

Doctrinal and Positional Statement

of

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Bibliology

General Revelation

I believe God has revealed Himself to all people through **general revelation**. God has given every generation (Rom. 1:20) a witness concerning Himself (Acts 14: 17). The means through which He reveals Himself are the grandeur of His creation (Ps.19:1-3), the beneficial nature of His providence (Acts 14:17), and the conscience of man (Rom. 2: 14-15). Through these, man knows God (Rom. 1:20) and is responsible before Him (Rom. 2:1). This knowledge, however, is insufficient for salvation, which requires special revelation (Rom. 10: 13-17).

Special Revelation

I believe that God has given **special revelation** to select people in the past. Jews in particular have been blessed with special revelation (Rom.3:2). Special revelation includes God's powerful and miraculous acts, His verbal communication (either directly or through human instruments), and the incarnation of the Son of God (2 Cor.4:6; Heb.1:1-2). The Scriptures are a divinely given selection of each of these kinds of special revelation.

Inspiration

I believe God has given us special revelation through His Word, the Bible, which is unique among all books in that it is **inspired by God** (2 Tim.3:16). Certain men were influenced by the Spirit of God to write Scripture (2 Pet.1:20-21) with the result that their words (characterized by their own intellectual abilities, vocabulary, grammar, and writing style) were in fact breathed out by God (2 Tim.3:16).

I believe supporting evidence of the Bible's supernatural origin can be found in its vast influence for good throughout the history of mankind, its unity and lack of self-contradiction (despite the fact that it was written by over 40 authors over the span of roughly 1500 years), and the amazing accuracy with which its prophecies have been fulfilled.¹ Ultimately, the Bible teaches its own inspiration (2 Tim.3: 16) and therefore is **self-authenticating**. To deny the doctrine of inspiration is to deny the reliability of the Bible in the area of doctrine.

I believe God used multiple processes to give us His inspired Word. While **dictation** was used at times in the process of inspiration (e.g. Ex. 34:27-28), it was not the sole process used (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:16; Lk.1:1-3).

I believe inspiration extends to the very words of Scripture (i.e. **verbal inspiration**). This was the view of Christ and the apostolic writers (Matt. 5:18; 22: 32; Gal. 3:16). Since every *word* of the Bible is inspired, the inspiration of the Bible is, by implication, **plenary**, meaning that every part of the Bible is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet.1:20-21). Inspiration is limited to the **autographa** (the original writings of the authors of Scripture), as virtually none of the thousands of manuscript copies are textually identical. Any copy or translation of the Bible can be said to be God's Word when it is faithful to the autographa.

¹ Adapted from B.B. Warfield, "Revelation and Inspiration" p. 429-447.

The Results of Inspiration

I believe the Bible is **inerrant** (meaning there are no errors in the autographs of the Biblical revelation) and **infallible** (meaning the Biblical revelation is incapable of erring in the autographs).² Jesus believed the Scriptures to be inerrant (Jn.10:35). Furthermore, the omniscience, omnipotence, truthfulness, and sovereignty of God demand the inerrancy of the Scriptures. I believe there are no genuine discrepancies in Scripture. Most so-called problem passages can be satisfactorily resolved through careful exegesis and harmonization with other passages. Some difficulties may require additional textual, archeological, or historical-cultural understanding to be resolved.

I believe the Bible is completely **authoritative** (meaning it has the right to govern man's belief and conduct). Jesus assumed the ultimate authority of the Scriptures in his teaching (e.g. John 10:34-35; Lk. 24:25). Because of his fallen mind (Eph.4:17-19; 1 Cor. 2:14), an unbeliever is unable to discern the inherent authority of the Scripture and needs spiritual illumination to do this (1 Cor. 2:14).

I believe the Biblical revelation is **sufficient** (2 Timothy 3:16-17). As a result, there is no need for further revelation beyond the Scriptures.

Canonization

I believe the Word of God consists of only the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament. The canonicity of these 66 books was not determined by any person or institution. Rather, these 66 books were recognized by God's people as authoritative and divine in origin, based on Scriptural **principles of canonicity**. *First*, subsequent revelation must be in agreement with previous revelation (Dt.13: 1-3). *Second*, predictive portions of revelation must be fulfilled in order to establish the integrity of the revelation (Dt. 18: 14-19). *Third*, the inherent and absolute authority of the Scriptures requires truly inspired writings to be self-authenticating to the people of God. Paul recognized the gospel of Luke as Scripture (1 Tim. 5:18) and Peter considered Paul's writings to be Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

Concerning the **Old Testament canon**, both Jesus and the apostles held to a definite canon of Old Testament Scriptures (Jn. 10:35; 2 Pet. 1:20; Rom. 1:2), which apparently was established and undisputed. In Matthew 23:35, Jesus refers to the Old Testament canon in the common book order of that day, starting with Genesis and ending with Chronicles. I do not consider the Apocrypha to be inspired, although they are helpful for our understanding of intertestamental history and thought. Jesus' reference to the tripartite division of the Old Testament canon (Lk. 24:44) is an indication that He did not consider the Apocrypha as part of the Old Testament canon.³

Concerning the **New Testament canon**, Christ promised the twelve that the Spirit would remind them of things He had said to them (Jn.14:26) and guide them into all truth (Jn.16:12-15), thereby predicting future revelation. In accordance with these verses, one characteristic of

² My understanding of inerrancy leaves room for alternative grammar, rounded numbers, generalities, etc.

³ The only versions that contained the Apocrypha were the Septuagint and those versions that were derived from the Septuagint. Even in these versions, there is no agreement as to which apocryphal books should be added and adding the books did not necessarily indicate the belief that these books were inspired. In addition, Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish writer in the first century, never quoted from the Apocrypha. Finally, Aquila's Greek version of the Old Testament was accepted by Alexandrian Jews in the second century, even though it did not contain the Apocrypha (adapted from Archer's *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p.81-85).

New Testament inspired writing is the close connection of the New Testament books with the apostles. Also, the content of the 27 New Testament books are in conformity with prior Biblical revelation (Dt. 13:1-3). The book of Revelation (chronologically and positionally the last book of the Bible) has a final and conclusive tone to it and fittingly closes the canon (Rev. 22:18-21).⁴

Preservation

While the original inspired writings seem no longer to be in existence, I believe God has preserved His Word. First and foremost, God's Word is preserved in heaven, eternal, true and unchangeable (Ps. 119:89). Secondly, I believe God's Word is preserved in the totality of the earthly manuscripts (Isaiah 40:6-8; 1 Peter 1:22-25). By comparing the various manuscripts, I believe we can reconstruct the autographical texts. In the Old Testament, I prefer to use the Masoretic Text. In the New Testament, I prefer to use a critical text, giving greater weight to older manuscripts. However, I grant others the liberty of preferring the Majority Text or the Textus Receptus. The percentage of significant variants between the three texts is extremely small and does not affect one's doctrinal beliefs.

Translation

I believe translation of the Bible is legitimate and Scriptural (Matt. 1:23). Scripture writers themselves quoted from the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (e.g. Heb 2:7). Because inspiration extends to the very words of Scripture, translation of Scripture should primarily reflect a **formal equivalence**, conveying the meaning of the underlying texts. This frequently, but not necessarily, results in a word-for-word translation. While modern day dynamic equivalence translations such as the NIV may be useful, I prefer a translation with more formal equivalence such as the NASB. Other translations that I can recommend are the KJV, NKJV, and ESV.

Interpretation

I believe in the overall semantic **perspicuity** of the Scriptures. Even unregenerate people can assess the essential meaning of Scripture and interpret Scripture literarily. Spiritual understanding is limited to believers and requires **illumination** (1 Cor. 2:14). Such knowledge of Scripture involves recognition of its divine origin (1 Thes. 2:13), conviction regarding its truthfulness (Jn. 14:17; 15:26 – "Spirit of Truth"), and experience of its power (Heb. 4:12).

There are numerous **principles for interpreting Scripture**. The Scripture ought to be interpreted grammatically and historically. The interpreter must also consider genre, figurative language, the immediate and larger contexts, the author's occasion for writing, the intended recipients, the place of the passage in the larger Christological and redemptive framework of Scripture, and other passages of Scripture which have bearing upon a text's meaning.

⁴ Over time, God's people have come to recognize the authority of these books. From 367 AD onward the current 27 books of the New Testament have made up the list of New Testament books.

Theology Proper

The Existence of God

I believe that the God of the Bible exists. There are numerous Biblically rooted, **logical arguments** for the existence of God. *First*, the cosmological argument states that since every effect must have a cause, there must be a great first Cause who is God (cf. Amos 3:3-6). *Second*, the teleological argument states that the design which is evident in creation demands a Designer, who is God (Rom. 1:20). *Third*, the anthropological/moral argument reasons that the general morality of mankind demands a moral Being who implanted this sense of right and wrong in man (Rom. 2:14-15). *Fourth*, the transcendental argument states that God must exist because to argue the contrary is a philosophical and intellectual contradiction. These logical arguments are useful to an extent, because every man is born with an **innate knowledge of God** (Rom. 1:21). The natural man suppresses this innate knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18) and foolishly denies the existence of God (Ps. 14:1). Ultimately, it is the **Word of God**, both in written form (Gen. 1:1, Heb. 4:12) and in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:18; 2 Cor. 4:6), that most powerfully testifies to God's existence.

