

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

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April 1, 2004

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Doctrinal Statement

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Bibliology

I believe that the Bible is the Word of God. It consists exclusively of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament. The Bible is God's self-revelation to man, verbally and plenary inspired by the Holy Spirit, and inerrant in its original autographs. God providentially preserved His Word through manuscript copy and translation throughout the centuries. The Holy Spirit applies the Scriptures to believers as they read and study it.

Revelation

Truth is given to man through revelation from God. God has revealed truth throughout history either generally or specifically. He has revealed a limited amount of truth to all mankind through internal means (the image of God and conscience; Rom 2.14-15) and external means (creation, providence; Rom 1.20; Ps 19.1-6). General revelation presents truth sufficient only for condemnation (Rom 1.18-20), but it does not present enough truth to lead a man to salvation.

Special revelation is the more specific form of truth given by God to specific people. The only form of special revelation at this time is the Word of God. The Bible presents propositional, univocal truth. Unlike general revelation, the special revelation presented in the Word of God is sufficient for salvation (John 20.31; Rom 10.14-17; 1 Cor 2.9-10) and sanctification (John 17.17).

God has given revelation in different stages throughout history (Heb 1.1-2). Each new revelation brought with it corresponding responsibilities for man to fulfill. The Bible, therefore, must be interpreted with this in mind (see Interpretation below).

Inspiration

The sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament are God-breathed (2 Tim 3.16). Only the original manuscripts were inspired. However, subsequent manuscripts and translations are inspired to the degree that they accurately reflect the words and truth of the original autographs. Human authors were carried along miraculously through the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1.21). This was done in such a way that the author's styles and personalities were maintained. Every word was equally inspired (plenary, verbal inspiration).

The Bible, therefore, is both inerrant (without error) and infallible (incapable of error) (Matt 5.18; John 10.35). The Bible is authoritative in all areas to which it speaks (1 Ti 3.16-17). It does not need verification from any external sources, but is self-attesting and self-authenticating (Dan 10.21; John 10.35; 17.17; Rom 1.2, 3.2).

Canonicity

Only the present sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments are part of the canon. Canonicity is the historical process by which the Spirit of God providentially led the people of Israel and the church to recognize those writings that were genuinely inspired. The canonizing process did not

make the books inspired. Rather, they were inspired as they came from the pens of the authors. Inspiration gives the Bible authority; canonization tells how the Bible received its acceptance. Providentially led by the Holy Spirit, a careful, systematic study of the sixty-six books leads us to the conclusion that they are a unified, complete, systematic whole.

Preservation

God has promised to preserve His Word. Preservation is the process by which God has providentially preserved His Word through countless manuscript copies and various translations (Deut 17.18; Matt 5.18; 1 Pet 1.25). These manuscript copies and translations are inspired, inerrant, and infallible in a derivative sense. No one manuscript family or translation has been uniquely or miraculously preserved.

Illumination

Though the Word of God is generally clear, only believers are able to understand the significance, not the meaning, of its truth through the Holy Spirit's work of illumination (1 Cor 2.14). Illumination is a ministry of the Holy Spirit by which He enables believers to understand the significance of the Bible (1 John 2.20-21). The Holy Spirit does not speak to the reader or give him new revelation.

Interpretation

The Bible should be interpreted using normal laws of language, each passage being studied in its grammatical, historical, and theological context and interpreted based on authorial intent and the univocal use of language. Because God has given His revelation in different stages throughout history (Heb 1.1-2), the Bible should be interpreted from a dispensational perspective based on that progressive unfolding of revelation (John 4.21, 23). This approach to interpreting Scripture acknowledges a distinction between Israel and the Church (Eph 2.18). It rejects all *sensus plenior* interpretations.

Theology Proper

I believe that God, existing from eternity past, is a personal being. He exists for His own pleasure, and is the source, sustainer, and end of all things. God exists in one essence with three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The existence of God need not be proven; it is assumed.

