

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

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DOCTRINE

Herein contains my doctrinal beliefs within the studies of Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology, Anthropology, Angels, Bibliology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, the Sacraments, and Eschatology, as derived from a conservative, literal and exegetical approach to Scripture; the content of which, in as much as possible, is drawn from an objective observation of what God has expressed to humanity through His Word in its various genres and authors inspired by the Holy Spirit.

GOD (THEOLOGY PROPER)

There is but one God (Deut. 6:4) and Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them (Gen. 1; Is. 44:6-8, 24), who has revealed Himself to man (Jn 1:9-17; Heb. 1:1-3), and is, in accord with His word, triune in nature. God exists (Ex. 3:14), infinite and eternal (Jer. 23:23-24; Ps. 90:2-4) as three persons (υποστασις; each personal; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) all in one God-head (Deut. 6:4 – composite unity, an early expression of the triune nature of God) and of the same essence (ομοουσια; all together in unity, cf. Mt. 28:19 το ονομα [singular]). Our God is both able and good, which is to say that there is nothing that He cannot do or accomplish (Gen. 18:14; Lk. 1:37) according to His sovereign will (Eph. 1:11), and He will always remain morally perfect (Ps. 119:68). When we view the triune nature of God we understand it from both an ontological perspective (the fact of His triune nature as derived from scripture) and an economical perspective (how each person functions within that triune nature); each person of the Trinity existing equally as God yet with a functional subordination through which God achieves His plans (Jn. 14:28, 15:26).

THE FATHER

The Father is the unseen person of the God-head (Jn. 6:46) who has sent His Son into the world out of His love for us and His desire for our salvation (Jn. 3:16; 1Tim. 2:4). Prayer is lifted up to the Father who is attentive and able to answer those prayers (Mt. 6:5-14), and He is considered the first person of the Trinity (Mt. 28:19).

THE SON (CHRISTOLOGY)

The second person of the Trinity is fully God (Phil. 2 μορφή; Heb. 1:3 χαρακτήρ), sharing equality and attributes that belong to God alone (e.g. pre-existent, Jn. 8:48-59; unity with the Father, Jn. 10:30-33; having authority to forgive sin and to grant eternal life, Mk. 2:1-12, Jn. 10:27-28; authority over the spiritual realm, Mk. 1:21-28; authority over nature, Mk. 4:35-40), and being the Creator of the heavens and the earth (Col. 1:15-19). Having temporarily relinquished His status of equality, the Son of God humbled Himself to become fully human (Phil. 2) as well as fully God (Col. 1:19) revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ (Jn. 1). As prophesied by Isaiah, Jesus was born of a virgin (Is. 7:14; cf. Mt. 1:18-25), lived a perfect life without sin (1Pt. 2:22; Heb. 4:15), died on the cross as the atonement and propitiation for our sin (Is. 53; 1Jn. 4:10), and rose from the grave (1Cor. 15:1-10). He now sits at the right hand of the Father (Acts 7:55-56; Heb. 1:3), continuously holding all things together by His word of power (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3, interceding and mediating on behalf of his church (Ro. 8:34; Heb. 8:6).

THE SPIRIT (PNEUMATOLOGY)

The third person of the Trinity has been sent by the Father and the Son (Jn. 15:26) to be our helper (Jn. 14:26, 16:13). He abides in us (1Cor. 6:19), He seals us (Eph. 1:13), gives us gifts (1Cor. 12:1-11), empowers us (2Tim. 1:7), intercedes for us in prayer (Ro. 8:26-27), and unites the church into one body (1Cor. 12:13). Within the pages of Scripture He displays both personality (Eph. 4:30) and deity (e.g. He is omnipresent, Ps. 139:7-10; eternal, Heb. 9:14; He is called God, Acts 5:3-4).

MAN (ANTHROPOLOGY)

Man has been created by God, in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) and for His glory (Ps. 150; Is. 43:7; Ecc. 12:13). All mankind has received through Adam a sinful nature (Ro. 5:12) and all men have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Ro. 3:23); all men are culpable for their sins, deserving death (Gen. 2:17; Ro. 6:23) for both their actions and inactions (Jms. 4:17) against God and man. No man left to his own design would seek out or acknowledge God (Ps. 14:1-3; Ro. 3:10-18). No man can effectually work out His own reconciliation to God (Eph. 2:1-10), and a man will only recognize the sovereignty of God when drawn by His Spirit (Ro. 8:30); Having been called by the Spirit and having acknowledged Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior, one then ceases to be God's enemy (Ro. 5:10-11) and becomes adopted into His family (Ro. 8:15; Eph. 1:5) through the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we are adopted into the family of God we are sanctified by the blood of Jesus, and having been made a new person we begin the process of sanctification (Heb. 10:14). The Christian is then exhorted to live as a new person in Christ (Eph. 4:17-32; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 3:1-17) by the grace of God and the renewal of our mind (Ro.