The Nature of God

I believe God is a **personal Being**, with personal qualities of emotion (Ex.32:10; Ps.103:13), will (Dan.4:35; Hos.6:6), and reason (Is.1:18; Is.55:9). He is entirely self-existent, self-sufficient (Ex.3:14), and independent (Acts 17:25). God is spirit (Jn.4:24), though the Bible at times expresses His actions or attributes in anthropomorphisms (e.g. Dt.5:15) to help the finite human mind to understand the infinite, non-corporeal God.

God's greatness: I believe God is **transcendent**, meaning He is separate and far above His creation (Ps.113:4-6; Is.55:9). God is **sovereign**, meaning He is the supreme authority over all and controls all (Ps.103:19; Dan.4:35). God is **holy**, meaning He is unique (Is.6:3; Is.40-48) and separate from sin (1 Pet 1:14-16). God is **infinite**, meaning there are no limits to Him. In regard to space God is **immense**, exceeding the bounds of space (1 Ki. 8:27). In regard to time God is **eternal** (Ps.90:2; Ps.102:25-27). God is **omnipotent**, meaning He is all-powerful (Jer.32:17; Job 42:2). God is **omniscient**, meaning He knows all things absolutely (Ps.147:5; Acts 15:18), immediately (Is.40:14), truly (Heb.4:13), and potentially (Matt.11:21). As a result, God is **all-wise**, knowing the best means to the best ends (Rom.11:33-36). God is **immutable**, meaning He has never changed, nor will He ever change (Mal.3:6; Jam.1:17).

God's goodness: God is **immanent**, meaning He is easily accessible (Acts 17:27) and active in His creation (Matt.5:45; 6:25-30). God is **righteous**, meaning He defines and conforms to perfect morality and ethics (Ps.11:7). God is **just** and metes out proportionate and equitable judgment or reward (Dt. 10:17; 32:4). God displays **wrath** against people who transgress His standard of holiness, righteousness, and ethics (Rom.1:18) and those who reject His Son (Jn.3:36). God is **true**, meaning He is truthful (Tit.1:2), reliable (Num.23:19), and faithful (1 Thes.5:24). God is **love** (1 Jn. 4:8), always doing what is best for His creatures, even at personal cost. God is **merciful**, meaning He responds with pity and compassion to His needy creatures (Ps.103:13; Dt.5:10). God is **gracious**, meaning He is favorably inclined to His creatures and is good to them, despite their unworthiness (Ex.34:6; Tit.2:11). God is **patient**, meaning that His anger is not easily aroused toward His creatures (Ex.34:6; 2 Pet.3:9).

I believe God is a **Trinity**, meaning there is one God who consists of three distinct persons. Although finite man cannot properly understand such a Being, the Scriptures teach three truths that support the doctrine of the Trinity. *First*, there is only one God (Dt.4:35; 6:4; 1 Cor.8:4). Historically, the unity of God has been expressed in terms of one essence. *Second*, three persons are identified as God, namely the Father (Gal.1:1; Eph.1:2), the Son (Jn.1:1, 18; Heb.1:8), and the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor.3:16). *Third*, these three persons are treated as separate persons in the Scripture (Jn.14:16-17; 16:12-15). Some verses in which all members of the Godhead are mentioned are Matt.28:19; 2 Cor.13:14, and 1 Pet.1:2.

The Designations for God

God has many **titles and designations**, particularly in the Old Testament. I believe each of those designations communicates truth about God's character.

Old Testament designations: **Elohim** is probably related to *El* (meaning "Mighty One") and is the most common designation for God in the Old Testament. **El Elyon** portrays God as the "Most High" or "Most Exalted." **El Shaddai** communicates the blessings and nourishment that God grants to His people. **Adonai** refers to God as "Master" or "Ruler." **El Olam** has reference to the eternity of God. "**Yahweh**" is not a designation for God, but His actual name (Is.42:8; Am.9:6). It is derived from an ancient form of the Hebrew verb "to be."

New Testament designations: The two primary New Testament designations for God are **Theos**, which corresponds to the Hebrew *Elohim*, and **Kurios**, which corresponds to the Hebrew *Adonai*, but was also frequently used in the LXX to translate the name *Yahweh*. Jesus is often the referent in the New Testament, posing a strong argument for the deity of Christ.

The Works of God

I believe God **created** everything out of nothing (Rom. 4:17) or previously created matter (e.g. Adam and Eve, Gen. 2:7, 21-22) in six literal, consecutive days, consisting of a morning and evening (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13). The establishment of a seven-day week was patterned after God's creative week (Ex. 20:11).

I believe that God, through **providence**, continually provides for His creation, sustaining all life and matter (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17). In His providence, God turns people's hearts according to His own purposes (Prov. 21:1) and incorporates the prayers of His people (Jn. 14:13; Jam. 4:2) to bring history to its right conclusion (Eph. 1:10; 1 Cor. 15:23-28). In doing so, God is never the author of sin, nor does He ever tempt any person (Jam. 1:13). For believers, God causes all things to work together for their sanctification (Rom.8:28-29).

I believe that God at times suspends His own laws of nature to perform **miracles** and mighty acts (e.g. Ex. 14:21-22) that manifest His unique glory and supremacy.

Christology

The Person of Christ

I believe Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, is God.

He is explicitly called God in Isaiah 9:6 (“Mighty God”), John 1:1 (“The Word was God”), John 1:18 (“The only begotten God,” critical text), John 20:28 (“My Lord and My God”), Tit.2:13 (“our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”), and Heb.1:8 (“of the Son He says, Your throne, O God, is forever”). From comparisons between certain OT and NT texts, it is clear that Jesus is Yahweh (Mat.3:3 cf. Is.40:3 and Mal.3:1; John 12:41 cf. Is.6:1; Eph.4:7-8 cf. Ps.68:18). In John 8:58, Jesus refers to himself as “I am,” Yahweh’s self-revelation at the burning bush (Ex.3). In Matthew 1:21 He is given the name “Jesus” (which means ‘Yahweh saves’) because He will save His people from their sin. He is called “Lord” (*kurios*), which is the word used to translate Yahweh in the LXX. He is the eternal (Ps.2:12; Prov.30:4), unique (Jn. 3:16) “Son of God” and therefore shares equality of nature with the Father (Jn. 10:30).

Jesus Christ displays divine perfections. Christ is eternal (Mic. 5:2; Is. 9:6), immutable (Heb. 13:8), omnipotent (Matt. 8:16, 26-27; Rev. 1:18; Jn. 10:17-18), omniscient (Jn. 1:48; 2:24-25; 4:39; Mat. 17:27), and omnipresent (Matt. 18:20; 28:20).

Jesus Christ performs divine works. He created all things (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2), upholds the universal matter (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3), performed miracles (Jn. 20:30), forgave sins (Matt. 9:6), and will one day judge the world (Jn. 5:22; Rev. 6-16; Mt. 7:21).

Jesus Christ is worthy of divine worship. He will be honored along with the Father (Jn. 5:23). He is worshiped in heaven (Rev. 5:8). All angels are commanded to worship Him (Heb. 1:6), and one day every knee will bow to Him (Phil. 2:10-11).

I believe Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, is fully human.

He referred to Himself as a man in John 8:40. The apostles also testified that Jesus was a man in Acts 2:22 and 1 Cor. 15:21. His present form is described as humanity (1 Tim. 2:5), and His future universal judgment will be done in His human form (Acts 17:31). He had human lineage (Matt. 1:1-16; Lk. 3:23-38; Heb. 7:14), experienced human birth (Matt. 1:25-2:1; Lk. 2:6-7), and underwent human development (Lk. 2:40, 52; Heb. 5:8). He also had human experiences such as weariness (Jn. 4:6), sleep (Matt. 8:24), hunger (Matt. 21:18), thirst (Jn. 19:28), temptation (Heb.4:15), and death (1 Cor.15:3).

Although Christ’s birth was human, His **conception** was a supernatural work of the Spirit (Matt.1:18; Lk.1:35) during His mother Mary’s virginity (Lk.1:31-34; Matt.1:18, 25; Is. 7:14).

His full deity and full humanity made Jesus Christ into a **theanthropic person**. He is one person who possesses both a divine and a human nature. During His earthly life, He did not give up His divine perfections, but rather gave up the full display and exercise of them in order to accomplish His mission. While Christ’s human nature was susceptible to temptation (Matt. 4:1), the absence of a sin nature (Heb. 4:15) and the influence of His divine nature secured His **sinlessness** (2 Cor. 5:21).

The work of Christ

I believe Christ was the **agent of creation** (Jn. 1:3; Heb. 1:2). He appeared in Old Testament times through **Christophanies**, like the Angel of the Lord. This Angel is referred to as God (Gen. 31:11-13; Ex. 3:11; Jdg. 13:21-22), evidences divine authority such as pardoning transgressions (Ex. 23:21), and accepted reverence and worship (Ex. 3:5; Josh. 5:13-15). Yet, He is also distinct from Yahweh in passages like Gen. 16:11 and Gen. 21:17.

I believe Christ was anointed with the Spirit of God (Acts 10:38; Is. 61:1) to fulfill the three **Messianic mediatory roles** of prophet (Dt.18:18-19; Acts 3:22-23), priest (Heb.9:11-14) and king (Acts 2:30-36; cf. Ps. 110).