Person

In the beginning, God existed (Gen 1.1). God is a person revealed to all men through creation (Rom 1.20) and conscience (Rom 2.14-15). He possesses personal qualities such as spirituality (John 4.24; Col 1.15), life (Jer 10.10; 1 Thess 1.9), intelligence (1 Sam 2.3; Prov 3.19-20; Acts 15.06-18), emotion (John 3.16), will (John 6.38-19), action (John 5.17), freedom (Dan 4.35), and self-consciousness (Ex 3.14). He is revealed through his attributes. Those attributes associated with His greatness (non-moral) are His self-existence (Ex 3.14; John 5.26), infinity (1 Kings 8.27; Gen 21.33, Ps 147.5), perfection (Ps 18.30; Matt 5.48), omnipotence (Job 42.2; Matt 19.26; Rev 19.6), omniscience (Ps 139.1-4; 1 John 3.20), omnipresence (Ps 139.7-12; Jer 23.23-24), immutability (Mal 3.6; James 1.17), wisdom (Rom 11.33; 16.27), eternity (Gen 21.33; Ps 90.1-2), and incomprehensibility (Ps 145.3; Rom 11.33). Those identified with His goodness (moral) are His holiness (Lev 11.44-45; Ps 99.4-9; 1 Peter 1.15-16), truth (Ps 31.5; John 3.33; 1 Thess 1.9), love (1 John 4.8), righteousness (Gen 18.25; Deut 32.4; Ps 145.17), faithfulness (Lam 3.23; Ps 36.5), mercy (2 Cor 1.3; Eph 2.4), and grace (Eph 1.7; 1 Peter 5.10).

God created the universe and all that is in it, including man, in six normal twenty-four hour days (Gen 1; Ex 20.11). God has ceased from creative work (Gen 2.2), however, He continues to rule and preserve His creation (Col 1.17; Acts 17.28).

God is the sovereign ruler of the universe (Dan 4.34-35). All things exist for Him, and through Him all things exist (John 1.3, Rom 11.36; Col 1.16). According to His own good pleasure and for His own glory, God sovereignly ordained all things that have past and that will come to pass (Eph 1.4-14; Gen 5.20; Ps 115.3; Ps 135.6; Is 48.11). He controls both nature and the actions of man (Eph 2.10, Acts 2.23; 4.27, 28; Psalm 76.10; Prov 16.4). Nothing passes outside the control of God, nor does he learn, grow, or respond to man's decisions. This does not, however, relieve man of his responsibility before God (Rom 1.20; 9.19-21).

Trinity

God exists eternally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three persons exist simultaneously in one divine being, having the same attributes and worthy of the same worship and honor (Ontological Trinity: Gen 1.26; 3.22; Is 48.16; Matt 28.19; John 6.27; Acts 5.3-4). The Son, however, voluntarily submits Himself to the will of the Father (John 5.30; 17.1-5), and the Holy Spirit voluntarily serves the Father and the Son (John 15.26; 16.14) (Economic Trinity).

Christology

I believe that Jesus Christ is God. He was virgin-born and is one person with two natures. Totally without sin, Christ freely bore the sins of mankind in order that He might redeem it. He lived a perfect life, died on the cross, rose again from the dead, and now lives in heaven as man's Advocate before the Father.

Deity

Jesus Christ is coequal (John 10.30) and coeternal (John 8.58) with the Father and the Spirit. The second person of the Triune God, Christ existed in eternity past (John 1.1-2; 8.58; Col 1.17), and possesses all the attributes of God the Father such as self-existence (John 1.4), immutability (Heb 13.8), eternality (Micah 5.2), omnipresence (Matt 18.20), omniscience (John 21.17), omnipotence (Matt 18.20), incomprehensibility (Matt 11.27), and holiness (1 John 3.5).

