

**Ordination Thesis  
of  
Michael E. Evans**

**EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF AMERICA**

**Respectfully Submitted This Day**

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## **I. Biographical Section**

### ***A. Briefly describe your own conversion to faith in Jesus Christ and the conversion experience of your spouse to faith in Jesus Christ.***

“God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). “To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen” (2 Peter 3:18). These two Scripture references aptly summarize God’s working in our lives. God is faithful. We were called (passive voice) into fellowship with His Son. To Him be all the glory!

I was raised in a loving home as the second of two children. My parents were very active in a main-line church and provided a strong moral framework during my formative years. However, it was not until I was sixteen years old that the Lord removed my heart of stone and gave me a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26).

I cannot possibly improve upon this biblical description of conversion. There I was, a proud, self-justified, spiritually dead sinner, experimenting every day in the laboratory of sin and the next thing I knew I no longer loved sin. Rather, I became keenly aware of my own sin before a holy God. My heart and mind were opened to the love of God. I repented of my sins, confessed Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and vowed to follow Him all the days of my life. This extraordinary event occurred in the fall of 1980.

I will always be grateful to God for placing an evangelical Methodist youth pastor in my life who challenged me to respond to the gospel, taught me, and disciplined me in the things of God. I will always be grateful to God for calling me into fellowship with His Son, Jesus, and giving me a new heart.

My wife Karla was converted to Christ during her freshman year of college (1984). Karla was raised in a strong moral environment by her parents who faithfully attended a main-line church. Having been baptized as an infant and going through confirmation as a teenager, Karla was at best *indifferent* to spiritual truth and at worst, *resting* in the perceived sufficiency of her infant baptism, rather than a personal faith in Jesus Christ.

During her freshman year of college (we both attended Luther College in Decorah, Iowa) some Christians on her dorm floor asked her to come to a Fellowship of Christian Athletes meeting of which I was one of the leaders. God used the words of the speaker that particular night to convince Karla that indeed she was not saved, and that she needed to have a personal faith in Christ. Thus, it was during this period of time that the Lord began His mysterious work of regeneration in her and she believed the gospel. She confessed Christ as her Lord and Savior and began life as a new creation in Christ.

***B. Briefly give an account of your call to ministry and your spouse's attitude towards this call.***

Early in my Christian life I sensed myself being drawn toward full time Christian ministry. I have never seriously considered anything else. I agree with Spurgeon when he says in Lectures To My Students, "In order to a true call to the ministry there must be an irresistible, overwhelming craving and raging thirst for telling to others what God has done to our own souls." I know something of this craving and thirst and know (from experience) that I would not be content, at least long term, in any other labors.

The Bible speaks of certain individuals as being *given* to the Church as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph. 4:11-12). The *purpose* of this good giving

by God is to equip and build up the body of Christ. I believe that God has gifted me to be a pastor/teacher for the equipping and nurturing of the saints. After serving more than six years as the pastor of Crossroad Evangelical Free Church in Earlham, Iowa, and previous ministries, my sense of God's call on my life to the pastoral ministry is stronger than ever. This calling has been, and continues to be, confirmed in a variety of ways.

Karla's attitude toward my call to ministry is very positive. She understands the unique calling that God gives to vocational ministry couples and families and accepts the inherent challenges and blessings with a grace-filled outlook. Karla has always been an integral part of my ministry and my number one supporter.

***C. Briefly describe your preparation for credentialed ministry.***

The single most important factor in my preparation for ministry has been the consistent study of the Bible from 1980 to the present. There is no seminary, nor are there *any* books, that prepare a man for ministry as does a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. Seeking to understand and apply the Scriptures will always be one of the primary ambitions of my life and ministry.

I attended Luther College from 1983-1987 earning a B.A. with majors in Biology and Religion. These were four excellent years of spiritual growth, as I became involved in leading Bible studies on campus as well as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

I valued my time at this theologically and socially liberal institution for a number of reasons. While there was a remnant of sincere Christians in the religion department (and other areas), for the most part my interaction came from theologically liberal religion professors and students. The benefits of these interactions were legion, but one of the most

helpful lessons learned in these years was to be made aware of the glaring deficiencies in my own theological framework and in my ability to effectively contend for the “once and for all faith handed down to the saints” (Jude v. 3). Having said that, however, there were also many opportunities to defend truth and the Fountain-head of truth, Christ and His Word.

After college I attended Bethel Theological Seminary from 1988-1992 and received the Masters of Divinity degree. My years at Bethel were good in many ways. There were some excellent professors who challenged me and taught me well. Much “iron sharpening iron” happened in these years through the forging of friendships, lively theological discussion, and intellectual challenge.

However, as I look back, it is clear that the most significant preparation for ministry occurred during my involvement in the apprenticeship program at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis. It was a program established by the church where students who attended the seminary and the church could be involved in hands-on ministry, personal accountability, training in hermeneutics, and serious theological instruction by the pastoral staff.

During these early years and up to the present day, I am deeply indebted to the teachings, books, and friendship of Dr. John Piper as well as the other pastors at Bethlehem. The God-centered theological foundation I gained in these years has been a pearl of great price in my life and ministry.