During His incarnation, Christ matured (Luke 2:52) and learned obedience (Heb. 5:8) without ever sinning – His **active obedience** (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 8:3-4). His earthly ministry concluded with His divinely preordained passion and death at the hands of Jewish and Roman authorities – His **passive obedience** (Acts 2:23; Is. 53:7). In His death He made **atonement** for sin through the shedding of blood (2 Cor. 5:21; Is. 53:4-6), providing reconciliation between God and man (Rom. 5:10) and redeeming mankind (Matt. 20:28). He was the propitiation (satisfaction) that extinguished the wrath of God (Rom. 3:21-27) and the expiation that extinguished the guilt of sinners (Heb. 9:26). I believe the **extent of the atonement** is broader than merely the elect (1 Tim.4:10; 1 Jn.2:2; 2 Pet.2:1), but the efficacy of the atonement applies only to the elect. At death, His spirit ascended to His Father (Lk. 23:43), while His body was buried (Jn. 19:40-42).

I believe Christ **rose bodily** from the grave after three days by the power of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Acts 2:24; Jn.10:18; 1 Tim. 3:16). His resurrection was the first stage of His **exaltation**, which climaxed in His ascension to the Father's right hand (Acts 1:11). Enthroned as Lord and Christ, He intercedes for His people (1 Jn.2:1; Rom.8:34) and serves as Head of the Church (Eph.1:22; Col.1:18), which He equips with gifted servants (Eph.4:8-11).

I believe Christ will **come again** in bodily form (Acts 1:11). At His return to earth, He will overthrow all evil (Rev. 19:11-14), reign for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-6), raise the dead (Jn. 5:25-29), and judge the world in righteousness (Rev. 20: 11-15; Acts 17:31). Ultimately, He will hand over the kingdom to His Father, so that God will be all in all (1 Cor.15:24-28).

Pneumatology

The Person of the Holy Spirit

I believe the Holy Spirit is a person.

The Spirit bears the **personal title** of “Comforter” or “Helper” (Paraclete) (Jn.14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7), which is also used of Christ (1 Jn. 2:1; Jn.14:16). In John 16:13-14 the Spirit is referred to with masculine pronouns, even though the Greek word for Spirit is neuter, not masculine. The Spirit has **personal attributes**, like intelligence (Rom.8:27; 1 Cor.2:10-13), emotion (Eph.4:30), and will (1 Cor.12:11; Acts 15:28). He can be tested (Acts 5:9), resisted (Acts 7:51), grieved (Eph. 4:30), lied to (Acts 5:3), quenched (1 Thess.5:19), insulted (Heb.10:29), and blasphemed (Matt.12:31). The Spirit performs **personal, moral works**, like teaching (Jn.14:26), foretelling (Jn.16:13), testifying (Jn. 15:26), commanding (Acts 8:29; Acts 11:12), convicting (Jn.16:8), and interceding (Rom.8:26).

I believe the Holy Spirit is God.

The Spirit is **expressly called God** in Peter’s assessment of Ananias’ lie to the Holy Spirit as a lie toward God (Acts 5:3-4). The Spirit has **divine attributes**, like eternality (Heb. 9:14), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7-10), and omniscient (Is. 40:13-14). The Spirit performs **divine works**. He participated in creation (Gen. 1:2; Jb.33:4), moved men to write the Scriptures (2 Pet. 1:21), brought about the virgin birth (Lk. 1:35), participated in Christ’s resurrection (Rom. 8:11), spiritually regenerates men (Tit. 3:5), and sanctifies believers (Rom. 15:16). The Spirit has **divine equality** with other members of the Godhead (2 Cor. 13:14), sharing in the divine name with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19).

The Work of the Holy Spirit

In the Old Testament era:

I believe the Spirit participated in **creation**, hovering over the created matter (Gen. 1:2). Combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words (1 Cor. 2:13), the Spirit brought about **inspiration**, moving men of God to write Scripture (2 Pet. 1:20-21). The Spirit’s most emphasized OT work was **anointing** select individuals for special tasks. Moses (Num. 11:17), various judges (Jdg. 3:10; 6:34; 14:6), Saul (1 Sam. 10:10), and David (1 Sam. 16:13) all enjoyed the Spirit’s anointing for leadership. The Spirit filled Bezalel to skillfully craft the items of the tabernacle (Ex. 35:31). The Spirit came upon men and gave them prophetic utterances (Num. 24:2; Eze. 2:2). While I do not believe the Spirit indwelt Old Testament believers, the Spirit exercised **moral influence** on the hearts of men (Gen. 6:3; Is. 63:10-11; Ps. 51:11).

In the life of Christ:

I believe the Spirit brought about the **virgin conception** of Jesus the Messiah (Lk. 1:35). The Spirit **anointed** Christ (Acts 10:38) at His baptism (Lk. 3:22) and empowered Christ as the Servant of Yahweh (Is. 42:1-4) to accomplish salvation for His people (Matt. 1:21). With the anointing came a **filling** with the Spirit (Lk. 4:1), in which the Spirit led Christ (Lk. 4:1). The Spirit

also **enabled** Christ to perform miracles (Matt. 12:28). Finally, Christ was **raised** through the power of the Spirit (Rom. 1:4; 1 Tim. 3:16).

In the New Testament era:

I believe the Spirit **gave revelation** to apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:5) to lay the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20) and glorify Christ (Jn. 16:13-14). To authenticate this new revelation, the Spirit empowered the messengers of this revelation to perform miraculous signs and wonders (Heb. 2:4; 2 Cor. 12:12).

I believe the Spirit **convicts** the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8; 1 Thes. 2:5). As a result, men are convinced of the Spirit's truth. At times, the Spirit's conviction takes place through the exercise of the Spirit's gifts (1 Cor. 14:24-25).

I believe the Spirit **regenerates**, making sinners who are dead in their sins alive in Christ (Eph. 2:1-6; Tit. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6). At regeneration, Christ **baptizes** believers with the Spirit (Matt. 3:11), uniting them with Christ (Rom. 6:3-4) and His Church (Eph. 4:3; 1 Cor. 12:13). As a result, the believer **receives** the Spirit (Gal. 3:2) and is **indwelled** by Him (2 Tim. 1:14). This indwelling has a personal and a corporate dimension, so that both the individual believer (1 Cor. 6:19) as well as the larger body of Christ serve as the temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:22). I believe this ministry of indwelling is unique to believers in the New Testament era (John 7:39; 14:17). The indwelling Spirit serves both as a **seal** (Eph. 1:13; 2 Cor. 1:22), signifying ownership and security, and **pledge** (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22), signifying the certainty of glorification. The believer is enabled by the Spirit to genuinely **testify to the lordship** of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12:3).

I believe the Spirit progressively **sanctifies** the believer through the Word of God (2 Cor. 3:18), renewing his mind (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23) and restoring the image of God in him (2 Cor. 4:4-6). The Spirit **intercedes** for the believer according to the will of God (Rom. 8:26-27). The Spirit **testifies** to the believer concerning his sonship, providing assurance (Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6). As the anointing of God (1 Jn. 2:27), the Spirit **teaches** the believer and **illuminates** his heart to truth (Eph. 1:17-18). The Spirit **empowers** the believer to put to death deeds of sin in his life (Rom. 8:13). The believer abounds in hope through the power of the Spirit (Rom. 15:13) and is strengthened in his inner man (Eph. 3:16). As the believer allows the Word of God to dwell in him richly (Col. 3:16f), the Spirit **fills** him (Eph. 5:18f) with the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19), resulting in mutual edification, joyful worship, and subjection to God-ordained authority (Eph. 5:18-21; Phil. 3:3). The believer then walks by the Spirit, not fulfilling the desires of his flesh (Gal. 5:16) and bears the **fruit of the Spirit** (Gal. 5:22-23).

I believe the Spirit sovereignly distributes **spiritual gifts** to believers (1 Cor. 12:11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11) for the building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:7-13). Each gift is dispensed as a stewardship (1 Pet. 4:10), which implies that all believers are responsible to exercise their gifts. The Spirit's gifts may be categorized into **manual gifts** and **verbal gifts** (1 Pet. 4:11). **Spiritual gifts mentioned in Scripture** include apostleship (1 Cor. 12:28), prophecy (Rom. 12:6), miracles (1 Cor. 12:28), healing (1 Cor. 12:28), tongues (1 Cor. 12:10), interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:10), evangelism (Eph. 4:11), shepherding-teaching (Eph. 4:11), serving (Rom. 12:7), teaching (Rom. 12:7), faith (1 Cor. 12:9), exhortation (Rom. 12:8), distinguishing spirits (1 Cor. 12:10), mercy (Rom. 12:8), giving (Rom. 12:8), administration (Rom. 12:8), wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8), and knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8).

I believe **some spiritual gifts have ceased**. Certain sign gifts and abilities to perform miracles were connected to apostolic ministry (Heb. 2:4; 2 Cor. 12:12). These gifts were necessary to lay the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) and were temporary in nature. Also, verbal gifts such as the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues have ceased (1 Cor. 13:8-9).⁵ I believe it is clear from Acts 2 that tongues are the miraculous ability to speak previously unknown languages.⁶ Consequently, I believe that any Christian group which practices tongues as ecstatic speech is not practicing the biblical gift of tongues. Furthermore, Christian groups and sects which have interpreted and practiced tongues as ecstatic speech have generally been considered unorthodox by both their contemporaries and by historical critics.⁷ Finally, many Christian groups who have practiced, or currently practice the gift of tongues, have failed to abide by the standards which Paul set forth for tongue speaking in 1 Cor. 14:27-40, or have erroneously taught that everyone should speak in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30). A bird's eye view of history indicates that there were only a few relatively short periods of time during which miracles and sign gifts were common. Therefore, I do not believe either sign gifts or tongues should be considered normative for this present age.