Humanity

Jesus Christ was conceived and born of a virgin (Matt 1.23) being conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1.20). He is one person with two natures, fully human (1 Tim 2.5) and fully divine (Col 2.9). He is totally without sin (Heb 4.15) and incapable of sin (impeccability; Luke 1.35; Heb 13.8; John 14.30).

Death

Jesus Christ freely gave Himself on the cross to bear the sin of His people (Matt 1.21; John 6.37; 10.15; 17.2, 6, 9, 19; Eph 5.25). Christ's death appeased the wrath of God against sin (1 John 2.2; Rom 1.32; Heb 2.2), obeyed the law (Phil 2.8; Rom 5.19), and accomplished atonement for sin (Rom 3.25; 5.11). That atonement was sufficient for the sin of all men (Heb 2.9), but efficient only for those to whom He would grant faith and repentance (John 3.36). It was both substitutionary and vicarious (Rom 3.25-26; 2 Cor 5.21; Gal 3.13). Christ's death justified His forbearance in leaving sins committed in the past unpunished (Rom 3.25), and provided the basis for showing common grace to all men (Matt 5.45).

Resurrection

Jesus Christ conquered death by physically rising from the dead in His glorified body on the third day (Luke 24.36-43; 1 Cor 15.3-4). He then ascended bodily into heaven (Acts 1.9-11) and is now exalted at the right hand of God the Father (Phil 2.9) where He acts as advocate, intercessor, and high priest for believers (Heb 7.25). He will come again one day to establish His literal kingdom on earth (Matt 24.44; Rev 22.3).

Pneumatology

I believe that the Holy Spirit is God. He is a personal being who actively works in the lives of men. He gives gifts to believers and works through the Word of God to convict men of sin and draw them to faith in Christ.

Deity

The Holy Spirit is coequal and coeternal with the Father and Son. He is called God (Acts 5.1-4), He is named in the Trinitarian titles as equal with the Father and the Son (Matt 28.19; 2 Cor 3.18; 1 Pet 1.2), and He possesses the attributes of God such as eternity (Heb 9.14), omnipresence (Psa 139.7-10), omnipotence (Gen 1.2; Luke 1.35), omniscience (1 Cor 2.10-11), holiness (Eph 4.30), and truth (1 John 5.6).

Person

The Holy Spirit is a personal being. He possesses the essential characteristics of personality such as life (Rom 8.2), intelligence (1 Cor 2.10-11), freedom (1 Cor 12.11), purpose (1 Cor 12.11), action (John 16.8), self-consciousness (Acts 13.2), and emotion (Eph 4.30).

Work

The Holy Spirit took part in creation (Gen 1.2; Job 26.13; Eph 2.18). He was active in inspiration (2 Pet 1.20-21), and the conception of Jesus Christ in the virgin birth (Matt 1.18; Luke 1.35). In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit theocratically anointed the judges and kings of Israel (Num 11.17) and regenerated those who would believe.

Today, the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin (John 16.8), restrains the depravity of man and allows relative good to be accomplished (2 Thess 2.7), He illuminates men to understand the significance of Scripture (1 Cor 2.13), He regenerates men (Titus 3.5), He indwells the believer (Rom 8.9; Gen 41.38; Num 27.18), He fills the believer (refers to the believer's submission to God's Word and will; Eph 5.17-20; Col 3.16), He baptizes the believer (the judicial placement of a believer in the Body of Christ) (1 Cor 12.13), He provides assurance to the believer (Rom 8.16), and seals a believer until his final glorification (Eph 1.13-14).

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to believers (1 Cor 12.11). These gifts are God-given abilities for service to be used in the church. They are not to be sought because they are sovereignly given by God to different people by God (Rom 12.6; 1 Cor 7.7). Some of these gifts were temporary and are no longer in existence today. Some of these miraculous gifts were tongues, healings, and prophesy. Their purpose was for the authentication of God's messengers and message (2 Cor 12.12; Heb 2.2-4). Other gifts, however, do exist today, though there is no complete listing in Scripture.