## II. Doctrinal Exposition

*In this section of the thesis, the candidate is required to relate his or her personal doctrinal convictions about the various elements found in the Statement of Faith of The Evangelical Free Church of America. It is expected that the candidate's responses will include citations of Scripture which give support to the articulated convictions.*

***Article I I believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life.***

I wholeheartedly affirm that both the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of God without error in the original writings. Together they encompass the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and will always be the divine and final authority for all matters of faith and practice.

The Scriptures contain the special revelation from God to man that details God's purposes from the beginning of all things to the consummation of all things. Throughout the Bible, God seems to exhibit an intense desire to make Himself known to His people so that they might live rightly in a redemptive relationship before Him.

He called Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). He spoke to Moses from the burning bush (Ex. 3:3-6). He revealed Himself to the prophets of old and He spoke to the disciples in the New Testament (e.g. at the baptism of Jesus [Matt. 3:16-17] and the transfiguration [Matt. Ch. 17]). The Scriptures are *filled* with the self-revelation of God, both through the authoritative *written* Word as well as the *Incarnate* Word (Heb. 1:1-2).

I affirm the plenary (full) inspiration of the Bible. It was without error in the original autographs. In the *strictest* sense of the word this full inspiration applies only to these original manuscripts. Otherwise we would be affirming the same level of inerrancy for translators that only the original authors possessed. However, inasmuch as copyists and translators have

preserved the original message, so also modern translations are fully inspired by God. All Scripture (both Old and New Testaments) are equally inspired. The written revelation of God's Word is accurate and the very Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16).

The Holy Spirit was selective in the events which He inspired the biblical authors to report (John 21:25). And, even though the Scriptures contain a very limited record of God's revelation to man, it is sufficient (along with general revelation) to render all men without excuse (Rom. 1:20). All that the Scripture teaches is true and inspired by God. Scripture also testifies as to its own inspiration, truthfulness, and authority (2 Peter 1:21).

I believe in the illumination of the Scriptures, that work of the Holy Spirit in applying biblical truth to the human heart. For the message of Scripture to change a person, it is necessary for more than simply an intellectual comprehension of authorial intent to be grasped, though this *is* critical. Sin affects not only human reason but also the human will. The noetic effects of sin are so pervasive that man in his natural state is incapable of recognizing and responding to divine truth.

The power of the written Word (as it is read, heard, or otherwise meaningfully communicated) in conjunction with the illuminating work of the sovereign Holy Spirit (John 3:6-8) results in changed lives. This change occurs as the Holy Spirit removes the spiritual blinders from sinners' hearts and bears witness with their spirits as to the veracity of the written Word *and* the Incarnate Word. There are no Scriptures that are *less* than God-breathed (*theopneustos*). Every word written in Scripture was written to teach us, "so that through endurance and the encouragement of Scripture we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). I affirm the full inerrancy of the Scriptures and that they are completely truthful in all of their teachings.

This impacts my life and teaching by providing me with a sure foundation for all that I believe and teach. While my understanding of God's Word grows over time, the Word never changes. The application and significance of the Scriptures will indeed change over time, but the Word of God stands true forever as a beacon of inextinguishable light (Ps. 119:105; Matt. 24:35)

The canon of Scripture consists in those divinely inspired manuscripts that should be included in the Bible. The modern Protestant Bible, with its sixty-six inspired books, was in its final form by 367 A.D. Various tests were used to determine canonicity. Among the New Testament tests was that of Apostleship (except for Mark, Luke, Acts, Hebrews and Jude). If an Apostle wrote as God's messenger, his writings were automatically included in the canon. The canon is now closed and remains the perfect repository of all God's directly inspired words. The sixty-six books of the Bible comprise the summation of God's revelation to man in written form.

***Article II I believe In one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.***

I do believe in one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The question of how we can *know anything* (epistemology) is foundational to all theological discussion. One of the presuppositions I hold, behind which I can give no concrete evidence, is the fact that God exists.

I cannot *prove* it. I cannot perform a replicable experiment in a controlled environment whereby proof of God's existence would be universally verifiable. I simply believe God exists. I know it and believe it as certainly as I know that *I* exist in time and

space. This belief, however, is not without substantive evidence. The reliability of Scripture, the testimony of millions through the ages, radically changed lives, the order and structure of the universe, the beauty of the created world, and the undeniable fact that man is an eternal creature (Eccl. 3:11) are just a few of these evidences.

Scripture teaches that the Triune God (Gen. 1:1, 26; Col. 1:16-18) created the universe from nothing (*ex nihilo*) in six literal days (Ex. 20:11). While the Bible is not a science textbook per se, I see little biblical evidence to suggest that the six day creation as reported in Genesis Chapter One should be taken as anything less than six twenty-four hour periods. In Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31, the phrase "...and there was evening and there was morning..." appears, signifying a normal day.