12:2). Those who have trusted in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins look forward to the day that they shall receive a new body, able to abide with God for the rest of eternity (1Cor. 15:42-56). Those men who deny the Son of God and His benevolent act on the cross for mankind shall be sent to a place of eternal damnation, known as hell (Jn. 14:6; Mt. 25:31-46).

ANGELS (ANGELOLOGY)

The angels are a creation of God to be his servants (Ps. 103:20; Heb. 1:7,14) and messengers (Lk. 1:26). Their abode is in the presence of God's own glory as they proclaim His holiness throughout eternity (Is. 6; Rev. 4), they watch over men (Ps. 91:11-12) and they long to comprehend the wonderful plan of salvation that God has wrought for man through His Son (1Pt. 1:12). At a past point in time the angel known as Satan rebelled against the Lord (Is. 14:12-14) and was cast from heaven along with a third of the angelic host who followed after him (Rev. 12:9). He now stands as the tempter of man (Gen. 3; 1Thes. 3:5), the Father of Lies (Jn. 8:44), a lion waiting to devour the unwary believer (1Pt. 5:8), and as the one who accuses men before God (Zech. 3:1; Rev. 12:10).

SCRIPTURE (BIBLIOLOGY)

The Bible is the inspired, plenary, sufficient, infallible and inerrant Word of God (*θεοπνευστος* – *God breathed*), written to mankind in order that we may know and understand who God is and His good and perfect will for us (2Tim. 3:16-17). These words of God have been guided by the Holy Spirit through their human authors (2Pt. 1:21), who were chosen by God to deliver His message to His people in their own unique ways, writing styles, and various genres; each individually constructing a unified message from God that is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. The books to which we ought hold as the plenary canon of Scripture are the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament as distinguished and accepted by Jewish scholars (particularly as applies to the OT) and the early church within the first 250-300 years of its existence, excluding any apocryphal works (e.g. 1st and 2nd Maccabees) or other so called extra-biblical writings (e.g. The Gospel of Thomas). God's Word contains everything that man needs to know and understand in order to live life in the world in a way that is pleasing to our Creator, to be reconciled to God, and thus to live out our new and living relationship with Him. The Scriptures, having been breathed by God, were entirely inerrant in their original writings and have been sufficiently preserved over time that they may still be trusted to this day as God's own Word, just as scripture states that God's Word shall remain forever (1Pt. 1:23-25). God's Word is effective in the tasks for which God has given it (Is. 55:11), and should be taught exegetically and in an expository manner, for what God has

actually said instead of what men may want Him to have said. All other teachings or writings must be considered in light of what God has stated to man in scripture.

SALVATION (SOTERIOLOGY)

From the beginning God has laid forth a plan for the salvation of mankind (Gen. 3:15; Ro. 3:23; Eph. 1:4) through His chosen people as promised to Abraham (Gen. 12:3; 13; 15), and ultimately through the God-Man, Jesus Christ (Gen. 3:15; Is. 7:14; Is. 53; Ro. 3:21-26) and in Him alone (Jn. 14:6). His plan is one of grace and mercy; of His own working (Gen. 15:7-21), not of the works of man that no one should be able to boast (Eph. 2; Ro. 3). His plan is efficacious in securing us in our reconciliation to God (Jn. 5:24, 10:28-29; Ro. 8:31-39; 1Jn. 5:13; Ju. 1:24). As Jesus explains, to be saved one must be born again (i.e. regenerated), not of flesh and blood but of the Spirit (Jn. 3; Ro. 9:8; 1Pt. 1:3). This shall occur for those who are elect unto this end (Ro. 8:29-30, 9:10-23), for while we yet retain a free will no one would of their own free will choose to follow or seek out the Lord, thus initiating their own salvation (Ps. 14:2-3; Ro. 3:10-23). Those who are elect to regeneration (Jn. 3:3-7) are justified (Ro. 8:30) by the propitiating (Ro. 3:25; 1Jn. 4:10) and atoning (Is. 53; 2Cor. 5:21) work of Christ on the cross; they are once for all sanctified (i.e. the elect need only accept Christ's sacrifice once, and not over and over [Ro. 5:1; Eph. 1:3]) and set into the process of sanctification (Heb. 10:10-14), as they have been given a new life (Eph. 4:21-24; Col. 3:1-17) but have not yet received a perfected body, remaining in these bodies of flesh and temptation (Ro. 7:7-25; Jms. 1:13-15).