Angelology

I believe in the existence of angels. They are created, spiritual, personal beings. Some were elect according to God's mercy, while others fell and followed Satan's rebellion.

Nature

Angels were created at the beginning of the first day (Job 38.6-7; Psalm 148.2, 5). They are spirit beings (Heb 1.14) and possess personal qualities (1 Pet 1.12; Luke 15.10; 2 Pet 2.4). They resemble man (Heb 13.2), but have greater abilities than man (2 Pet 2.11). Angels are limited in that they are neither omniscient (Mark 13.32) nor omnipotent (2 Pet 2.11).

Angels were originally holy (Gen 1.31). However, the non-elect angels, led by Satan, rebelled against God (Matt 12.24-26; 25.41).

Good Angels

Some angels are elect according to God's mercy (Matt 25.31; 1 Tim 5.21), and thus serve the Triune God (Heb 1.7). They praise Him (Psalm 148.1-2) and worship Him (Is 6.1-3). They worship Christ (Heb 1.6), protected Him (Matt 2.13), and strengthened Him (Matt 4.11). Angels also minister to believers (Matt 18.10; Luke 16.22; Heb 1.13) and pronounce judgment upon unbelievers (Matt 13.39-40; Rev 8.7; 20.1-2). Some specific kinds of angels mentioned in Scripture are cherubim (Gen 3.24; Ps 18.10; Ezek 10.1-22), seraphim (Isaiah 6.2-7), and Michael, the archangel (Jude 9; Daniel 10.13).

Demons

As an angel, Satan led a rebellion against God, and was thus thrown from heaven (Matt 22.24-26; 25.41; Jude 6; Rev 12.4). He is the adversary of God and believers, slandering God (Gen 3.4-5) and seeking to destroy His people (2 Cor 4.4) by accusing them of evil (Rev 12.10). Satan also leads unbelievers astray (John 8.44; Rev 12.9). Satan was judged at the cross (John 16.11) and will be ultimately cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20.10). He is the god of this present age (2 Cor 4.4) and is to be resisted by believers (James 4.7).

The non-elect angels (demons) followed Satan and now serve him in their rebellion against God (Rev 9.11). They will finally be judged along with Satan.

Anthropology

I believe that Adam, the first man, was created directly by God apart from any evolutionary process on the sixth day of creation. Man was created in the image of God, though through the fall this image was marred. Man is now wholly corrupt and unable to do good or comprehend spiritual matters.

Origin

God created man from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life (Gen 1.26-27, 2.7; Jer 27.5). God did not make use of any evolutionary process, but directly created man by the word of His mouth. Man was created in God's image (Gen 1.26-27), sharing with Him spiritual (John 4.21-24; 1 John 1.3), moral (Rom 3.14-15), and personal (Gen 2.19-20) qualities. Before the fall, man existed in a state of untested creaturely holiness (Gen 1.31). The image of God was not removed in the fall, but it was marred (James 3.9).

Nature

Man is made of material and immaterial parts (Matt 10.28; 1 Cor 7.34; James 2.26). Both parts, including the sin nature, are passed on through natural generation (traducianism; Gen 2.1-3; 5.3; Ex 21.11; Ps 51.5; Acts 17.26; Heb 4.4).

As a result of the fall, man is totally and completely depraved (Eph 4.17-19). Both man's will and understanding are corrupt (Tit 1.5). All men are now sinners (Ps 51.5; Jer 17.9; 1 John 1.8; 2 Tim 3.2-4; Is 53.6), alienated from God, and spiritually dead (Eph 2.1-3). The natural man cannot do anything good (John 5.42; 8.34; Rom 7.18, 23), nor can he understand spiritual things (Rom 8.5-8, 1 Cor 2.14). He does not and cannot seek God, nor does he desire to do so (John 6.44; Rom 3.10-18).

Hamartiology

I believe that sin is any personal lack of conformity to the moral character or desire of God. Sin has permeated all of God's creation and deserves absolute punishment.