Granted, in Genesis 2:4 the Hebrew word for day, *Yom*, is also used to describe more broadly the entire process of creation. And clearly the word "day" *can* also be used to describe a period of time, as this context indicates. However, the context of Chapter One clearly indicates a normal "day." Since there is no contextual evidence to suggest otherwise, it is my view that the word for day, *Yam*, in Genesis Chapter One should be understood in its most obvious sense. This is clearly how Moses understood it as this literal twenty-four hour period became the basis for the Sabbath command in Exodus 20:11.

Genesis 1:1 tells us that "In the beginning God created..." This is important because this most basic fact is what gives inherent purpose to every created thing. The fact that an all-powerful and all-wise God created this universe from nothing is proof of purpose. Without God as Creator, man's purpose is unclear.

God, by His very nature is infinitely perfect in all His ways. He identified Himself as "I am" (Ex. 3:14). He is self-existent and self-sustaining. He *needs* nothing and no one (Acts

17:25). He is the source of all that exists and sustains all that is. He exists eternally, lives in time and space but is not bound by such. Because He is infinitely perfect, He is jealous to defend His own glory (1 Sam. 2:30; Deut. 4:24; Nah. 1:2; Zeph. 1:18). All that God does, thinks, plans, ordains and brings to pass is perfect, just as He Himself is perfect.

The ultimate purpose of God is to be glorified. He *is* to be glorified for His magnificent creation (Pss. Chs. 8, 19). He *will* be glorified by His elect (Isa. 43:6-7; Eph. 1:5-6). He will also (and I say it with tears) be glorified by those who perish (Rom. 9:17-23). God is committed to seeing His glory and fame spread to all people groups, even to the ends of the earth (Hab. 2:14). All that God does is for His own glory and for the ultimate good of His people. His glory and our good are not mutually exclusive concepts.

God is without form. He is infinite. He is everywhere present. God is Spirit (John 4:24). God is holy and just in all His ways. He lives in unapproachable light and has never been seen in fullness by any human being (1 Tim. 6:16). He is purposeful, all-powerful, and sovereign in relation to His creation. He has a perfect plan for the entire scope of history and is working out all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11).

He is transcendent, yet also immanent. He is involved in every aspect of man's existence, down to the number of hairs on an individual person's head at a particular moment in time (Matt. 10:30). He alone knows the end from the beginning and there is nothing in the past, present, or future of this universe that He does not know perfectly at this very moment. Neither is there any possibility of God's ultimate plans being frustrated. His purposes shall stand and He will always joyfully do all that He pleases (Ps. 115:3; Isa. 46:10).

God exists eternally in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The word used to describe this relationship is Trinity. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are co-eternal and have

co-existed forever in perfect fellowship. God is one. He is not three. At the heart of the Jewish faith is the oneness of God expressed in the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4).

The Trinity has always existed and has always been divine. In Genesis 1:1-2, God the Father was present, the Holy Spirit, “hovered over the waters,” and the Word (Jesus) was with God in the beginning (John 1:1-2) playing an active role in creation with the Father (Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). At the baptism of Jesus we also see all three persons of the Trinity (Luke 3:21-22). The Son was being baptized. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove, and the Father confirmed that Jesus was indeed His Son.

I believe in a functional subordination within the Trinity. Unity in diversity and equality with role differentiation characterizes the Trinity. God the one and only Son, “...came *from* the Father (John 1:14). The *Spirit* proceeds forth from the Father (John 15:26) and dwells within all believers enduing them with power and spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7).

While the word “Trinity” does not appear in Scripture, it *is* a biblical truth that has been affirmed again and again throughout church history as well as definitively at the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381). The Trinity is clearly defined in the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19-20, “...in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” Second Corinthians 13:14 also links all three persons of the Trinity together.

It is crucial that Christian pastors, churches, and *all* believers have at least a basic understanding of the Trinity. Every cult or false teacher of religion in this world goes astray from the orthodox biblical teaching of the Trinity. The subtleties are so minute as to at times deceive even well-read students of theology. Correct belief always has the *potential* to lead to right action.

It is also important to have a correct biblical understanding of the Trinity because this will affect every other Christian doctrine. For example, if Jesus were *only* man He could not then make satisfaction for my sin. Because He is at the same time divine and an *actually* sinless man, He is able to propitiate my sins completely. If Jesus were *only* divine He could not have *actually* suffered the full weight and anguish of having our sin placed upon Him (Isa. 53:4-5). But, in bearing our sin both as God's Son *and* as a man, God *actually* made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21).

In an effort to simplify the complexities of orthodox biblical teaching on the Trinity, many have erred. *Modalism* is one of the most insidious heresies to enter the Church. Sabellius taught this doctrine in the third century. Modalism teaches that there is one God-head which may be referred to as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In this view they (the three persons of the Trinity) are all identical and merely different titles by which to refer to a different *revelation* of God.

While preserving the *deity* of the Trinity, Modalism loses the individual *persons* of the Trinity. Instead Modalism teaches one God-head who is not three persons, but one person with three different names, roles, or functions (Erickson, [Christian Theology](#), p.334). The difficulties in suggesting that the God-head was only one person are overwhelming. If true, then God the Father would have suffered completely as the Son suffered on the Cross. If true, then the baptism of Jesus (Luke 3:21-22) where all three persons of the Trinity are present would be misleading at best.

