluntary change of mind in which the sinner turns from his sin to God (Acts 26:20). It is an active, volitional responsibility which God both commands (Acts 17:30) and grants (Acts 11:18). It is not merely sorrow for sin but rather *abandonment* of sin (2 Cor 7:9-10).

**Faith:** I believe that *faith* is man's intellectual assent to the facts of the gospel (*belief*) and his emotional and willful commitment in Christ to the personal reality and implication of those facts (*trust*). Faith is not the cause of salvation or a work, but it is God's designated *means* of salvation (Eph 2:8-9). The content of our faith is the Word of God (both Christ and Scripture; Rom 10:17), and the commitment of our faith is to and in Christ (John 3:16-17).

**REGENERATION:** I believe that *regeneration*, also known as the *new birth*, is God's implantation of spiritual life into a believer (John 1:13) through the agency of the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5) by means of the Scripture (1 Pet 1:23). Regeneration is both spiritual resurrection (Col 2:13) and spiritual birth (John 3:3-8).

**JUSTIFICATION:** I believe that *justification* is God's righteous, objective, legal declaration in which he declares a sinner to be righteous and in right standing before him, free from all guilt and penalty of sin (Rom 4:5-8). Justification does not *make* a person righteous, but it is rather a judicial declaration. Justification is possible through the substitutionary, imputed righteousness of Christ that is credited to the sinner so that he stands before God in the righteousness of Christ (Rom 5:17-19). In justification, God forgives all the sinner's transgressions (2 Cor 5:19) and imputes them to Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:21).

**ADOPTION:** I believe that *adoption* is God's granting to the believer the position of sonship to God. The status of adoption is initiated at salvation (Rom 8:15) through the new birth (regeneration; John 1:12-13) and culminates with the believer's resurrection (Rom 8:23) when he receives his inheritance. Adoption is not merely an alternative illustration to being born into God's family.

**SANCTIFICATION:** I believe that *sanctification* is the process of a believer's becoming actually holy, righteous, and Christlike, and it involves an objective (positional) aspect (1 Cor 1:2) and a subjective (practical) aspect (1 Thess 4:3). Sanctification is the restoration of God's image in man which was damaged in the fall. I believe that *ultimate sanctification* will occur after death when the believer is raised incorruptible and becomes entirely pure and sinless (1 John 3:2). At that time, indwelling sin will be eradicated, and Christ will present believers to himself without spot or wrinkle, holy and blameless (Eph 5:26-27).

**SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER:** I believe that all who truly trust in Christ for salvation will remain true to him until death (*perseverance of the saints*). A true believer will not and cannot "fall away," repudiate his faith, or forfeit his salvation. The Lord promises to keep believers to the day of Jesus Christ (John 10:27-29). Passages that warn against apostasy (Heb 6:4-8) or command believers to continue in the faith (Heb 6:11-12) exist to alert false professors of the danger in which they stand and to ensure that saved individuals will not fall away, encouraging them in their faith. Passages that indicate that people do apostatize (Heb 10:26-27) speak of false professors of salvation.

**GLORIFICATION:** The apex of sanctification is *glorification* (Rom 8:30), in which the believer experiences physical and spiritual perfection (Rom 8:21). The spiritual aspect of glorification takes place when the believer dies and is ushered into the presence of the Lord (Col 1:22), and the physical aspect of glorification occurs at the second coming of Christ when all believers are resurrected and are given glorified bodies (1 Cor 15:38-50). Man will not reach sinless perfection (*ultimate sanctification*) until he is glorified after death.

## ECCLESIOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

I believe that the *church* consists of all those who are unified by faith in Christ Jesus and who through his death have been savingly reconciled to God and have received new life (Acts 2:38-42).

### THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

I believe that the *universal church* consists of the totality of believers who are part of the church, past, present, and future.