Origin

Sin entered the universe with the fall of Satan (1 Tim 3.6; 1 John 3.8) and the human race with the fall of Adam (Rom 5.12-15). God ordained sinful events (Lam 3.38; Josh 11.20; Judg 3.12; 9.23; 14.4; 1 Sam 2.25; 16.14; 2 Sam 24.1, 10, 12-17; 1 Chr 21.1; Job 1.21; Ps 105.25; Isa 45.7; Acts 2.23; 4.27) for His own glory and purposes (Ps 76.10; Prov 16.4; Rom 8.28; 9.14-24) though He is not culpable for the sin, and those committing the sin will be held responsible (Luke 22.22; Matt 18.7; 26.24; Mark 14.21).

Nature

Sin is any disposition (Jer 17.9), thought (Matt 5.27-28; 15.19), act (Rom 7.19), omission (James 4.17), or combination of these that fails to conform to God's moral character or desire. Sin can take the form of disobedience (Rom 5.19), lawlessness (1 John 3.4), selfishness (2 Cor 5.15), transgression (Rom 5.15-18), or unrighteousness (1 John 5.17).

Extent

Sin permeates the whole universe (Rom 8.19-22). It extends to every member of the human race (Rom 3.23; Eph 2.1). It consumes man's body (Rom 8.10), mind (Titus 1.15; Eph 4.17-18), heart (Eph 4.18, Jer 17.9), will (John 8.34; Eph 2.3), and emotions (Eph 4.17-19). Thus man is totally and completely depraved. Total depravity does not mean that man is as depraved as he could be, but that all of man is completely depraved.

Imputation

As a result of Adam's fall, sin came upon the whole race (Rom 5.12-19). Adam was a representative of the race, and his sin is imputed to every individual. Thus, men are conceived and born totally depraved. Men are not sinners because they sin; men sin because they are born sinners.

Consequence

Sin deserves judgment. Sin results in physical death (James 1.15), spiritual death (Rom 6.23), and ultimately eternal death in the Lake of Fire (Rev 20.14).

Soteriology

I believe that salvation is the complete deliverance that God, through the person and work of Christ, and by the operation of the Holy Spirit, gives to His people.

The following reflects the theological order of the events in salvation.

Foreknowledge

Foreknowledge is God's loving purpose toward individuals, determined in eternity past. Foreknowledge is not simply foresight but forethought. It is the predetermined decree of God regarding individuals (Acts 2.23). Scripture does not explicitly state what foreknowledge is based on, but it does insist that foreknowledge is not based on any human action (John 1.13; Rom 9.11-12, 16).

Election

God sovereignly chose individuals for salvation in eternity past according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph 1.4). Election is based on God's foreknowledge (1 Peter 1.2), which is His determinate council (Acts 2.23). He did this, not based on anything worthy in the individuals, but in order that they may glorify God and serve Him (1 Thess 1.4; 2 Thess 2.13; Psalm 65.4; Deut 8.6-8; John 15.16; Rom 8.29).

Calling

God commands all men to receive Christ (general call; John 7.37-38; Acts 17.30) and effectually brings elect sinners to salvation through the work of the Holy Spirit (effectual call; John 6.37, 44, 64; 10.27, Rom 8.30; 1 Cor 1.9; Luke 14.15-24).

Regeneration

God supernaturally implants new life into spiritually dead men (Eph 2.1-5; Col 2.13; Titus 3.5; 1 Peter 1.3, 23). This new birth is the exclusive work of the Holy Spirit (John 1.13; 3.8) that immediately results in repentance and faith on the part of the sinner (Deut 5.29; Acts 16.14; 8.45-47; James 1.18; 1 John 5.1; 3.9; 4.7; 5.4; 5.18).