Many attempts to define the Trinity by analogy fall unintentionally into the realm of Modalism or tri-theism. For example, the classic analogy of water having three different states: solid, liquid, and gas, (as representing one substance in three different forms) falls flat

because it is impossible for a specific unit of water to exist *simultaneously* in these different forms.

It is impossible this side of heaven to fully understand the Trinity. How God can exist eternally in three persons, each fully God, yet but one God, is a mystery. However, this *is* the clear teaching of Scripture and the orthodox teaching of the faithful through all generations and I believe it completely.

***Article III I believe that Jesus is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross, a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where, at the right hand of Majesty on High, He is now our High Priest and Advocate.***

I do affirm that Jesus Christ is true God and true man. I believe that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and died on the cross as a sacrifice for sins. He rose bodily from the dead and ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

I believe that Christ was fully man and also fully God. He was not part man and part God, but fully both. As a man He was, and is, able to sympathize with our weaknesses because He too was a man, experiencing nearly all of the same “earthly” experiences common to man (Heb. 4:15). He was conceived supernaturally, but born naturally, to the virgin Mary (Luke 1:26, 31; 2:7). He *progressed* in His earthly life and grew in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man (Luke 2:52). Jesus wept (John 11:35). He was hungry at times (Matt. 4:2), thirsty (John 19:28), tired (John 4:6), and was genuinely tempted (Matt. 4:1-11). Jesus was a perfect man. He is *also* fully God. He is of one substance (*homo-ousious*) with the Father, co-equal and co-eternal. Nevertheless He willingly subordinated Himself to the Father’s will (John 6:38).

Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). He frequently spoke of the relationship between Himself and the Father, stressing that He only did what He saw His Father doing (John 5:19). There is an indissoluble union between God the Son and God the Father. To honor one is to honor the other. To *dishonor* one is to dishonor the other (John 5:23). The Son has always been in perfect fellowship with the Father and the Spirit (John 1:1).

The union of the divine and human natures of Jesus in one being is sometimes referred to as the hypostatic (substance, essence) union. This term came from the Chalcedonian Council’s (A.D. 456) definition of how the human and divine nature of Jesus existed together. The human and divine nature of Jesus are distinct entities each having their own properties, while at the same time also being inseparably joined together.

As divine Son of God, Jesus told His disciples that He would be with them always (Matt. 28:20). In the context of church discipline, Jesus promised that where two were in agreement that *He* would be in their midst (Matt. 18:19-20). The Apostle Paul spoke of “...Christ *in* you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). I affirm both the full deity and full humanity of Christ.

This perfect union of divine and human natures was God’s masterful plan of redemption. As sinless man, Jesus is able to bear our sins. As the divine Son of God, He is able to take our sins away and throw them as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12).

In the fullness of time God the Father sent His only-begotten Son into this world. God became flesh and dwelled among us (John 1:14). Mary conceived through the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) at which time God became flesh. The Messiah, whose coming was foretold as early as Genesis 3:15, was born to Mary and nurtured in the home of Joseph and Mary.

In order to fully identify with man, Jesus freely gave up many of His heavenly privileges. He did not, however, give up *any* of His divine attributes. While remaining omniscient (John 1:48), omnipotent (Matt. 8:23-27), and omnipresent (John 8:58), the Son seems to have *limited* the indiscriminate use of these attributes. Thus, I deny the teaching that there was a true kenosis, understanding Philippians 2:7 as referring mainly to the *attitude* (making Himself nothing) of Christ.

Jesus did not perform His *own* will but the will of His Father, and that perfectly. He willingly gave up the intimate proximate personal fellowship with the Father that He had known from eternity past. On the cross the Son felt the full fury of the Father's hatred of sin, and experienced the complete estrangement from His Father (Matt. 27:46). Jesus was, and is, the all-sufficient propitiation for all the sins of all who believe (have believed, are believing, or *will* believe) in Christ as Lord (Rom. 3:22-25).

While the death of Christ was necessary for *any* to be saved, clearly His death did not secure salvation for all without exception, for all will not be saved. Scripture teaches that even *many* professing Christians will not be included among the saints in everlasting glory (Matt. 7:21-23). The gate to heaven is a narrow gate but it *is* the only gate (Matt. 7:13-14; John 14:6).

Neither did the death of Christ function in such a way as to *potentially* secure the eternal salvation of all people without exception. I believe that Christ *actually* died to save elect sinners (Matt. 1:21; Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15) and that when a person comes to trust in Christ, the merits of *His* death became their own (2 Cor. 5:21). The death of Christ *actually* purchased the salvation of a massive company of people from all generations who would trust in Him (Mark 10:45).

The substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of a biblical view of salvation. Jesus Christ died in our place as a substitute for sinners who would be saved (Isa. 53:5). Jesus paid the price for our sin that we could never repay. He averted the wrath of God for multitudes of sinners throughout all ages of history who would have otherwise perished in their sins. He did this by placing our sin upon His own dear Son and then judged that sin by putting Him to death (2 Cor. 5:21). Thus, it becomes clear that our redemption is purchased not by any worldly thing such as silver or gold, tradition, or human effort, but only through the precious blood of the spotless Lamb of God, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19).