⁵ Regardless of how one interprets "the perfect" of 1 Cor. 13:10, Paul does not include tongues as a gift which ceases when "the perfect" comes. He distinguishes between tongues on the one hand and knowledge and prophecy on the other hand by 1) using a different verb, 2) using a different verb tense and 3) by designating knowledge and prophecy as being "in part." It is only that which is in part (i.e. knowledge and prophecy) which will be done away with when "the perfect" comes.

⁶ The fact that tongues are languages is clear from Luke's designation that the tongues spoken at Pentecost were "other" tongues (Acts 2:4), implying that the tongues were of the same kind as their own tongue of Aramaic. Also, those present from various nations testified that they understood these men speaking in various human languages (Acts 2:11). First Corinthians 14:21 also bears testimony to the nature of tongues as the ability to speak human languages in quoting Isaiah 28:11, where the context clearly identifies tongues as foreign languages.

⁷ The Pentecostal movement of the early twentieth century initially held the position that tongues were the ability to speak human languages. It wasn't until practical experiences of using tongues on foreign mission fields taught them that they were *not* speaking known human languages that the leaders of Pentecostalism redefined tongues as the ability to speak some spiritual or angelic language.

Angelology

The Creation of Angels

I believe that God created angelic beings. Different terms used for these creatures are: angel (Lk. 1:11), minister (Heb.1:7), host (i.e. army) (1 K. 22:19), watcher (Dan.4:13, 17), son of the Mighty (Ps 89:6), son of God (Jb.1:6), holy one (Ps 89:6-7), star (Rev.12:3-4), and even *Elohim* (God) in the sense of a divine representative or supernatural being (Ps.8:5 cf. Heb.2:7). As angels neither procreate (Matt. 22:30) nor die (Lk. 20:36), the same number of them exists today as when they were created. The time of their creation is not revealed, but evidently angels were present during the creation of the earth (Jb. 38:7). The number of angelic beings is enormous, with the number of holy angels being myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands (Rev. 5:11). At creation all angels were holy, since God pronounced all that He had made good (Gen.1:31).

Angelic Characteristics

I believe angels are **personal beings**. They display intelligence (Dan.8:16-27; 1 Pet. 1:12), emotion (Lk.2:13; Ja.2:19), and will (Jude 6). They are not glorified human beings, although humans will be *like* the angels in that they will neither marry nor procreate (Mt.22:30).

I believe angelic beings are **spirit beings**, having no physical body (Heb.1:14). Although they are generally invisible, at times they may become visible to the human eye (2 K. 6:17; Lk. 1:11). Angels never cease to exist or die (Lk. 20:36).

The Fall of Angels

I believe that one third of the angelic host **fell into sin** (Rev. 12:4) at some point before the fall of man (Gen. 3:1). Led by a guardian cherub (Ezekiel 28:12-19), who exalted himself in pride (Is. 14:12-15), these angels overstepped the bounds of their authority and ranking and abandoned their heavenly dwellings (Jd. 6). While God has confined some fallen angels (2 Pet.2:4), others dwell on the earth (Rev. 12:4). Great spiritual warfare exists between holy angels and fallen angels (Dan. 10:13; Rev. 12:7-9).

Holy Angels

I believe there are various **ranks of angelic beings**. There is evidently only one archangel, Michael (Dan.12:1; Rev. 12:7) who is part of a group/order of angels called the chief princes (Dan. 10:13). Other angelic ranks include thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities (Col.1:16; Eph.1:21; 3:10). Related to rank, angelic beings also seem to carry national and territorial responsibilities (Dan.10:20; 12:1).

I believe the Scripture identifies several **classes of angelic beings** as well. **Cherubim** kept fallen man from the Garden of Eden (Gen.3:24), covered the mercy seat (Ex. 25:18), and were included in the decorations of the Tabernacle (1 K. 6:23). **Seraphim** (burning ones) praise God for His holiness and were the agents through which God cleansed Isaiah (Is. 6:2-7). Similarly, four **Living Creatures** praise God ceaselessly around His throne (Rev.4:8).

Works

I believe angels **worship** God. The psalmist exhorted the angels to praise God (Ps. 97:7 cf. Heb. 1:6; Ps 148:2). Isaiah saw Seraphim exalting Yahweh for His holiness (Is. 6:2). John observed *all* the angels falling on their faces to worship God (Rev.7:11; Rev.4:8).

I believe angels are God's **agents of communication**. The word "angel" means "messenger." God announced the births of Samson, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ through angels (Lk. 1:13; Matt.1:20; Lk. 1:26-38; Lk. 2:9-15). Daniel, Cornelius, and Paul received communications through angels (Dan. 10:5-13; Acts 10:3-7; 27:23-24). Angels were involved in the giving of both the law to Moses (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19) and the book of Revelation (Rev.1:1).

I believe angels are God's **agents of service** to believers (Heb. 1:14). Their ministries include protection (Ps.91:11; 2 Ki. 6:15-16), encouragement (Acts 27:23-25), guidance (Acts 8:26), and ushering believers into God's presence at death (Lk.16:22). Angels also played an important role in serving Christ on earth (Mat.2:13, 19-20; 4:10; Lk. 22:43).

I believe angels are **God's agents of judgment**. Angels executed God's wrath on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen.19:15-24), on Israel (2 Sam. 24:17), on Sennacherib's army (2 Chr. 32:21) and on Herod (Acts 12:23). End-time judgments will be executed by angelic beings (Matt. 13:41, 49; Rev. 7:1; 8:2-9:14; 11:15; 15:1; 16:1-17).

Satan

I believe in a literal devil, who is also called Satan (Rev.12:9). Satan was created a good creature, likely the guardian Cherub described in Ezekiel 28:12-19. After his fall into sin (1 Tim. 3:6), he introduced sin into the world by deceiving Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen.3:1-6). God decreed that a deliverer would come who would bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). That promise was (at least partially) fulfilled when Christ, who came to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8), rendered Satan powerless at the cross (Heb.2:14) and disarmed him (Col. 2:15). Although he is a defeated foe, Satan is still active, seeking people to devour (1 Pet. 5:8). During the Millennium, he will be bound for a thousand years (Rev.20:1-3). After his release, he will stir up the nations to enter into war against Jerusalem. Fire from heaven will consume these armies and Satan will be eternally confined (Rev.20:7-10) to the lake of fire, prepared for him and his angels (Matt. 25:31).

Works

I believe Satan **opposes God**. Satan is a liar (Jn. 8:44) who deceives the whole world (Rev. 12:9; 1 Jn. 5:19). Disguised as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), he promotes false doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1-3), mainly through false religion. He sows counterfeit Christians in the Church (Mt. 13:38-39) and hinders God's servants in ministry (1 Thes. 2:18; Rev. 2:10). The climax of Satan's opposition will be the man of sin (2 Thes. 2:3), who in the power of Satan (Rev. 13:2, 4) will blaspheme God outspokenly (Rev. 13:5) and persecute His people vehemently (Dan. 7:21).

I believe Satan **tempts people to sin**. Satan is called the tempter (Mat. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5). Among others, he tempted Eve (Gen. 3:1-6), Job (Job 1:12; 2:6-7), David (1 Chron. 21:1), and Christ (Lk.4:1-2, 13). Specific targets of Satan's temptation are the husband-wife relationship (1 Cor.7:5) and evangelistic efforts (1 Thes.3:5; Lk. 8:12).

I believe Satan **slanders God's people**. One of Satan's titles is 'devil' (e.g. Matt. 4:1), which means 'slanderer.' The story of Job is a good example of such slander (Job 1:9-12; 2:4-5). He is the continuous accuser of the brethren before God (Rev.12:10).

I believe Satan **blinds unbelievers** (2 Cor. 4:4). He is a deceiver and presently deceives the nations of the world (Rev. 20:3; 1 Jn 5:19) who are held captive by his will (2 Tim. 2:26). He energizes the world system to walk in disobedience to God (Eph. 2:2).

I believe Satan's **access to believing people** is real (1 Pet. 5:8; Jam. 4:7), but limited. *First*, Satan is limited in that he cannot thwart God's purposes for His people or the fulfillment of God's promises (Dan. 4:35; Rom. 8:39). *Second*, the extent of Satan's access to God's people is controlled by God (Job 1:10-12). *Third*, I do not believe a true believer can ever be possessed by the devil or a demon.

I do not believe Christians should '**exorcise**' or '**bind**' Satan or his demons. While Christ's disciples cast out demons, this seems to have been a special authority akin to miraculous healing gifts (Mk. 3:14-15). Scripture never commands believers to perform exorcisms, but to resist Satan (Jam.4:7; 1 Pet.5:9), using the Word of God (Eph. 6:17).