Repentance

Repentance is a complete turning away from sin and a turning to God, necessarily expressed by a believer, resulting from a Spirit-given realization of the seriousness of sin. The believer will demonstrate genuine sorrow and a determination to turn from his rebellion to serve the Lord (Joel 2.12-14; Ezek 18.30-32; Matt 21.30-32). Without repentance, there is no salvation (Matt 3.2; Acts 3.19; Rom 2.4; Luke 24.47). Repentance involves the whole person, including his mind (Psalm 51.3), will (Luke 3.8; Matt 3.8; Acts 26.20), and emotions (Zech 12.10; Matt 11.21; 2 Cor 7.8-10). Repentance is a gift from God (Acts 11.18; 2 Tim 2.24-25).

Faith

Faith is an unreserved trust in Jesus Christ, expressed by a believer, resulting from a Spirit-given realization of the truth of the gospel. Faith involves the whole person, including his mind (1 Cor 15.1-4; 1 John 5.9-13), will (John 3.36; 2 Tim 1.12; Heb 3.18-19; 5.9), and emotions (Matt 13.23). Faith will necessarily result in good works (James 2.14-19; Rom 1.17; John 17.17). Faith is a gift from God (Phil 1.29; 2 Pet 1.3; Mark 9.24; John 5.44; Eph 2.8-9; Acts 14.27; 1 Cor 12.3).

Spirit Baptism/Union with Christ

Believers are judicially placed into an inseparable spiritual bond with Jesus Christ resulting from the baptism of the Holy Spirit (John 17.21; Rom 8.1; Gal 3.27). Believers thereby enter the Body of Christ. (1 Cor 12.13). This union provides the basis for believers to be imputed with Christ's righteousness (1 Cor 1.3; 2 Cor 5.21).

Justification

Justification is a judicial act of God whereby He declares a sinner righteous (Rom 5.1, 9). He does so by imputing Christ's righteousness to the believer and will therefore treat him as such (Rom 3.24-26; Rom 5.18-19; 1 Cor 1.30; 2 Cor 5.21). God legally declares (not makes) believing sinners righteous (Rom 3.21-28; 8.33; Rom 3.4, 19-20; 4.5) because of the imputed righteousness of Christ based on His active and passive obedience (Rom 5.15-19; 2 Cor 5.21).

Adoption

Adoption is a judicial act of God whereby He places the believer into His family, bestowing upon him all rights and privileges of an adult son (Rom 8.15; Eph 1.5; Gal 3.26; 4.5). It will culminate when God resurrects believers and they enter into their inheritance and are glorified (Rom 8.23).

Sanctification

Believers are positionally set apart from sin unto God at the moment of their salvation (Acts 26.18; 1 Cor 6.11). They are progressively set apart from sin through the continual work of the Holy Spirit during their lifetime (Phil 1.61; Thess 4.2-7). Ultimately in the eternal kingdom, believers will be freed from the very presence of sin (Phil 3.21; 1 John 3.2). Though believers will inevitably persevere (1 Pet 1.3-4, 7; 2 Peter 1.5-8), sanctification is not automatic. Believers are commanded to actively pursue holiness (Rom 12.1-2; 2 Cor 7.1; Titus 2.12; Rom 8.13; 1 John 2.15-17).

Glorification

Believers will experience final sanctification in the eternal kingdom. They will be freed forever from the presence of sin and will be wholly conformed to the image of Christ (Rom 8.29; Phil 3.21; Col 3.4; 1 Thess 3.12-13; 1 John 3.2; Jude 24).

Ecclesiology

I believe that every believer in this age is a member of the church, which is the body of Christ. A body distinct from Israel, the church is formed by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit that began on the Day of Pentecost and continues until the rapture. The local church is the visible representation of this body, whose mission is to worship God, edify believers, and accomplish the Great Commission.

Nature

The church is comprised of all believers, both dead and alive, from Pentecost (Acts 1.5; 11.15-16) until the Rapture (1 Thess 4.13-18) (universal or invisible; Matt 16.18). It is the body of Christ (Col 1.18, 24; Eph 1.22-23; 3.21; Heb 12.23), formed as believers are Spirit-baptized at the point of their conversion (1 Cor 12.13). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Cor 10.32).

