

BELIEF STATEMENT:
MY CONVICTIONS

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BELIEF STATEMENT

OVERVIEW

This belief statement represents my theological convictions and can be categorized as Presuppositional, reformed, Dispensational theology. The statement, while rooted in Scripture, is heavily influenced by the belief statement of The Master's Seminary and Grace Community Church, as well as various pastors, seminary professors, and systematic theologians, most of whom are now in glory.

It is Presuppositional as it rests on two fundamental presuppositions revealed in Scripture; 1. the Triune God of the Bible (Father, Son, and Spirit) IS, He exists eternally; 2. the Triune God had revealed Himself to us in the Self-Revelation of His Word and in the Person of Jesus Christ, the divine, preexistent, second Person of the Trinity.

It is reformed (emphasis on the lowercase "r") as it is shaped by the five sola's of the Reformation, along with the Doctrines of Grace, but rejects Covenant Theology, paedobaptism, and Presbyterian ecclesiology.

It is Dispensational (emphasis on the uppercase "D") because this statement; 1. holds that the primary meaning of any Biblical passage is found in that passage through the use of the theological (presuppositional), literal, historical, grammatical hermeneutic; 2. Holds to the literal, physical fulfillment of both the curses and the promises God made to Israel; 3. the distinction between Israel and the Church that also recognizes the spiritual unity in salvation between Jews and Gentiles; 4. God's plan for the nations, a pre-tribulation rapture, and premillennialism.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

My conviction is that the Bible is God's written, Self-revelation to man, and thus the sixty-six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit, constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (2 Peter 1:20-21).

My conviction is that Scripture is an objective, propositional revelation of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed. I hold to a theological, literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture. My interpretation is grounded in two fundamental presuppositions employed by Scripture (theological). First, the Triune God of the Bible (Father, Son, and Spirit) IS, He exists eternally (Genesis 1:1; Exodus 3:14). Second, that our Triune God has revealed Himself to us in the Self-revelation of His Word (Genesis 1:1) and in the Person of Jesus Christ, the divine, preexistent, second Person of the Trinity (John 1:18; Hebrews 1:1-2).

My conviction is that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17).

My conviction is that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

My conviction is that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20-21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16).

My conviction is that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is only one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the theological, literal, grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper interpretation is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; men never stand in judgment of God's Word.

GOD

My conviction is that there is only one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes/perfections, one in essence/nature, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience. God is Creator of all things, the originator of all being, truth, beauty, logic, and ethics (Genesis 1:1; Acts 17:28).

God the Father

My conviction is that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders, decrees, and disposes all things according to His purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6).

He is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36).

His Fatherhood involves both His relation to the Son in the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator, He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18).

He has decreed for His glory all things that come to pass (Romans 11:36, Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11).

In His sovereignty, He is not morally culpable for sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17).

He has graciously chosen from eternity those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

God the Son

My conviction is that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these, He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

My conviction is that God the Father created all things according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2).

My conviction is that in the incarnation the eternal Son, the second Person of the Trinity, without altering His divine nature or surrendering any of the divine attributes, made Himself of no reputation by taking on a full human nature consubstantial with our own, yet without sin (Philippians 2:5-9; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26). Thus He is fully God and fully man. Christ fully possessed His divine nature, attributes, and prerogatives (Colossians 2:9; cf. Luke 5:18–26; John 16:30; 20:28). However, in the state of His humiliation, He did not always fully express the glories of His majesty, concealing them behind the veil of His genuine humanity (Matthew 17:2; Mark 13:32; Philippians 2:5–8).

In His incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-Man (Philippians 2:5–8; Colossians 2:9). My conviction is that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9). Because Christ was not born of ordinary generation, He did not inherit Adam's sinful nature but knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).

My conviction is that our Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35); that He is God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7 9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

My conviction is that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished the redemption of His people through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

My conviction is that our justification is secured by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1). My conviction is that based on the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous (justified), given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8 9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

My conviction is that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

My conviction is that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His Body, unto Himself at the rapture, and returning with His church in glory will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).

My conviction is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23):

- Believers at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
- Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46).
- Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15).

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His Body, the Church, (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

God the Holy Spirit

My conviction is that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13).

In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).

My conviction is that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will concerning all mankind. Scripture teaches His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7).

My conviction is that the work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

My conviction is that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13).

My conviction is that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

My conviction is that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

My conviction is, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today. Speaking in tongues and the working of the Apostolic sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were to authenticate the Apostles as revealers of divine truth and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:4).

MAN

My conviction is that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9).