**Identity of the Church:** The church was founded on the Day of Pentecost when 3,000 souls were added to the church at the preaching of Peter (Acts 2:41), and it exists on the earth as local congregations of believers (1 Cor 1:2). I believe that the church is a distinct entity from Israel. Israel was the people through whom God worked to dispense salvation during Old Testament times. In the New Testament age, however, God is working through the church to provide salvation to man. The church is not a theocratic nation as Israel was. The church's responsibility to the state today is to give to it what rightfully belongs to the state (Matt 22:21), such as submission to its authority (Rom 13:1-7) when that authority does not contradict God's authority over the church (Acts 5:29). The church is the current expression of the *kingdom of God*, God's rule over the earth throughout history, just as Israel was an expression of that kingdom in the past. I believe that the *people of God* refers to all believers of all ages, and the church is part of this people of God (Rom 9:24-26) as Israel is (Ex 15:16).

**Descriptions of the Church:** The New Testament uses three major images to describe the church. First, the New Testament describes the church as the *body of Christ* (Eph 1:22-23) of which believers are members and Christ is the head. The body imagery highlights believers' identity with Christ and their interconnected and interdependent relationship with each other (1 Cor 12:12-31). Second, the church is a *temple of the Holy Spirit* (Eph 2:21-22), and the Holy Spirit indwells the church both as a whole and individually (1 Cor 3:16-17). The church as a temple of the Holy Spirit is an incentive to holy living (1 Cor 6:19-20). Believers also constitute the priesthood of the temple and are responsible to offer spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet 2:5) and to proclaim the excellencies of God (1 Pet 2:9). The priesthood of each believer grants him direct access to God through Jesus Christ with no need of any other human priest (1 Tim 2:5). Finally, the Bible speaks of the church as the *bride of Christ* (Rev 19:7-8), an image which emphasizes God's great love and care for his people and the faithfulness and submission his people must display towards him.

### THE LOCAL CHURCH

I believe that the *local church* denotes the assembly of Christians in a specific locale under Scriptural leadership.

**Purposes of the Church:** I believe that the ultimate purpose of the church is to bring glory to God (Eph 3:20-21), and the church accomplishes this purpose in various ways. The church's responsibility toward God is to worship him, and the church follows the example of the early church by setting aside the first day of the week as *the Lord's day* (Acts 20:7; cf. Rev 1:10). Although parallel with the Old Testament sabbath day, which occurs on the seventh day of the week, the first day of the week is significant as the day on which Jesus Christ rose from the dead (Matt 28:1-6). The church's times of gathered worship should be marked by decorum and orderliness (1 Cor 14:40), and ought to involve prayer (Acts 12:12), fellowship (Acts 2:42), giving (1 Cor 16:1-2), the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col 3:16), the observance of the ordinances (see below; Acts 2:46), the public reading of Scripture, exhortation, and teaching (1 Tim 4:13). The church exists to serve believers in other ways as well, each believer using the unique gifts God has given him (1 Pet 4:10). The church also exists to evangelize unbelievers, making disciples of all nations (Matt 28:18-20).

**Membership in the Church:** I believe that every obedient Christian ought to be a member of a local church at least in the sense that he is committed, involved, and visibly identified with that church (Heb 10:25). The existence of and recognition of church leadership (Heb 13:17) in the New Testament and the enrollment of widows (1 Tim 5:13-17) imply an organized structure of church membership. The believer's role as a member of a body with various functions and gifts requires commitment to a local assembly of believers (1 Cor 12:14-30). Since a believer's formal membership in a church ought to visibly reflect his spiritual union with Christ, the requirements for church membership are credible evidence of regeneration and baptism, which symbolizes his death, burial, and resurrection with Christ (Acts 2:38-41).

**Government of the Church:** I believe that the *congregational* form of church government is the best form of government for the church. The congregational form of church government best fulfills the principles of order (1 Cor 14:40), the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:5), and the importance of each member of the body (1 Cor 12). In the congregational form of church government, each local body of believers is independent and self-governing (*autonomous*), and every member has a voice in its decisions under scriptural leadership.