Local Church

The local church is the earthly, visible representation of the body of Christ (1 Cor 1.2; Rev 2-3). It is comprised of believers (Acts 2.47) who have been baptized by immersion (Acts 2.41). It is an independent (1 Cor 5.1-6.5), organized body that meets regularly (Acts 20.7; 1 Cor 16.2; Heb 10.25) for worship, instruction, prayer, observance of the ordinances, mutual assistance, and evangelism (Acts 2.42; Matt 28.18-29).

Government

The officers of the local church are elders (pastors) and deacons (Phil 1.1; 1 Tim 3.1-13), with one elder being identified as the leader (Acts 15.13; 21.18). The local church is to administer the biblical ordinances of baptism (Matt 28.19) and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11.23-26). The government of the church should be congregational (Acts 6.1-6; 13.1-2; 2 Cor 8.19; 1 Cor 5.4-5).

The biblical distinctives of Baptist churches are biblical authority (2 Tim 3.16-17), the autonomy of the local church (Matt 18.17; 1 Tim 3.15), the priesthood of the believer (1 Peter 2.9), the practice of baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2.47; Matt 28.19; 1 Cor 11.17-24), individual soul liberty (Acts 5.29; 1 John 2.27), regenerate church membership (Acts 2.41-47), two offices (Phil 1.1; 1 Tim 3), and separation of church and state (Matt 22.21).

Mission

The primary purpose of the church is doxological (Eph 3.21). It accomplishes this purpose through evangelism (Matt 28.19), discipleship of believers (Matt 28.19-20), and continued expansion (Acts 1.8).

Purity

It is mandatory for a church to actively pursue purity, both internally and externally. It must discipline its disobedient members (Matt 8.16-17; Rom 16.17; 1 Cor 5; 2 Thess 3.8-15), maintain a distinct separation from the world (1 John 2.15-17; Rom 12.1-2; James 4.4; Eph 5.11; 1 Cor 1.21), expose and refute false teachers (2 John 9-11; 1 Tim 1.19-20), and separate from those men or organizations that deviate from Scripture in doctrine or practice (Matt 7.15; 1 Tim 6.3-5; 2 Tim 2.16-20; 2 Cor 6.14-18; 1 John 4.1-3; Rom 16.17-18; Gal 1.8-10) or those who affiliate with such (2 Thess 3.6; 1 Cor 5.1-11; 1 Tim 1.18-20; Matt 18.15-17).

Eschatology

I believe the next event on God's prophetic calendar is the rapture of the church. The coming of Christ will be premillennial and pretribulation, commencing with the seven year tribulation period. At the end of the tribulation, the church will return with Christ who will then set up His kingdom on earth.

Rapture

The Rapture of the church is imminent (1 Thess 4.13-18). It will occur before Christ sets up His earthly kingdom (2 Tim 4.1; Rom 11.25-27) and before the tribulation period (Rev 3.10; John 14.1-3; Matt 25.31-46). Once in heaven, the church will take part in the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5.8-10; Rom 14.10-12) and the Marriage of the Lamb (Rev 19.1-10).

Tribulation

After the church is raptured, God will once again turn His focus upon Israel (Jer 30.7; Dan 9.24-27; Rom 11.25-27). The Antichrist will be revealed (2 Thess 2.7-8), who will become the leader of the revived Roman empire (Dan 7.20, 24) and will sign a treaty with Israel (Dan 9.26-27). This will mark the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period (Rev 11.3; 12.14). This will be a time of disastrous calamities of God's wrath upon sinners. The tribulation will culminate with the battle of Armageddon (Zec 14.1 ff) at which time Jesus Christ will return with His saints (Rev 19.11 ff).