Evil Angels

I believe demons are **fallen angels** who were created as good creatures, but rebelled with Satan in his self-exaltation. God has confined some fallen angels (2 Pet.2:4), while others dwell on the earth and seem to prefer indwelling other creatures (Matt. 8:31; 12:43-44). Demons have a knowledge of God (Jam. 2:19), God's Son (Mat. 8:29), and God's servants (Acts 16:7; 19:15). They fear and submit to divine authority (Jam. 2:19; Matt. 8:32), knowing that God will ultimately judge them (Matt. 8:29; Matt. 25:31). Scripture identifies ranks among demons, like rulers, powers, world forces, and spiritual forces of wickedness (Eph. 6:12).

I believe demons **oppose God** and His people (Matt. 12:25-26). Much of idolatry in the world is in fact the worship of demons (Psalm 106: 36-38; 1 Cor. 10:20; 1 Tim. 4:1). During the tribulation, demons will stir up the kings of the earth to war against God (Rev.16:14). Demons can **possess people** (Matt. 4:24), often inflicting physical illness (Matt. 9:32-33; 12:12). *See also the works of Satan.*

Anthropology

The Origin of Man

I believe God created man and woman on the sixth day of creation (Gen. 1:27). The first man, Adam, was made from the ground of the earth. God breathed life into man to make him a living being (Gen. 2:7). The first woman, Eve, was a special creation made out of a rib from Adam to correspond to Adam and be a help to him (Gen. 2:18, 22).

The Nature of Man

Man as a Created Being

I believe that man as a created being is a **dependent being**. In conception (Ps. 127:3; Gen. 30:2, 22), prenatal development (Ps. 139:13, Jb. 31:15), birth (Jb. 1:21; Ps. 22:9), and even in every breath (Jb. 12:10; Acts 17:25) man is dependent on God as Creator and Sustainer (Heb. 1:3). Man's joy in meaningful productivity (Eccl. 2:24; 5:19), his possessions (Eccl. 5:19; Acts 17:25), and his satisfaction in life's blessings (Acts 14:17) are all gifts from God's hand. God has determined man's appointed times, and the boundaries of his habitation (Acts 17:26).

I believe that man as a created being is a **responsible being**. Man was given the task to multiply (Gen. 1:28) and to subdue and to rule over God's creation (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:6), starting with the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:15). Ultimately man was created to bring God pleasure (Rev. 4:11) and magnify the goodness of His creative works (Gen. 1:31).

Man as an Image Bearer of God.

I believe God created man in His image and after His likeness (Gen.1:26, 27; 5:1; 9:6; Jam. 3:9). The image of God distinguishes man from the rest of creation (Gen.1:26; 9:6) and enables him to fulfill God's creation mandate of subduing and governing His creation. As image bearer, man has the capacity to relate to God and other people on a spiritual level (Gen. 3:8-24; John 4:23-24; Rom. 1:20-21), the capacity for great intelligence, understanding, and wisdom (Gen. 1:26), and the capacity to make moral judgments (Rom. 2:14-15). While the image of God is still present in fallen human beings (Gen. 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jam. 3:9), it is marred (Col. 3:10).

Man as a Spiritual Being

I believe man is a dichotomy, made up of both a material and a non-material part (Gen. 2:9; Eccl.12:7). Scriptural terms for man's non-material parts include spirit (1 Thes. 5:23), soul (Heb. 4:12), conscience (Heb.10:22), heart (Mat. 22:37), will (Jn. 7:17; 1 Cor. 16:12), mind (Matt. 22:37), and (in fallen man) the flesh (Rom. 7:18). These terms do not lend themselves to strict scientific definitions, as Scripture at times uses them interchangeably, metaphorically, and synecdochally.⁸ Man's body is referred to as a tent or building (2 Cor. 5:1-4; 2 Pet.1:14).

⁸ One example of interchangeable concepts is the soul and spirit. Both are used in contrast to the body (Matt. 10:28; Jam. 2:27). Both are said to be the objects of salvation (Jam. 1:21; 1 Cor. 5:5). Both are used in descriptions of a person's departure from the body at death (Gen. 35:18; Acts 7:59). Physical organs like the kidney (כִּלְיָהוּ),

I believe God is the One who creates the soul of man (Eccl. 12:7), presumably at conception. The material and non-material parts of man form a unity that continues until death (Jam. 2:26). At death, the material part of man returns to the dust of the earth from which it came, and the non-material part of man returns to God who gave it (Eccl.12:7).

Man as male and female

I believe God made both male and female in the image of God (Gen.1:27) with equal spiritual and personal status before God (1 Pet. 3:7; Gal. 3:28). Yet, even in pre-fall conditions, the man was the leader in the relationship, since the man was created first (Gen. 2:7, 21-22; 1 Tim. 2:13), the woman was created for the man (Gen. 2:18; 1 Cor. 11:9), and the woman was created out of the man (1 Cor. 11:8). In giving Eve to Adam (Gen. 2:22), God established the creation ordinance of marriage, wherein He purposed that one man and one woman should become one flesh. Within this union, God provides physical intimacy (Prov. 5:18; Sng. 4:12-16) and fruitfulness (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 127:3-5). The husband's responsibility is to love his wife (Eph. 5:25) and to live with her in an understanding way (1 Pet. 3:7). The wife is to submit herself to the authority of her husband (Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:1) and to respect him (Eph. 5:33).

Fall of Man

The test

I believe the records in Genesis 1-3 regarding Adam and the fall of man are literal and historical. The biblical genealogies (Gen. 5; 1 Chron. 1; Luke 3) and theological relationship between Adam and Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45) argue for this. God placed Adam in a garden and allowed him to eat freely of all trees but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Disobedience would result in certain death (Gen. 2:16-17).

I believe the test in essence was one of obedience to the plain command of God and of faith in the promised consequence attached to disobedience. The command was couched in the great liberty which God gave Adam to eat of every other tree.

The temptation

I believe Satan tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Through deceit and half-truths he persuaded Eve to disbelieve God's words and disobey the command (Gen. 3:1-5). The fruit appealed to Eve's bodily desires (lust of the flesh), her desire to possess the evidently beautiful fruit (lust of the eyes), and her desire to advance through the knowledge of good and evil (pride of life) (Gen. 3:6). She ate the forbidden fruit and gave some to Adam (Gen. 3:6).

The result

I believe the results of failing God's test were immediate and irreversible. Their eyes were opened and they were ashamed concerning their nakedness (Gen. 3:7). They experienced the accusation of their conscience (Rom. 2:15) and guilt associated with their disobedience, and

σπλάγχνα) and heart (כֶּלֶב, καρδία) are metaphors for the emotional capacity of man. Finally, Matt. 22:37 and 1 Thes. 5:23 use a limited number of terms to refer to the entirety of man's non-material part.

hid themselves (Gen. 3:8). The Lord pronounced judgment on the spot. The serpent lost his upright posture (Gen. 3:14); Satan was sentenced to a fatal blow to the head by one of Eve's descendants (Gen. 3:15); Eve and her female descendants were judged with pain in childbearing (Gen. 3:16); Adam and his male descendants were judged with toil in cultivating the land (Gen. 3:17-19); all of Adam's descendants received the death penalty (Rom. 5:12); and all of creation was subjected to futility and corruption (Rom. 8:20-21). Mankind was barred from the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24) and lost the potential for continued life. Death was the ultimate consequence of sin (Rom. 5:12; Jam. 1:15; Gen 5).

Hamartiology

The Nature of Sin

General definition

I believe sin is the lack of conformity to God's moral law in deed, attitude, thought, or motive. Sin can take the form of a commission or an omission. All sin is ultimately an offense against God Himself (Ps. 51:4).

Biblical descriptions

Sin (חטא, ἁμαρτία) – missing the mark. The mark that humans should aim for, but nevertheless continually miss, is the glory of God, i.e. glorifying Him (Rom. 3:23).

Transgression/trespass (פָּשַׁע, παράβασις, παράπτωμα). Stepping over a boundary set forth by God in His law (Gal. 3:19).

Iniquity/crookedness (עוֹן). Although there is no common NT word for this concept of sin, both Peter (Acts 2:40) and Paul (Phil. 2:15) applied the term "crooked" to the world of lost people, who stand in contrast to the Lord's ways which are always straight (Acts 13:10).

Lawlessness/rebellion (רֶשַׁע, סָרָה, פְּרִי, ἄνομος, ἀνυπότακτος). The natural man seeks to be unrestrained and rebels against the restraints of law (1 Tim. 1:9; Cf. 1 Jn. 3:4).

Godlessness/irreligion (חִנּוּף, ἀσεβής). Fallen man may not be always outspokenly hostile to God, but even having little regard or fear for God is considered sin (Job 8:13).

Evil/badness (רָע, πονηρός). These are sins that transgress normal bounds of morality and goodness. The last days will be characterized by increasing degrees of evil (2 Tim. 3:13).

The source of sin

I believe God is never the source of sin or temptation (Jam. 1:13). Rather, the source of sin is man's heart with its inordinate desires or inordinate applications of good desires (Matt. 15:18-19). The appeal of the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17), energized by Satan (Eph. 2:1), stimulates the natural man's flesh (Rom. 8:6-7). Man's desires entice him and he is carried away in his lust (Jam. 1:14), which conceives and gives birth to sin (Jam. 1:15).