In my understanding, the power of the cross and the work of Christ are lessened when we suggest that the passion of Christ only *potentially* saves. While there is clearly a division in time and space when Christ purchased my salvation and when *I* came to *believe this*, this distinction, while necessary, is less important than it might seem. For the fact remains that Jesus died to *save* sinners. He came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10) and to *give* His life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28).

In First Timothy 2:6, Paul suggests that the scope of this ransom is more universal. However, we know from Christ's own words in Matthew 20:28 that Christ did not ransom all men without exception. Though the blood of Christ would be sufficient to cover the sins of infinite multitudes of people, it is efficient only for the elect who exercise faith in Christ. Nevertheless, the gospel invitation must be sincerely given to all without exception or distinction, for the Lord alone knows those who are His (2 Tim. 2:19).

Jesus made it clear that all whom the Father "gave" to Him would indeed come to Him for salvation (John 6:37) and that He would lose none of these (John 6:39). And yet, at the same time, it is consistent for Jesus to say that *everyone* who beholds the Son and believes in

Him will have eternal life (John 6:40). Those who *behold* the Son in saving faith are those who have been *given* to the Son by the Father.

After Jesus laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:15), He rose from the dead on the third day. This was just as He had predicted (John 2:19). The resurrection of Jesus is essential to Christianity. Without it we are merely left with an apparently good man who died a martyr's death. In rising from the dead, Christ demonstrated His power *over* death. Unlike Lazarus, who was raised from the dead only to die again, Jesus would never die again. Thus, the resurrection of Christ becomes the sure and certain hope of all true believers in this life. Why? Because all who have been united with Christ in His death will also be united with Him in His resurrection (Rom. 6:4-9).

*After* the resurrection, Jesus ascended into Heaven on the fortieth day in the presence of many witnesses (Acts 1:9-10). The significance of the Ascension is that Jesus was not simply leaving the scene, but that He was going to prepare a place for His sheep (John 14:3). In addition, Jesus explicitly stated (as well as two angels in Acts 1:9-11) that He would return again one day to take His disciples to the place He had prepared for them (John 14:3; 17:24).

The session of Jesus is a term used to refer to the position which Christ occupies at the right hand of the Father. After Jesus had made "purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3). The session of Christ is a beautiful picture of the completed work of Christ, where Christ is given rule, authority, and power over all things (Eph. 1:21-22).

But, even at His rightful place of honor at the right hand of the Father, Jesus still works. He is our High Priest and Advocate. He remains the *only* mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5) and "lives to make intercession" for the saints of God (Heb. 7:25). This

should serve as a great source of hope and comfort to those of us who are redeemed, yet live in physical bodies that are not yet redeemed. To know that Jesus not only *understands* perfectly every temptation of man, but that He is able to *help* those who are being tempted (Heb. 2:18) is a truth which brings great hope.

***Article IV I believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service***

The Holy Spirit dwells within all believers, is a gift from God, and is a guide which leads believers into “all truth” (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 6:19). The Spirit *gives* spiritual life where there was previously none (John 6:33) and is the active agent in regeneration (John 3:5). All sinners whom the Holy Spirit regenerates will come to believe in Christ. Those who remain in a state of unbelief have not been regenerated. No person will come to faith in Christ unless the miracle of regeneration occurs. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit is the ultimate *cause* of a person believing in Christ, not the *effect* of believing (John 3:3-8; Eph. 2:4-6).

This third Person of the Trinity plays an essential role in the believer’s assurance of salvation. The internal witness of the Spirit is one means of determining the validity of one’s faith. (Rom. 8:16; 2 Cor. 5:5). The Spirit *seals* believers and functions as a *pledge* in their hearts guaranteeing their eternal and glorious inheritance (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13-14).

The Spirit also plays an active role in empowering the believer for service and effective witness in this world (Acts 1:8). The Spirit brings about obedience, peace, and joy in the lives of the redeemed (Rom. 14:17). The Spirit also gives special fillings for specific tasks, as in Acts 4:7-14 where Peter and John are given an unusual boldness and eloquence to proclaim the Gospel.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is, in my view, that which happens to every believer at the time of conversion (1 Cor. 12:13). As in Romans 6:1-11 where Paul speaks of believers as “having been baptized into Christ’s death” (v.3), so in the baptism of the Spirit one is indwelled and completely identified with Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Because of the Holy Spirit’s working, good spiritual fruit *will* be produced in a believer’s life (Matt. 7:17; Gal. 5:22-23). Fruit bearing is not optional. Nor is it a human work, the successful completion of which guarantees one a place in heaven. Obedience to Christ and His commands springs forth from one who truly loves Jesus Christ (John 14:15) and yet it is also true that “the righteous man shall live by faith” [alone] (Rom. 1:17). Spiritual fruit will flow forth from the life of a true believer as surely (though not necessarily as consistently) as the sun emanates light.