**Leadership for the Church:** I believe that there are two primary offices in the church: elder and deacon (Phil 1:1). The New Testament uses three terms for the office of *elder*: ἐπίσκοπος, πρεσβύτερος, and the actor of ποιμαίνειν. When Paul was speaking to the elders (πρεσβύτεροι) of Ephesus (Acts 20:17), he described them as *overseers* (ἐπισκόπους) who were responsible to “*shepherd*” (ποιμαίνειν; “pastor”) the church (1 Pet 5:1-2). The different terms highlight different aspects of the office. Elders are responsible to “oversee” the activities of a church (1 Peter 5:2) and to “rule well” (1 Tim 5:17). They are also responsible to be devoted to the word, to exhort in sound doctrine, and to refute those who contradict (Tit 1:9).

*Deacons* (διάκονοι) exist to serve the church under the oversight of the elders, so that the elders may devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:2-4). The responsibilities of deacons are practical in nature, in contrast with the responsibilities of elders, which involve administration and instruction. The first seven deacons in Acts 6 were initially appointed to “serve [διακονεῖν] tables” by managing the care of the widows in the church (Acts 6:1-3), and this type of work parallels the qualifications for deacons outlined in 1 Tim 3:8-13. Only men (ἄνθρωπος) who meet the qualifications outlined in 1 Tim 3:1-13 and Tit 1:5-8 may serve as elders or deacons.

**Discipline in the Church:** I believe that the church must practice *separation*, both on an individual (personal) and institutional (ecclesiastical) level. *Personal separation* is the setting apart of the Christian from the world to serve God in complete and total devotion. Personal separation involves the Christian separating himself from close partnerships with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14-7:1) and a shunning of the lifestyle characteristic of unbelievers (Eph 5:11). Although a believer must necessarily have contact with unbelievers and be a Christian witness to them, his association with them should not be such as to indicate a preoccupation with and a condoning of secular and worldly things (1 John 2:15-17). Personal separation means that a Christian will not participate in activities or display a lifestyle that are characteristic of the world, and it means that a believer will revoke fellowship, association, and participation with false teachers who distort the gospel of Christ (Rom 16:17-18) and with professing believers whose behavior or lifestyle is disobedient and characteristic of unbelievers (2 Thess 3:14-15).

*Ecclesiastical separation* is separation on a larger scale of a group of believers from a denomination or church for the reasons above. *Excommunication* is a special type of separation in which the church excludes a professing Christian from its fellowship for serious, unrepentant sin (Matt 18:15-18). Excommunication serves in part to preserve the purity of the church (1 Cor 5:6-8), but the ultimate goal of excommunication or of separation from professing believers is the restoration of fellowship on the condition of repentance (2 Thess 3:15).

**Ordinances of the Church:** I believe that *ordinances* (*sacraments*) are special ceremonies that Christ has commanded (*ordained*) the church to observe to visibly portray elements of the gospel and to symbolize the spiritual reality of Christ’s work. The church practices two ordinances: baptism (Matt 28:19) and the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:23-26). *Baptism* is an outward sign of the miraculous internal transforming work of salvation in a person’s life. Baptism does not convey any merit or cause any spiritual change in the one baptized. Believers should doubt the salvation of one who professes salvation but refuses to be baptized, however, for baptism is something that is mandated both by command and example, and there is no example of an unbaptized Christian in the New Testament (Acts 8:12). Only believers may participate in baptism, because the ordinance is meant to be a picture of the spiritual reality of regeneration in the subject. Consequently, the subjects of baptism are those who can testify of their conversion with understanding and would thus exclude infants (*paedobaptism*). Baptism by immersion is the only mode that parallels the actual meaning of the word βαπτίζω and that most closely follows the evidence we find in the New Testament (John 3:23). Immersion best pictures the work that has been accomplished in the believer’s life: a burial with Christ in his death and a raising with him in his resurrection (Rom 6:3-7). Thus, sprinkling (*aspersion*) or pouring as modes of baptism are inappropriate. Baptism is ultimately a public identification with the work of Christ. I believe that the ordinance of the *Lord’s Supper* (*communion*) is a remembrance and a proclamation of the death of Christ until he comes again (1 Cor 11:26). Only believers who are walking with the Lord may partake (1 Cor 11:27-34). Partaking of the Lord’s Supper does not inherently impart grace to the believer, although the ceremony can be a means of spiritual growth for the Christian.

## ESCHATOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

### INDIVIDUAL ESCHATOLOGY

**Nature of Death:** I believe that there are three distinct meanings of *death*. First, *physical death* refers to the termination of the life of the physical human body (Matt 10:28). Second, *spiritual death* is alienation and separation from God because of sin (Eph 2:1-3). Third, *eternal death*, or the *second death*, is a perpetual state of spiritual death after physical death (2 Thess 1:9; Rev 20:14). If a person is still spiritually dead when he dies physically, he remains spiritually dead for

all of eternity. I believe that the cessation of man's physical life is not the end of his existence. The immaterial, spiritual part of man, his soul, is immortal and will live forever in a state of eternal life or eternal death (Matt 25:46).

**Intermediate State:** I believe that upon physical death the spirits of believers enter the presence of Jesus Christ in "paradise," located in heaven, which is the spiritual realm in which God dwells (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 5:8). When unbelievers die, their spirits depart to *Hades* (equivalent to הַאֵשׁ [Num 16:30]), also called *hell* (KJV), a place of burning torment (Luke 16:22-24). After the physical, bodily resurrection and final judgment of unbelievers, Hades is cast into the *lake of fire* (Rev 20:14-15), and thus their eternal state may be more intensely painful than their intermediate state (2 Pet 2:9).

## GENERAL ESCHATOLOGY

**Interpretive Frameworks for Eschatology:** I believe the best interpretational approach to eschatology is based on a *dispensational* perspective, rather than a covenant theology perspective. I believe that the church has not replaced Israel and that God still has future plans for Israel which will be fulfilled during the Millennium. See bibliology above.

**Systems of Eschatology:** I believe that a grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture and a recognition of the distinction between the church and Israel leads to a *premillennial* understanding of eschatology, the teaching that Christ will one day return to physically rule on earth for 1,000 years (Rev 20:1-7).

**Heaven:** I believe that the term *heaven* can refer to, *first*, the physical atmosphere that surrounds the earth – in which birds fly, clouds form, and rain descends (Deut 11:11) – and outer space, inhabited by the sun, moon, stars, and galaxies (Gen 1:14-16). *Second*, heaven often refers to the spiritual realm in which God dwells (Amos 9:6). *Finally*, heaven can refer to the new heaven and new earth in which believers will spend the eternal state (Rev 21).

**Hell:** I believe that there are three terms in Scripture that fall under the conception of hell. *First*, *Hades* (ᾅδης, corresponding to הַאֵשׁ) often simply refers to the *grave*, the place where the dead go (2 Sam 22:6), but Scripture also describes it as a place of burning torment (Luke 16:23-24) and judgment (Matt 11:23-24). *Second*, *Gehenna* (γέεννα), usually translated *hell*, is a fiery place of judgment for sinners (Matt 5:22), and it most likely is the same place as the third term for hell, the *lake of fire* which burns with sulfur (Rev 19:20).