Inherited Sin

Original sin

I believe man is born sinful by nature, not innocent or neutral. From conception, man is corrupted by sin (Ps. 51:5) and can rightly be called a child of wrath by nature (Eph. 2:3). He stands guilty before God by virtue of his participation in Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12).

Total depravity

I believe that man is totally depraved from the time of conception. By this I mean that every aspect of man is affected by sin (Rom. 3:10-18; Eph. 4:18) and unable to overcome his own depravity (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14). The natural man's mind (Rom. 1:28), his

understanding (1 Cor. 2:14), and his heart (Eph. 4:18) are all affected by sin. As a result, every facet of man is the object of God's saving grace (1 Thes. 5:23).

Imputed Sin

I believe that Adam's guilt has been imputed to the entire race (Rom. 5:12). I believe that the phrase "all sinned" in Rom. 5:12 refers to our participation in Adam's act of sin in the Garden of Eden. Because Adam is the representative head of mankind, his sin and guilt is imputed to all. Christ, who is the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), stands as head of a new humanity (Rom. 5:18-19). As God imputed sin to the entire race in Adam, He now imputes righteousness to all who believe in Christ (Rom. 5:18-19; 8:3-4).

Personal Sin

Degrees of sin

I believe there are degrees in the severity of sin and culpability of the sinner. There is a prioritistic order within the law, whereby certain laws are weightier than others (Matt. 23:23). Furthermore, the sinner's intent in his sin (Num. 15:22-31), his status (Lev. 4:3, 27; Jam. 3:1), and his past privileges (Jn. 19:11; Lk. 12:47-48) all have bearing on the degree of his guilt. As a result, there are also degrees of condemnation (Mk 12:40; Lk. 20:47).

The Unpardonable Sin

I believe there is a sin that is unpardonable. Christ Himself taught this when He asserted that every sin can be forgiven, except blasphemy against the Spirit (Matt. 12:30-31). I believe the unpardonable sin is ultimately, deliberately, and blasphemously rejecting Christ's claims, which He supported by miraculous signs in the power of the Spirit. I believe this kind of blasphemy against the Spirit can be committed today.

The Sin unto Death

I believe there is "sin unto death," i.e. sin that leads to an untimely death (1 Jn. 5:16). The context of 1 Jn. 5:16 seems to suggest that believers can commit such a sin. Ananias and Saphira, if true believers, are examples of Christians whose lives the Lord took because of sin (Acts 5:5, 10). Certain Corinthians were also taken prematurely in response to their irreverence at the Lord's Table (1 Cor. 11:30).

The Fate of Those Who Die in Infancy

Although the Scripture is not explicit concerning this question, I believe there are some indications that infants who die go to be with the Lord. First, David encouraged himself in the fact that he would one day see his dead infant son again (2 Sam. 12:23). Second, the Scriptures teach something like an age of accountability by distinguishing between children who have moral discernment and those who do not (Dt. 1:39; Is. 7:15-16; Jon. 4:11).

Soteriology

Election

I believe God graciously elects certain individuals⁹ to salvation (Eph. 1:4; 1 Cor. 1:27-28) solely on the basis of His own sovereign good pleasure (Rom. 9:11). God's election is governed by foreknowledge (1 Pet. 1:1-2; Rom. 8:29), which is the covenant-relational knowledge God enters into with His people through election (Am. 3:2; Gal. 4:8-9; Matt. 7:23).¹⁰

I believe the doctrine of election gives believers assurance concerning their glorification (Rom. 8:29-30). The doctrine of election should also motivate believers to proclaim the gospel to all people (Matt. 28:19-20; Lk. 24:47), because it ensures evangelistic fruit (2 Tim. 2:10).

Effectual Calling

I believe that all the elect are effectually called. While God extends a general call of invitation to all men (Lk. 14:16-24; Jn. 7:37), only those and all those who are effectually called are saved (Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:2). I believe effectual calling in this age involves conviction (Jn. 16:8-11), illumination (Eph. 4:18; 2 Cor. 4:6), and persuasion (Jn. 6:44).

Conversion

I believe that man can experience genuine conversion through repentance and faith in Christ. I believe repentance is a change of mind regarding sin that is characterized by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10) and results in a changed life (Mat. 3:8). Man must also exercise persevering (Lk. 8:13) and fruitful (Jam. 2:19) faith in Christ (Acts 16:31). The content which must be believed is the gospel concerning the person (Rom. 1:1-4) and work of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-8). Repentance and faith are not works, but gifts of God (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25; Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8-9). I do not believe that acknowledgement of the lordship of Christ is a prerequisite or condition for salvation, but rather that obedience and submission to the lordship of Christ are an essential evidence or characteristic of saving faith (1 Jn. 2:3-5).

Regeneration

I believe God regenerates believers at conversion. The believer experiences a spiritual birth as God raises him from spiritual death and imparts spiritual, eternal life to him (Jn. 3: 5-7; Eph. 2:1-5; 1 Pet 1:3). The believer becomes a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) and is made partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). While faith and regeneration occur simultaneously, I believe the Scriptures seem to emphasize that faith *logically* precedes regeneration (Jn. 20:31).

⁹ I do not believe the object of God's election is merely the church as an entity. There is a sense in which the church is chosen corporately as a chosen race (1 Pet. 2:9), but not to the exclusion of God's election of individuals within that group. If the spiritual blessings of redemption, forgiveness, and the sealing of the Spirit (Eph. 1:7,13) are experienced individually, than blessings such as election and predestination must be as well (Eph. 1:4-5).

¹⁰ The meaning of foreknowledge cannot merely refer to God's knowledge of man's response to the gospel beforehand. It is the believer *himself* who is foreknown, not his *faith* (Rom. 8:29). Furthermore, Romans 8:29 explains that *all* who are foreknown are eventually glorified. God knows the response of every person ahead of time, but not everyone will eventually be glorified.

Justification

I believe God justifies a believer at conversion. In justification, God, in a single act, declares a sinner to be righteous. God can justly do this because of the penal, substitutionary atonement of Christ (Rom. 3:23-27). God's holy demands in the law have been satisfied by the death of Christ on behalf of sinners (1 Pet. 2:24). As a result, the believer is freely forgiven (Rom. 4:6-8) and is credited the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 5:16-18; 8:2-3).

Adoption

While a believer enters God's family through new birth, I believe he receives his full standing of sonship through adoption, which is the redemption of his body through resurrection (Rom. 8:23). At that time, the believer enters into his full spiritual inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14). In anticipation of adoption, the believer is given the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5-6), who testifies with the believer's spirit that he is a child of God (Rom. 8:16).

Sanctification

I believe that God sanctifies every believer. In sanctification God sets believers apart to holiness. *First*, in **positional sanctification** the believer is positionally and objectively made holy at the time of salvation (1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 5:26). *Second*, in **progressive sanctification** the believer is subjectively and practically made holy through the cooperative work of God and man (Phil. 2:12-13). While the Christian has died to sin (Rom. 6:2) and has been freed from sin's dominion (Rom. 6:7, 9), he still struggles with indwelling sin (Rom. 7:14ff). In sanctification, he grows in actual holiness through transformation by the Spirit of God using the Word of God (2 Cor. 3:18). *Third*, in **ultimate sanctification**, the believer is made completely holy through glorification (1 Thes. 5:23).

Perseverance

I believe that all true believers will persevere in their faith. All whom the Lord effectually calls will be glorified (Rom. 8:28-30), so that nothing can interrupt the process of salvation (Rom. 8:33-39). As a result, true believers can never lose their salvation (Jn. 10:28; Eph. 4:30). I believe warning passages like Hebrews 6:1-8 refer to people who have had certain spiritual privileges without truly experiencing regeneration. Such people can fall away from the grace (though not saving grace) they have received. For this reason those who profess Christ must continuously examine the genuineness of their faith (2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Pet. 1:10).

Glorification

I believe God glorifies all true believers. Glorification is the act whereby God perfects His people, completely delivering them from the presence of sin (Col. 1:22; Eph. 1:4). Believers obtain a fullness of knowledge (1 Cor. 13:12), and receive a glorified body at the resurrection (Phil. 3:20-21). This body will be similar in form to the resurrection body of Christ (Phil. 3:20-21), incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual (1 Cor. 15:38-50).

Ecclesiology

The Universal Church

I believe the universal Church consists of both glorified saints and present day genuine believers since Pentecost. In the New Testament, the term “church” (ἐκκλησία) is used for both the entire body of New Testament believers (Matt.16:18) as well as local gatherings of believers (Matt. 18:17). Members of the Church are called saints and brethren (2 Cor. 1:1; Acts 15:22). The Church, made up of New Testament believers, is part of the larger group of all believers of all time called the people of God (Heb. 4:9; Rev. 21:3).

Primary Images of the Church

I believe the universal Church is **the Body of Christ** (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18, 24). Each member of the body is gifted according to the sovereign will of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:11) to contribute to growth of the body (Eph. 4:15-16). Christ is the head of this body (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18) and indeed head over all things for the benefit of His body (Eph. 1:22). As head, Christ has authority over the body, and nourishes and cherishes it (Eph. 5:29).

I believe the universal Church is **the Temple of God**, indwelt by the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 3:16). Believers are portrayed as spiritual stones that make up this temple (1 Pet. 2:5) and priests offering up sacrifices to God (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15-16).