The Holy Spirit also gives gifts to *every* believer for the building up of the body of Christ (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-11). In my studies I have found no convincing textual evidence to suggest that *teleios* (complete, perfect) in First Corinthians 13:10 refers to anything but the return of Christ. Nor am I persuaded by any other New Testament texts that sign gifts have ceased. Thus, I do not rule out the possibility of the manifestation of any sign gift.

While I am not a cessationist, I empathize with the arguments of those on the other side of this issue. The manifestation of the sign gifts; prophecy, miracle working, tongues and interpretation, seems to be concentrated in the first century with the initial evangelistic and church planting efforts of the apostles. Indeed the initial purpose of the sign gifts was to authenticate the work of the apostles and to edify the body of Christ. Neither does church history suggest that the sign gifts have been normative in church life in the intervening years.

However, I want to be careful not to speak authoritatively where the Bible *does not* speak. I also want to speak carefully where the Bible *does* speak. There are many gifts from the Holy Spirit that God *has* given to people for His own glory and for the building up of the church which are, without question, to be used in the everyday life of the local church.

No misuse of certain charismatic gifts among some should serve either to construct or deconstruct one's pneumatology as it relates to *any* gifts of the Spirit. We must be constrained (negatively) and driven (positively) by the revealed propositional truths of God's Word, not emotion and experience.

While I am not, in the strictest sense, a cessationist, I am suspicious of what passes off as "authentic" sign gift use in many churches. Tragically, subjectivism rather than clear biblical precedent often rules the day. In my understanding both the quantity *and* efficacy of the modern sign gift manifestations are quite different than the relatively few biblical examples we are given.

In addition, I believe that what is often accepted as a biblical use of the sign gifts can be counterfeit (2 Cor. 11:14; 2 Thess. 2:9). Modern day believers ought not to be sign seekers, though we should responsibly use those gifts which the Holy Spirit has sovereignly given. One of the litmus tests for the authenticity of sign gifts is the effect they have on the body of Christ.

The purpose of *all* the gifts of the Spirit, whether they be sign gifts or service gifts, is for the glory of God and the common good of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7). Therefore, inasmuch as believers use their gifts humbly, with a view to the common good and the glory of God, I theoretically support the responsible use of *all* the gifts of the Spirit. After all, it is the Spirit who distributes the gifts among God's children. Having said that, however, if

someone were to stand up in public worship this Sunday morning (with little regard for order or spiritual authority) and proclaim a message in tongues I would be inclined to halt it immediately, for it would not conform to the “orderly manner” requirement of First Corinthians 14:40. By this, I mean that the manifestation of tongues has never before occurred in my current church, nor has it been explicitly taught. I fully understand both the theoretical and practical difficulties this position creates, and must be content in living with some ambiguity.

If the use of sign gifts caused dissension in the church, this would be a strong indication that God is not pleased. When those so gifted are insensitive to others in their practice, causing division, the church would do well (as she *always* should) to follow the most excellent path of love (1 Cor. 13:1). Thus, while I am open to the valid use of sign gifts in the church, the above mentioned concerns serve to make me cautious in practice.

***Article V I believe that man was created in the image of God, but fell into sin and is, therefore, lost and only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit can salvation and spiritual life be obtained***

I believe that God has made every human being without exception in His own image (Gen. 1:26-27). The fact that man is made in the image of God is the reason given for the prohibition of murder and the subsequent death penalty for those who have so transgressed (Gen. 9:6).

The *imago dei* is what makes man a man in sharp contrast to other living or non-living things. The image of God in *all* men is what renders *all* men without excuse regarding the eternal power of God and certain other of his attributes (Rom. 1:19-20). It has not been *lost*

through original sin, but remains an intrinsic part of the human makeup. It is not superior in one human being over another, but is equal in all.

Because man is made in the image of God, this means that in some ways we are like Him. We are eternal creatures and we know it (Eccl. 3:11). Like God, we too have intellect, emotions, and a will. We have personalities and are capable of intelligent interaction with other human beings. Man has also been given dominion over creation (Gen 1:28). Finally, being made in the image of God means that, whether we acknowledge it or not, each of us belongs wholly to God. Therefore, there is a sacredness and value to all human life born or unborn.

Even though the image of God remains an integral part of the make-up of humanity, the fall of man and its effects on mankind have been enormous. God created mankind to have fellowship with Him and bring glory to His name (Isa. 43:7). When Adam sinned, he brought sin into the world for all who would follow after him (Rom. 5:12-13). As a result of the fall, a woman's pain in childbirth is greatly enhanced, the difficulty of working the earth for food is magnified, and relationships between men and women will be adversely affected (Gen. 3:16).

The ultimate effect of Adam and Eve's sin is both physical and spiritual death. Physical death remains the lot of us all (Heb. 9:27), but spiritual death *can* be reversed through the redemptive work of Christ.

The doctrine of salvation (soteriology) is a huge category in any systematic theology. I will briefly touch on two key aspects of this doctrine.

Conversion and Regeneration: Conversion occurs when a person genuinely repents of his sin and exercises faith in the person and finished work of Christ. I understand regeneration to be entirely the work of God whereby He imparts new spiritual life.