My conviction is that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

My conviction is that mankind was created by God as either male or female, distinct sexes that are biologically defined and divinely imparted to each individual at conception (Genesis 1:27; 2:5-23; Job 3:3; Psalm 139:13-14; 1 Corinthians 11:3-15). Attempting to confuse the two sexes is an abomination to God (Leviticus 18:22; Deuteronomy 22:5; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

My conviction is that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence; incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death; became subject to the wrath of God and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

My conviction is that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men born of ordinary generation. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

SALVATION

My conviction is that salvation is completely of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19). Genuine salvation is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 2:10) and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17–21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4–10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's second coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2–3).

Election

My conviction is that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

My conviction is that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

My conviction is that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Romans 9:16; Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2).

My conviction is that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other perfections, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Atonement

My conviction is that the Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience and sacrifice of Himself, which He offered up to God through the eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14; 10:14), has fully satisfied the justice of God (Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 4:10), propitiated the wrath of God (Romans 3:25–26; cf. 1:18), procured reconciliation (Romans 5:10), and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven (Hebrews 9:15), for all those the Father has given to Him (John 6:39; 10:14–15, 28–29; 17:2, 9, 24).

Regeneration

My conviction is that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 5:24). Because of regeneration, the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10) and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification of Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

Justification

My conviction is that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26b).

Sanctification

My conviction is that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

My conviction is that there is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer can live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ. Sanctification is glory begun, awaiting the final glorification that occurs when we meet Christ face to face. Glorification is sanctification consummated, (John 17:17,19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23).

In this respect, My conviction is that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the

believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Security

My conviction is that all the redeemed once saved are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

My conviction is that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

My conviction is that someone who is truly regenerated by the Holy Spirit will persevere to the end (Matthew 10:22; Romans 9:28-39), and only those who do persevere to the end are saved. Those that fall away from the faith were never regenerated/saved (1 John 2:19).

THE CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN LIVING

The Church

My conviction is that the Church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4-6) and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 3:16). Thus, the Church is distinct from national Israel and does not supersede Israel in regard to the promises God (Romans 11:28-29; 1 Corinthians 10:32). The formation of the Church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The Church is united by the Holy Spirit as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Colossians 1:18; 2:19). The one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures.

The Church is manifest in local churches (Acts 9:31; 20:28-30; Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 16:19; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1-2). The membership of the local church should be composed only of believers (Matthew 18:15-20; Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 9). My conviction is that the church is to meet visibly and personally, to encourage and exhort one another (Hebrews 10:25). My conviction is that it is biblical for genuine churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The elders should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as well (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

My conviction is that discipleship is extremely important to the life of the local church (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), that there is a need for mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

My conviction is that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42). All saints are called to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).

My conviction is that the church is called to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

My conviction is that the Biblical model of church governance is an elder (pastor) ruled, local church, free from any external authority or control (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17). Pastors/elders are responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of their local congregations, teaching sound doctrine, and guarding against error (Acts 20:28-30; Hebrews 13:17). The Bible proscribes that the local church is to be led by a plurality of elders (pastors), who are to exercise authority as Christ's under-shepherds (Acts 20:28-30; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:17). My conviction is that the titles "pastor", "elder", and "overseer" are used interchangeably in Scripture. The Bible gives clear guidelines concerning elder qualifications, including that elders/pastors must be men (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The office of deacon and elder are separate offices with different roles within the church (1 Timothy 3:1-13).

My conviction is that the Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances for the church. The first is baptism (Matthew 28:18-20). The second is the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26), which visibly and tangibly express the Gospel. They are not the means of salvation (1 Corinthians 1:17).

My conviction is that Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

My conviction is that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). The elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, yet, participation in the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ, who indwells every believer, and so is present, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

My conviction is that there were two kinds of gifts given to the early Church: apostolic/miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12) and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message. Thus, confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13-14:12; Revelation 13:13-14). The only gifts in operation today are those non-revelatory equipping gifts given for edification (Romans 12:6-8).

My conviction is that no one possesses the gift of healing today but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

The Church, State, and Sphere Sovereignty

My conviction is that the church and state have different spheres of sovereignty, and exercise authority within those spheres.

God is the ultimate authority for the believer. God is the Creator (Genesis 1:1) and everything that was created was created for Him (Colossians 1:16). Christ has been granted all authority (Matthew 28:18) and everything is subject to His rule (1 Corinthians 15:27; Hebrews 2:8). God exercises authority over kings and all those to whom He has delegated authority (Daniel 2:20-21; 4:24-25). Even when God delegates authority, it still belongs ultimately to Him.

Authority from God rests within certain spheres. These spheres include the family, the church, and the state. Individuals holding authority in one do not necessarily exercise authority in another. An example is Uzziah, the king who attempts to usurp the authority of the priests (2 Chronicles 26:16-21). When an authority figure in one sphere attempts to intervene in another sphere, such authority should not be recognized and is often sinful to obey (2 Samuel 11; Daniel 6).