Inauguration of the Church

I believe the Church was **inaugurated at Pentecost**. During His earthly ministry, Christ predicted the commencement of His Church (Matt. 16:18) and prepared His apostles for a new era in God’s kingdom, marked by the coming (Acts 1:5) and indwelling (Jn. 14:17) of the Spirit. These promises were fulfilled at Pentecost, which Peter recognized as “the beginning” of this era (Acts 11:15-16) when the foundation of the church was begun to be laid (Eph. 2:20).

Distinctiveness of the Church

I believe the Church is **distinct from Israel**. The New Testament never unambiguously equates the term “Israel” with the Church in the 38 NT occurrences of the word. Rather, Israel is viewed as a national entity, which contains some genuine believers, the true Israel (Rom. 9:6). Although believers in the church age are called the “seed of Abraham” in a spiritual sense (Gal. 3:29), this does not equate Israel with the Church, but merely indicates that Abraham is the father of both Israel and the Church (Rom. 4:11-12).

I believe the Church is **the current manifestation of the Kingdom of God**. The kingdom of God is the rule of God expressed through various manifestations in history. These include God’s universal rule over creation (Ps. 103:19), His rule over Israel through human mediators (1 Sam. 8:7; Deut. 17:15), His rule over His Church through the ascended Lord Christ (Acts 2:34-36; Rev. 3:21), and His rule from Jerusalem over all the earth during the Millennium through Jesus Christ (Rev. 20:1-4).

I believe the Church is **distinct from the State**. The Church and the State are authorized by God to minister in different realms. The Church ministers in the salvific-spiritual realm (Matt. 28:19-20), while the State ministers in the societal-judicial realm (Rom.13:1-4). To fulfill her

God-given task, the State has been authorized to “carry the sword” (Rom. 13:4), while the Church accomplishes its purposes apart from the sword (Jn. 18:36). Members of the Church are to submit to government authorities (Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-2; Matt. 17:24-27).

The Local Church

I believe God’s design for His Church is to gather in local assemblies (Heb. 10:25). The designated day for gathering is the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2), since this was the day of our Lord’s resurrection (Jn. 20:1).

Purposes of the church

I believe the overarching purpose of the Church is **to glorify God** by manifesting His supreme wisdom to heavenly beings (Eph. 3:10). This overarching purpose is accomplished through the following secondary purposes. *First*, the church’s responsibility toward God is **joyful worship**. God intends His people to respond to the resurrection of His Son with joy and gladness (Ps. 118:21-24, cf. Acts 4:11). *Second*, the church’s responsibility toward unbelievers is **evangelism**. The scope of this evangelism includes all nations for the duration of the Church age (Matt. 28:19-20). The New Testament example includes both corporate evangelism (Acts 8:5-11) and personal evangelism (Acts 8:26-40). *Third*, the church’s responsibility toward believers is **edification**, which takes place through preaching/teaching (Acts 2:42; Acts 6:4; Acts 20:32), through the exercise of spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 12-14), through fellowship (Acts 2:42), and through prayer (Acts 2:42).

Membership of the church

I believe New Testament believers ought to attach themselves to a sound local church for the purpose of corporate worship (Acts 2:46), instruction (Acts 2:42), mutual edification through spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:16; Heb. 10:23-24), spiritual accountability (Heb. 13:17), and fellowship (Acts 2:42). Official church membership identifies the people who make up the local church, which is essential in exercising church discipline (1 Cor. 5:2-5; Matt. 18: 15-17), practicing congregational government (Acts 15:22), exercising spiritual leadership (Heb. 13:17), and providing for its widows (1 Tim. 5:9). Qualifications for membership are conversion (Acts 2:41), baptism (Matt. 28:19),¹¹ and the absence of sin(s) that would require church disciplinary action.

Government of the church

I believe Christ is the supreme **authority** over His Church (Eph. 1:22; 5:23) and rules each congregation directly (Rev. 2-3). Within the congregation, Christ delegates authority to the pastor/elder (1 Tim. 3:1; 5:17), as well as to the congregation (Matt. 18: 15-17; Acts 6:3-6).

I believe the Scriptural **church offices** are pastor/elder¹² and deacon (Phil. 1:1). The New Testament example suggests churches should ideally have a plurality of elders (Acts 14:23;

¹¹ While Scripture does not make water baptism a requirement for church membership, it does not conceive of a genuine believer who does not get baptized.

¹² The terms elder, pastor (shepherd), and overseer (bishop) are synonyms (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2).

20:17). I do not believe the New Testament teaches an *office* of deaconess (1 Tim. 3:12) or allows women to teach or have positions of authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12).

Discipline in the church

I believe church members should seek to restore a fellow believer living in serious sin by exercising church discipline (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1). *First*, the spiritual person should seek to restore his brother through personal confrontation (Gal. 6:1; Matt. 18:15). *Second*, the spiritual person should confront the sinning brother with two or three witnesses (Matt. 18:16). *Third*, the spiritual person should present the sinning brother to the church for excommunication (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5). Upon repentance, the church should engage in a restoration process and reaffirm its love (2 Cor. 2:8).

Ordinances of the church

I believe an ordinance is a divinely instituted rite which symbolizes redemptive truth and was observed by the New Testament Church. I believe water baptism (Matt. 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:25-26) are the two New Testament rites which fit this description.

I believe **water baptism** is an outward manifestation and display of spiritual baptism. It identifies the believer both with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-4), as well as with Christ's body, the Church (1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:41). Water baptism also pictures the spiritual cleansing of salvation (Acts 22:16). The lexicographical meaning of *baptize* ("to dip, immerse"), the New Testament examples of water baptism (Matt. 3:6; Acts 8:36), and the practice of the early Church argue for immersion as the biblical mode for baptism. Believers are the only proper subjects for baptism (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38).

I believe the **Lord's Table** is a corporate ordinance (1 Cor. 11:33) in which believers (Acts 2:41-42) upon self examination (1 Cor. 11:27-29) remember the redemptive work of Christ, proclaim His death (1 Cor. 11:25-26), and commune with Christ and one another (1 Cor. 10:16).

Eschatology

Individual Eschatology

Death

I believe death is the result of the fall (Rom. 5:12) and the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23). **Physical death**, which is appointed for every man (Heb. 9:27), is the departure of the spirit/soul from the body (Jam. 2:26; Eccl. 12:7). **Spiritual death** is the unregenerate soul's spiritual separation from God (Eph. 2:1), the source of spiritual life (Jn. 15:1-6). Those who remain in this unregenerate state will experience the second (eternal) death in the lake of fire after the final judgment of all mankind (Rev. 20:14-15).

The Intermediate State

I believe the soul of every human being continues to live consciously during the intermediate state (Lk. 16:19-31; Eccl. 12:7). In the Old Testament, *Sheol* generally refers to the abode or realm of the dead, or the grave, which was entered even by the righteous (Gen. 42:38). Some occurrences of *Sheol* may refer specifically to the place where the wicked go at death, i.e. hell (Is. 14:4-15). In the New Testament, *Hades* can refer to the realm of the dead (Acts 2:27, 31), but usually refers to a place of torment, i.e. hell (Lk. 16:23).

I believe the souls of **Old Testament saints** went to be with God at death (2 Ki. 2:11; Matt. 17:1-8). Likewise, **New Testament saints** go directly into the presence of God at death (2 Cor. 5:8; Lk. 23:43), while their bodies are laid to "sleep" in anticipation of the resurrection (Jn. 11:11; 1 Cor. 15:51). The souls of **unbelievers** are confined to hell at death (Lk. 16:23). After the resurrection, these souls are reunited with their bodies and cast for ever into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15), also called *Gehenna* (Matt. 5:29). I do not believe there is Scriptural evidence for the concept of **purgatory**. Furthermore, the idea of purgatory contradicts the full propitiation of Christ's sacrifice (Heb. 1:3; Jn. 19:30) and the nature of divine forgiveness (Heb. 8:12).

General Eschatology

Biblical Foundations of Eschatology

I believe the **Abrahamic covenant** (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-27; 18:17-19; 22:15-18) is the foundational covenant in relation to eschatology. In response to Abraham's faith and obedience, God entered into a covenant with Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob. The provisions of the Abrahamic covenant are a land, a seed (signifying national existence as well as a Messiah – Gal. 3:16), and international blessing. While the promises of the seed and international blessing have been partially fulfilled in the Church, ultimate fulfillment is in the Millennium, when Abraham's seed, the Messiah, will give Israel all her promised territory and will cause Israel to be an international blessing (Zech 8:22-23).

I believe the **Davidic covenant** (2 Sam. 7:8-19) is an outflow of the Abrahamic seed promise. The main provision is an eternal dynasty, which was inaugurated in the ascension of Christ to the Father's right hand (Acts 2:30-36) and will be ultimately fulfilled in the earthly reign of the Messiah during the Millennium (Rev. 20:4, 6; Zech 14:9).

I believe the **New Covenant** (Jer. 31:31-34) is an outflow of the Abrahamic international blessing promise. Its basic provision is the complete forgiveness of sins, something the Mosaic covenant could not provide, because of the insufficiency of animal sacrifices to atone for human sin (Heb. 10:4). Gentiles are grafted into the spiritual provisions of the new covenant (Heb. 8-9; Rom. 11), but the ultimate fulfillment of the new covenant will be the national salvation of Israel at the second coming of Christ (Rom. 11:25-32; Zech. 13:8-9).