Both biblically and logically, this mysterious work of regeneration seems to precede an individual's response to the gospel call (John 1:12-13; 3:8). Conversion itself occurs as *we respond* to God's call, repent of our sin, and exercise faith in Jesus (Acts 3:19; 16:31; 20:21).

The biblical *order salutis* is profoundly humbling (Rom. 8:30). *All* the credit for a sinner's salvation belongs to God alone. It is *His* work and *His* grace alone which saves. From first to last, from grace to faith, it is all because of His free gift of mercy to those who believe (Eph. 2:8-9). While it is difficult to pinpoint exactly where one aspect of salvation begins and another ends, one thing is clear. The biblical elements of salvation mesh together into a beautiful mosaic of God's glorious grace. Every Christian is a poster child of God's amazing grace.

No person can be saved unless he truly repents of sin and turns to Christ by faith. Man plays an *active* role in *conversion* by personally trusting in Christ. However, in *regeneration*, man is passive (John 1:12-13). A person who is dead in his trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:5) does not simply wake up one day and decide of his own volition that he wants to be regenerated. Spiritually dead people do not *choose* God. God the Father and God the Spirit work together in bringing about regeneration (Col. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:3).

Neither is regeneration *produced* by faith (John 3:3-8). Rather, regeneration is more like *spiritual* heart surgery (Ezek. 36:26-27) that will *necessarily* produce saving faith. Why? Because spiritual life has been granted by God (1 Peter 1:23). As we consider salvation from the divine perspective, we must ask ourselves, "Who is it that can believe in Jesus Christ?" The answer is that every individual person *given* to the Son by the Father *will* come to saving faith in Christ (John 6:37).

In short, I believe that God's work of regeneration in the human heart makes it *possible*

to respond to the gospel call, and assures that as the gospel goes forth without discrimination, there *will* be success. This biblical truth is a foundation stone of my pastoral ministry.

***Article VI I believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit and, thus, become children of God***

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ bring about our salvation by virtue of the fact that Christ was delivered over to death by the Father (Isa. 53:10) and raised to life for our justification (Rom. 4:25). In biblical salvation we die to ourselves as we die *with* Christ so that we might also *live* with him (2 Tim. 2:11). The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only grounds for justification and salvation. Just as in the one trespass of Adam, all are condemned, so also by Christ's one act of righteousness, many are made alive (Rom. 5:18-19).

Romans 3:21-26 is perhaps the most powerful description of Christ's atonement. The Greek word for atonement, *hilasterion*, means "propitiatory sacrifice" or "means of propitiation." Christ died as a substitute for all that the Father had given Him (John 6:37-40). He not only died as a *substitute* however; He also died to appease the holy and righteous anger of Almighty God against sinners. Christ was the satisfaction made to the Father for man's sin. For Paul to say that Christ was "displayed publicly" (Rom. 3:25) "as a propitiation in His blood" is to say that the death of Christ not only covered all the sins of all who believe, but that He also served as a lightning rod of God's righteous anger against sinners.

The Father placed the sins of the world upon the shoulders of His own dear Son. Then, He executed His righteous judgment against those sins (Isa. 53:4-7, 10-11; 2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus

was crushed for *our* iniquities, but it was by this very punishment that salvation has been made available to mankind. This is atonement.

Justification is the legal declaration by God that a sinner is no longer guilty before Him, because his sins are forgiven. He is now imputed (not *infused* as Rome) with the very righteousness of God. To be “justified” in the biblical sense means not only to be legally “acquitted” of cosmic treason against a holy God, but also to be declared “righteous” in God’s sight. It is not something we do. Rather, justification is by faith alone (Gal. 2:16; 3:24). Justification is God’s response to our faith in declaring us “not guilty” and “righteous.” It happens at the point in time that a person exercises biblical faith.

Sanctification, like justification, is also something that begins at the point of conversion. However, unlike justification, sanctification is a *progressive* work of God that, coupled with our obedience, makes us more like Christ.

Is sanctification complete? Yes. Is sanctification incomplete? Yes. On the first “yes”, I turn to Scriptures such as Hebrews 10:10, 29, First Corinthians 1:2, Acts 20:32 and 26:18. The verb tenses for “sanctified” in these verses tend to speak of sanctification as something that is a completed event.

However, other texts seem to indicate that sanctification in believers remains *incomplete* in this life (1 Thess. 5:23). Why would Paul have prayed that the saints would be “entirely” sanctified if it were a completed process? In addition Hebrews 10:14 also indicates the ongoing nature of sanctification, “...He has perfected...those who are sanctified” (NIV are being sanctified). This is a present tense, passive voice participle. The present tense indicates the continuing nature of the work. The passive voice indicates that the primary

action (for this sanctification) is from God *acting upon* the saints. Redeemed sinners in this life are simultaneously justified and *yet* remain sinners (*simul iustus et peccator*).

When I attempt to point a person to the message about Christ in the interest of their salvation, I find that the approach varies. While the core message is unchanging, I try to take into account all that I know and have experienced with that individual.