THE CHURCH (ECCLESIOLOGY)

The Church is universally composed of all those who have trusted in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for the cleansing of sin have accepted Him as their Lord and Savior. We are to be unified in the "closed fist" issues (e.g. salvation in Christ alone, the triune nature of God, sin and its effect upon all mankind, etc.), while there remains some liberty in the "open handed" matters (e.g. one's view on the timing of eschatological events). In the current dispensation the Church is the body of Christ on earth (1Cor. 12:27; Eph. 3-4), currently purposed to the spreading of the gospel (Mt. 28:19-20) and to the encouragement of believers (Eph. 4). At a future point in time the Church is destined to abide with Him eternally in a new heaven and a new earth as His bride (Is. 66:18-23; 2Cor. 11:2). While the Church does not replace Israel (as God continues to have plans for that nation and people) the church is now God's people, a combination of Jew and Gentile (Eph 2-3), adopted children into His family and tasked to be a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for his own possession (1Pt. 2:9).

THE SACRAMENTS

The Church is called to the proper observation of two sacraments, or tangible manifestations of spiritual ideas: baptism and communion.

In accord with Scripture, baptism is the immersion of a believer into water (βαπτίζω – to “plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm”, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Walter Bauer, 2nd ed. 1979, Ed. Arndt and Gingrich, p. 131) thus representing the believer’s union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Ro. 6:4-5). While the sacrament of Baptism is not a means of salvation in itself, it is representative of what has occurred in the life and heart of the believer, and the Church has been called to perpetuate this act of public declaration of faith (Mt. 28:19; 1Pt. 3:21-22). I hold to the value of a Believer’s Baptism, regardless of its exact form, and would not condemn someone who has been sprinkled or splashed. The value of Baptism is in what it represents: the public declaration of the dedication of the believer to Christ and their association with His death and resurrection. While I personally recognize the value of baptism by immersion (as it represents clearly the burial and resurrection of Christ), there is no condemnation to be had for those who have been sprinkled, or otherwise, especially as there are many believers who, for various reasons, are not physically able to be immersed in water.

Communion is a shared act of remembrance for the Church, representative of what Christ has done in His body and blood on our behalf on the cross, to be continued while we await His return (1Cor. 11:17-34); there is no act of transubstantiation in the elements of communion as they are merely representative of the body and blood of Christ. This sacrament is to be observed regularly enough that we remember to keep Christ at the center of our faith, not forgetting how great a salvation we have in Jesus (Heb. 2:1-4).

Though not traditionally regarded by the church as a sacrament, in today’s culture it is important to point out that marriage is a rite to be observed by those who cannot restrain the desires of the flesh having not been endowed with the gift of celibacy (1Cor. 7:1-9). It was designed by God from the beginning to be the union of one man to one woman (Gen. 2:18-24), representative of the exclusivity of relationship and the headship between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:23).

THE END TIMES (ESCHATOLOGY)

As mankind lives in the world, with the church amongst them, there will come a time when the trumpet shall sound and the Son of Man will come to remove His church from the face of the earth (i.e. the rapture), including those who have fallen asleep in Him (1Cor. 15:20-28; 1Thes. 4:13-17). Thus will begin a period of tribulation for mankind remaining on earth (Rev. 7:14), until Satan is cast into

prison and Jesus Christ begins His millennial reign here on earth (Rev. 20:1-6). Following Christ's millennial reign there will be a time of judgment (Ecc. 12:14) before the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-15), after which there shall be a new heaven and a new earth where the church will abide with Christ forever (Is. 66:22; 1Thes. 4:17; 2Pt. 3:13; Rev. 21). It is significantly important that Christians strive to comprehend eschatological events (Rev. 22:6-7, 18-19) as described throughout Scripture, though admittedly there is some room for the exact interpretation of these events in their form and sequence (ex. the millennial reign of Christ, pre-, post-, or a-; or perhaps the rapture, pre-, mid-, or post-). I believe that it is entirely possible for two redeemed, regenerated, believing Christians to hold differing views and yet maintain fellowship as we debate specifics and endure the sanctification and maturation process together (Eph 4:1-18). Suffice it to say that while I retain a pretribulation-dispensational-premillennial view of the end times, I need not part ways with an amillennialist so long as we can agree on the foundations of the faith.