Second Coming

Christ will surely come again (Acts 1.11), at which time Satan, the false prophet, the beast, and his armies will be bound and thrown into the abyss (Rev 20.2; Zec 13.2). Seventy-five days will then pass (Dan 12.11-12) during which the Old Testament and Tribulation believers will be resurrected (Dan 12.2), Israel will be regathered (Eze 20.34), and the Millennial Temple will be built (Eze 40-48).

Kingdom

Once Christ returns, He will initiate the Millennial Kingdom with the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Matt 25.1-10). Christ will physically rule His Kingdom on earth with His saints (Dan 7.13-14). After the 1,000-year reign, Satan will be loosed and will lead his final rebellion (Rev 20.7-9), be defeated, and thrown into the Lake of Fire with his followers (Rev 20.15). The wicked will then be judged at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev 20.11) and cast into the Lake of Fire. Believers will enter the eternal kingdom, living forever with God in the New Heavens and New Earth (1 Cor 15.24; Rev 21-22).

Music

(Due to the specialized nature of my ministry, I have included a brief statement of my music philosophy.)

Music, without any text, communicates general moods universally (Job 30.31; Isa 16.11; 30.19; Jer 48.36). It can, therefore, communicate moods that are moral or immoral. In the mind of God, there is a definite line between music that is pleasing to Him and music that is not pleasing to Him. Because we are finite, however, and because Scripture does not explicitly tell us what pleases God in this area, that line is difficult to determine. Every decision in life should be an act of worship (responding to truth; John 4.19-24). We must, therefore, make decisions in this regard just as we make any other decisions in the Christian life.

1. Does the music risk failing to bring God glory (1 Corinthians 10.31)? True, dedicated believers will more concerned with the glory of God than their personal tastes, and will not see how close to the line they can get.
2. Does this music offend others (1 Cor 8.9; 10.32-33)? True, dedicated believers will be willing to give up what may be their legitimate right for the sake of weaker brothers.
3. Does the music control me (1 Cor 6.12; 9.27)? True, dedicated believers will not allow their tastes to control them. They will be willing to give up that which is taking the place of God in their lives.
4. Is the music beneficial for sanctification (1 Cor 10.23-24)? True, dedicated believers will actively pursue holiness and godliness in their lives (Eph 5.9-10; Phil 1.9-10; Col 3.10-14; James 3.17-18; 2 Pet 1.3-11), and only chose that which is beneficial for their spiritual growth. The question is not, What is *wrong* with this? but, What is *right* with this?

Believers should acknowledge the existence of better music both in content and style and learn to appreciate what is best. They should then actively chose what is best, both in quality and in benefit for their spiritual lives.

With regard specifically to congregational worship music, the qualifications are even more narrowed.

1. Congregational worship music must be God-oriented. It must express Bible-based, complete truth about God, and the musical style should be worthy of the truth.
2. Congregational worship music must be doctrine-oriented. Because believers can worship only when they respond to objective, biblical truth, music used in congregational worship should be filled with doctrinal truth.
3. Congregational worship music must be affection-oriented. Because the very nature of worship is response to truth, the music used should develop deep affections for God and not simply emotionalistic passions. This involves the way the text is written as well as the composition of the music itself. Congregational worship music should affect the affections through the intellect.
4. Congregational worship music must be congregation-oriented. Because the purpose of congregational worship is that believers join together as the body of Christ to express a unified response to God, music that is very individualistic or personal does not have a

place in congregational worship. This applies to the content of the text as well as the style of the music.

I believe there exists within fundamentalism a serious need to examine its music. Fundamentalists have historically fought against the Contemporary Christian Music movement because of its adoption of popular music styles with the purpose of attracting unbelievers. While this is a correct and necessary battle, I do not believe fundamentalists have been willing to apply their own arguments to their own music, and as popular culture (and the parallel CCM styles) has continued to worsen, Fundamentalists have adopted more and more pop styles, careful only to remain sufficiently separated from current styles.