The state has certain authority delegated to it. The state is to punish evil and promote righteousness (Romans 13:1-7). The very notions of evil and righteousness are ordained by God and thus, demonstrate the authority of government is derived from God and limited to what He has decreed. Individuals do not have the authority to punish evil as that falls outside their sphere of authority (Romans 12:17-21). Even if the state does not punish iniquity, the individual is not given authority to do so (1 Peter 2:23), for it is outside of his sphere.

The church has certain authority delegated to it as well. The church leadership have certain requirements and roles that Scripture clearly defines (1 Timothy 3; 5:17-22; Titus 1; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-6). The state has no authority to tell the church how it worships. Christ, not Caesar, is head of the church.

Separation

My conviction is that separation from sin is clearly taught throughout the Old and New Testaments and that the Scriptures clearly indicate apostasy and worldliness shall increase in the last days (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

My conviction is that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. Scripture teaches that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

My conviction is that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

My conviction is that true worship must be separate from the profane (ordinary). The church must not attempt to attract the world by using worldly/profane methods, or adopt worldly means of worship (Leviticus 10:1-10, Ezekiel 22:26). Areas of worship that are especially susceptible to syncretism in the modern church include music, dress standards, entertainment, and preaching methods.

The Family

My conviction is that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime (Genesis 2:24; Malachi 2:14; Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:6-9). It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church, and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. Any sexual activity outside the marriage of one man and one woman is an abomination before God (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:1-30; Matthew 5:27-32; 19:1-9; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 6:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7).

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19). He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, protect, and lead his family (1 Peter 3:7). A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-24; Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1). She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation (Proverbs 31:10-31; 1 Timothy 5:14).

My conviction is that marriage is ordained by God (Genesis 2:24). My conviction is that two genuine believers should never divorce. If a professing believer abandons a spouse, is engaged in

continual, unrepentant sin and refuses to submit to church discipline, then the church is to consider them an unbeliever (Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5). My conviction is that divorce is only permissible when an unbelieving spouse abandons his/her believing spouse (1 Corinthians 7:10-16; Romans 7:1-3). In such cases, the believer is free to remarry. My conviction is that the adultery referenced by Jesus as grounds for divorce is describing a betrothed, unmarried couple, and does not constitute grounds for divorce for married believers (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12).

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord (Psalm 127; Psalm 128; Psalm 139:13-16). Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 78:1-8; Proverbs 1:8; Colossians 3:21). Children are to honor and obey their parents (Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:18-25; Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 6:20-22; Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20).

ANGELS

Holy Angels

My conviction is that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9).

Fallen Angels

My conviction is that Satan is a created angel who was the efficient cause of the first sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-15).

My conviction is that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10); that he is the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

ESCHATOLOGY

Death

My conviction is that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8), that there is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21-24), and that, for those in Christ, such separation will continue until the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), which initiates the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6) when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1

Corinthians 15:35–44, 50–54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with Him in the intermediate heaven (2 Corinthians 5:8).

I hold to the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10–11, 19–23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13–15).

My conviction is that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment in the intermediate hell until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19–26; Revelation 20:13–15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28–29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11–15) and shall be cast into eternal hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41–46; Revelation 20:15), cut off from the life of God and enduring His wrath forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41–46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9).

The Rapture of the Church

My conviction is in the personal, bodily appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13) to rapture His Church from this earth (John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:51–53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15–5:11). My conviction is that, between the rapture and His glorious return to the earth with His saints, He will reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11–15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Tribulation Period

My conviction is that immediately following the removal of the Church from the earth (John 14:1–3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18) the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7–12; Revelation 16), and that these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matthew 24:27–31; 25:31–46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7–12). At that time, the saints of the Old Testament and the tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged (Daniel 12:2–3; Revelation 20:4–6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel’s prophecy (Daniel 9:24–27; Matthew 24:15–31; 25:31–46).

The Second Coming and Millennial Reign

My conviction is that, after the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31–33; Acts 1:10–11; 2:29–30; cf. Revelation 3:21) and establish His messianic kingdom for a thousand years on the earth (Revelation 20:1–7). During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21–28; Daniel 7:17–22; Revelation 19:11–16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17–27; Revelation 20:1–7).

My conviction is that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God’s promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17–25; Ezekiel 37:21–28; Zechariah 8:1–17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15–68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1–26) but will again be awakened

through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:22–32; Romans 11:25–29).

My conviction is that this time of our Lord’s reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11; 65:17–25; Ezekiel 36:33–38; Zechariah 8:4), and that it will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Revelation 20:7).

The Judgment of the Lost

My conviction is that, following the release of Satan after the thousand-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10), whereupon Christ, who is the Judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge all unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment.

My conviction is that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical, bodily resurrection (John 5:28–29) in which they will be committed to eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11–15).

Eternity

My conviction is that, after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7–15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15; 21–22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21–22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24–28) that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).