**Order of Events:** I believe that the *first* eschatological event that Scripture reveals is the return of Christ to first resurrect dead believers and then rapture living believers, catching them up in the air where they will all meet Christ (1 Thess 4:16-17). I believe in a *pretribulational rapture* of believers, which means that all saints are raptured before the onset of the Tribulation. The rapture is *imminent* in that it could happen at any time, and no one knows the timing (1 Thess 5:1-11). In the *second* eschatological event, all believers will come before the *judgment seat of Christ* (the *bema* [βῆμα]; 2 Cor 5:9-10), at which time he will evaluate and reward believers based on their conduct and service for him (1 Cor 3:11-15). The new position of raptured and resurrected believers in Christ's presence is portrayed as the *marriage of the Lamb* in which believers have a new and intimate relationship with Christ (Rev 19:7-10). I believe that the *third* major eschatological event will be the *Tribulation* (Matt 24:21-22), which commences immediately after Christ comes to rapture the church (Rev 3:10). This seven-year period of intensive judgment from God is, *first*, an expression of his wrath against sin (Rev 6:15-17). *Second*, the Tribulation fulfills the 70th "week" (Hebrew, שִׁבְעָתַיִם, referring to a unit of seven) of Daniel (Dan 9:24-27).

In the *next* event, the *battle of Armageddon*, which occurs toward the end of the Tribulation, the dragon (Satan), the beast (Antichrist), and the false prophet will gather all the kings of the earth to wage war against Israel in the area also known as Megiddo (Rev 16:13-16). The battle of Armageddon will culminate with the *fifth* major event, Christ's second coming, his physical return to rule the world (2 Thess 1:7-10). Christ will come with the armies of heaven (Rev 19:11, 14) to defeat the beast (Antichrist) and the false prophet, both of whom he subsequently casts into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20). The dragon, Satan, will be bound with a chain and thrown into the abyss for 1,000 years (Rev 20:1-3). At this time, God will judge all Tribulation survivors (Matt 25:31-46). Those who were converted during the Tribulation enter into the next phase of end time events, but the unconverted enter into eternal punishment by fire (Matt 25:34, 41, 46). The *sixth* major event of eschatology, the *Millennium*, is a literal, 1,000-year period in which Christ will reign with all resurrected and raptured saints (Rev 20:1-7). Believers who died during the Tribulation will be resurrected at this time to rule with Christ (Rev 20:4-6). During the Millennium, Israel will experience the fulfillment of the many unfulfilled prophecies contained in the Old Testament (Acts 3:19-21), and the entire nation of Israel will be converted (Rom 11:25-32). The millennial period will be a time of peace among nations and in the animal kingdom (Isa 11:6-7). The *next* event will be a brief uprising of Satan against Jerusalem at the end of the millennial period (Rev 20:1-3). God will release Satan from the abyss in which he was imprisoned during the Millennium, and Satan will deceive the nations and gather them together for war

(Rev 20:7-8). God will send fire to destroy Satan's army and will throw Satan himself into the lake of fire, where he will experience torment for eternity (Rev 20:9-10). At this time, fallen angels will also be cast into the lake of fire, the final location of the beast (Antichrist), the false prophet, and all the unconverted (Matt 25:41).

*Eighth*, after Satan is completely defeated, God will bodily resurrect all unbelievers (Rev 20:13), and Christ will judge them all at a *great white throne* according to their deeds (Rev 20:11-15). If anyone's name is not in the book of life, he is thrown into the lake of fire where the physical body will experience torment for eternity (Rev 20:15). This is called the *second death*, eternal separation from God (Rev 21:8). *Finally*, God will destroy this current world (2 Pet 3:7-14) and will create a vastly different new heaven and new earth in which believers will live and reign forever (2 Pet 3:13). It will be a place where God personally dwells with his people, and the light of his glory will pervade the "New Jerusalem" (Rev 21:22-24), which will be situated in the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:2). There will be no sin or sinful persons (Rev 21:27), the curse of sin will be reversed (Rev 22:3), and there will be no sorrow, pain, or grief (Rev 21:4). Christ will reign over all (Dan 7:13-14), but he will ultimately subject himself to the Father when he hands over the kingdom to him "so that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:24, 28).

This is the final and eternal state.