Interpretive Framework of Eschatology

I believe a **dispensational** framework best accounts for the Biblical data concerning eschatology. I hold to a normal interpretation of Scripture. I believe God's administration has varied in different eras, but that salvation was always by faith (Rom. 4:1-10). I believe the Church is the present manifestation of the kingdom which Christ announced during His ministry (Matt. 16:18) and inaugurated at Pentecost (Acts 2:33). I distinguish between national Israel and the Church. I believe all unfulfilled unconditional promises to Israel in the Old Testament will be literally fulfilled during the millennial reign of Christ on the earth (e.g. the land promise – Eze. 48). At least some Old Testament promises to Israel are additionally fulfilled in the Church (e.g. the new covenant – Heb 8:8-12), or during the Church age (e.g. the Davidic covenant – Acts 2:30-36, Acts 15:16-18).

I believe a **premillennial return of Christ** best accounts for the biblical data concerning the nature and timing of the millennium. A normal interpretation of Revelation 19 and 20 indicates a future 1000 year period during which Christ will reign on the earth. During this time period many Old Testament promises made to national Israel will be fulfilled as Jerusalem will become the political and spiritual center of the earth (Zech. 14:6-21; Is. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-4).

I believe the **rapture of the Church** will occur before the start of the great tribulation (1 Thes. 4:15-18) to keep believers from the hour of trial which will come upon the whole world (Rev. 3:10). The imminent return of Christ fits best with a pretribulational rapture (e.g. Jm. 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:4). A pretribulational rapture also allows for the conversion of people during the tribulation who can enter the Millennium in non-glorified bodies (cf. Rev. 7:9-17).

Order of Eschatological Events

Rapture - I believe both living believers and those asleep in Christ will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thes. 4:16-17). This is God's means of keeping believers from the hour of trial (Rev. 3:10).

Judgment seat of Christ - I believe every believer must give account to Christ for the things done on earth (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:10). Rewards will be given for faithful stewardship (Matt. 25:21, 23).

Marriage of the Lamb - I believe there will be a celebration of the marriage of the Lamb to His bride (Rev. 19: 7-9).

Tribulation - I believe a period of unprecedented judgment will take place on the earth. This tribulation period will be seven years in duration (Dan. 9:24-27) and is designed to test mankind (Rev. 3:10) and chasten the Israel (Jer. 30:1-11). During this time, Satan will raise up the man of

lawlessness (2 Thes. 2:3; Rev. 13:2), who will be assassinated, apparently resurrected (Rev.13:3), and universally worshiped (Rev. 13:4).

Second Coming - I believe Christ will return to the earth in bodily form, riding on a white horse (Rev. 19:11). He will defeat the man of lawlessness and the armies gathered together against Jerusalem in the valley of Armageddon (Rev. 19:15-21; Zech. 14:2-3).

Millennium - I believe Christ will set up a thousand-year long, worldwide kingdom over which He will rule with His saints (Rev. 20:1-6). During this time peace and righteousness will characterize the earth (Is. 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 11:6-10; Mic. 4:1-4).

Resurrection of the unrighteous and Great White Throne - I believe that Christ will raise all the unrighteous dead from the grave to judge them at the Great White Throne according to their deeds. Those whose names are not found in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

Eternal State - I believe God will make a new, eternal world with a new Jerusalem where the righteous will live without end, serving God and worshiping Him for their redemption (Rev. 21:3). Unbelievers will be tormented eternally in the lake of fire (Mark 9:43-48).

Practical Issues

Personal Information

I was born into a missionary family in the Netherlands as the fourth child out of five. My father is Dutch and my mother (now with the Lord) was American. I was taught the gospel from an early age and made a profession of faith when I was about 5 years old. Although I do not remember many of the details of this time in my life, I have never doubted my salvation since then and believe I was genuinely converted. The Lord nurtured a desire for the Christian ministry in my heart at an early age. I really did not even consider doing anything else besides preaching until my teenage years when I developed an unbiblical spirit toward parental authority. Even during that wayward season of life I knew in the back of my mind that I could not keep up my rebellion and would end up in the ministry some day. The Lord dealt with me very graciously toward the end of my high school years and I yielded my life to Him.

I attended BJU where I majored in Pastoral Studies with an Ancient Languages minor. Through those undergraduate years the Lord confirmed the ministerial call in my heart through increased desire (1 Tim. 3:1), confirmation of my ability to teach (1 Tim. 3:2), and a sense of constraint (1 Cor. 9:16). After finishing my B.A., I went on in my education to receive a M.A. in Bible and a Master of Divinity.

My **ministry experience** during my educational years includes campus evangelism at Clemson University, summer camp ministry, itinerant children's evangelism, two church internships (Mount Calvary Baptist Church and Falls Baptist Church, WI), preaching ministries at various assisted living facilities, BJU society chaplain, BJU dormitory supervisor, door-to-door evangelism, Bible club ministries, Children's Church ministries (ages 3-8), teaching in Neighborhood Bible School (VBS), teaching a Sunday morning Neighborhood Bible Class, and teaching Sunday School (both children and adults). I also had the privilege of participating in a two-year ministerial preparation program ("Undershepherd In Training") at Mount Calvary Baptist Church. My primary spiritual gifts are in the areas of teaching and exhortation. By God's grace I have seen people come to Christ and/or grow in their understanding of God's Word through the exercise of my gifts. Other God-given strengths include leadership abilities, administrative abilities, and loyalty.

My **ministry goal is** to plant churches in the Netherlands, using a "mother church" ministry model. We desire to plant a church in the Parkstad area (the fifth largest population pocket of the Netherlands with 250,000 people) and progressively wean ourselves from American support. We hope to be totally self-supportive within 10 to 15 years. This mother church will then seek to train, send out, and support Dutch church planters to plant other churches in the Netherlands.

Philosophy of Ministry

I believe the starting point of any Biblical and successful ministry is a close **personal relationship** with the Lord, which involves daily reading of Scripture, daily prayer, and keeping a clear conscience. Since the goal of all ministry is bringing about growth in Christ-likeness to the glory of God (Col. 1:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18), the minister should strive for and excel in spiritual growth (1 Tim. 4:15), maintaining a **blameless testimony** (1 Thes. 2:4-10). The minister should also strive for **personal faithfulness** in his ministry (1 Cor. 4:1-2), never compromising Biblical

principles to attain greater apparent success in the eyes of men. Finally, the minister needs to be **diligent**, striving and laboring on behalf of Christ (1 Tim. 5:17; Col. 1:28-29).

Evangelists and pastors are God's gift to the Church to equip God's people to do the work of **service** (Eph. 4:11-12), **making disciples** of the nations (Matt. 28:19-20). Each member of the body contributes to the growth of the body by exercising his/her spiritual gift(s) (Eph. 4:11-16). In ministry, the priority should always be **preaching/teaching** and **prayer** (Acts 6:4). Preaching should be (1) expository in nature, accurately explaining passages according to a historical, literal, and contextual hermeneutic, (2) passionately delivered, evidencing the Spirit's powerful application of the passage to the heart of the preacher himself, and (3) pastorally applied, evidencing Christ's deep affection for the congregation and desire to see His people grow (Rev. 2-3). Because the Scriptures are sufficient, the minister should use **Biblical counseling** to bring people to Christ or to help them overcome spiritual problems (2 Tim. 2:24-26). **Worship** in the church should be sincere, reverent, God-centered, Spirit-filled, passionate, and free from worldly values (Eph. 5:18-19; 1 Jn. 2:15-17). Music should be carefully chosen to communicate these values. I do not believe CCM is appropriate for the worship of the Church, because its styles are patterned after ungodly, secular music styles.

Associations

I believe that believers should disassociate from false teachers (2 John 9-10) and blatantly disobedient Christians (1 Cor. 5:1-13, 2 Thes. 3:6, 14-15). For this reason, I believe it is necessary to disassociate with any ministry which clearly compromises Scripture. I believe separation from another believer should never be done rashly and always in a gracious manner with a broken heart, first removing any beams out of my own eye and seeking the restoration of the disobedient brother throughout.

I believe I can and should cooperate with other like-minded ministries which are seeking in all things to obey the Scriptures, granted the association will not harm the spiritual condition of my congregation or a reputation of integrity.

Divorce and Remarriage

I believe the Mosaic Law tolerated divorce (Dt. 24:1-4; Matt.19:8), but divorce has never been God's intention (Matt. 19:8). Rather, God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16) and intends marriage to be permanent until the death of one of the partners, after which the survivor is free to remarry (Rom. 7:1). *Possibly*, the only valid ground for divorce or remarriage after divorce is fornication (Jer. 3:8; Matt. 5:32; 19:9), which may refer to illicit or deviant sexual sins like incest and homosexuality. In such cases, Scripture does not command divorce, but merely allows it. However, a spirit of forgiveness and faithfulness on the part of an offended spouse seems far more in line with Scriptural admonitions and example than divorce does (Col. 3:12-14; Hos. 1-3). In light of Scripture's lack of unambiguous clarity in this area and its encouragement toward forgiveness, I do not believe that I would ever counsel anyone to pursue a divorce or perform the remarriage of a divorcee if the former spouse is still living.

While divorced men can be useful to God in the church, I would restrict them from the office of elder or deacon in light of the qualifications set forth in 1 Tim. 3:2,12.