I like to begin by speaking with others about the purpose for which they were created. Human beings were created for the glory of God (Isa. 43:7). Deep and lasting joy only comes from being what we were created to be. All people should live for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). All of us should love Him, trust Him, obey Him, and be thankful to Him. But...all of us have failed to glorify God as we ought (Rom. 3:23). The end result of this failure is physical and spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). This is the bad news.

The Good News is that God sent His only Son to provide us with eternal life. Jesus came to this world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). I would then explain to this person that the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection belong only to those who repent of their sins and trust in Christ (Acts 3:19; 16:31). I would then probe, asking questions to see if this indeed expressed the desire of his heart. If it did, I would encourage this person to talk to God, repent of his sin, and by faith put his trust in the finished work of Christ.

I affirm the doctrine of the preservation of the saints. All those who come to genuine saving faith in Christ shall be kept in Him until the end. Jesus made it clear on many occasions that those who belong to Him (referred to as His *sheep* in John 10:1-30 or as *gifts*, having been *given* by the Father to the Son (John 6:37-39) *will be saved*. The efficacy of regeneration and saving faith is such that it cannot be reversed. When one belongs to Jesus Christ, by definition, he cannot be *snatched* out of the Father's hand (John 10:29; Jude v.24).

However, there are also multiple warnings in Scripture which serve to balance a casual attitude toward this precious doctrine. Believers are *responsible to continue* in the faith *and if they do not*, will have proven by their *faithlessness* that their (self-attesting) faith was *not* genuine (Col. 1:23). Overconfidence is discouraged (1 Cor. 10:12; Heb. 4:1). In spite of these explicit warnings, however, the hope of the Christian is that He who *begins* a saving work in a person will carry it through to completion (Phil. 1:6).

In my experience, the doctrine of eternal security or perseverance of the saints is one of the most widely misunderstood doctrines among evangelicals, even by those who profess to hold to it. Many cling to this precious biblical doctrine, but deny other closely related effects *of it*. For example, a person may hold to this doctrine but deny that Christ actually, not potentially, died to save sinners, or deny the utter depravity of man in his natural state, or the unconditional nature of his election. In my view the doctrine of eternal security rests entirely upon whether or not one believes that it is *God alone* who saves, or whether my so-called “free will” is what finally determines my eternal destiny. If we limit, in any sense, the power of God in predestination, effectual calling, justification, and ultimate glorification of His elect, we lose the heart of this doctrine (Rom. 8:29-30).

My eternal salvation rests in the *fact* that Jesus Christ shed His blood for me, even me, that He predestined me to salvation from eternity past (Eph. 1:4), regenerated my heart, called me to Himself, justified me, and is in the process of *keeping* me to the very end. In short, this precious doctrine hinges on a radically God-centered understanding of salvation from first to last. This is an important biblical doctrine that I believe and am committed to teaching.

***Article VII I believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances to be observed by the Church during the present age. They are, however, not to be regarded as a means of salvation.***

I affirm that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances to be observed by the Church during the present age, and are not to be regarded as a means of salvation. Because I am unable to find any direct biblical evidence that anyone other than *believers* (contra infants of believers) were baptized in the New Testament, I believe that water baptism is for believers only (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38). Baptism is a public declaration of one's allegiance to the person and work of Jesus Christ, and a symbol of dying with Christ in His death, and rising to new life with Him in His resurrection (Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12).

The biblical evidence seems to point to the mode of baptism as being by immersion, though since the ordinance itself does not impart saving grace, it is not critical that it be done in only one manner. What is clearer is the fact that baptism is a very important step of obedience for new believers. There seems to be little separation of time in the New Testament between conversion and baptism. Because baptism is a symbolic clothing of ourselves with Christ (Gal. 3:27) it is only natural that believers identify themselves with Christ in this way.

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ Himself on the night in which He was betrayed (Matt. 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Cor. 11:17-35). Participation in the Lord's Supper is a way of commemorating the death of our Lord and also "proclaiming the Lord's death" until He returns (1 Cor. 11:26).

Both of these ordinances are important to the life of God's people. Both are commanded for a reason. The Lord's Supper is a powerful demonstration of unity in the body of Christ as we symbolically partake of one loaf (1 Cor. 10:16-17), thereby identifying with

Christ and one another. Baptism was also commanded by the Apostles and modeled by Christ. It is a very important outward expression of an inward commitment to Jesus Christ. As in the Lord's Supper, so also in baptism, the unity of the body of Christ is strengthened as another member identifies with Christ in this way.

***Article VIII I believe that the true Church is composed of all such persons who through faith in Jesus Christ have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are united together in the Body of Christ of which He is the Head.***

The true Church is composed of all those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, exercised saving faith in Jesus Christ, and are thus united together in the universal body of Christ, of which He is the head (Eph. 5:23).

Regardless of denomination or creed, *all* who are trusting in Christ alone for salvation are my brothers and sisters in Christ. The Church is first of all the body of Christ (Eph.1:22-23; Col 1:24). Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore, the Church must submit in every way to Him and also to the Word of God.

The Church *exists* to glorify God (1 Peter 4:11). The Church, made up of individuals united by Christ, glorifies God by fulfilling both the Great Commandment of loving God with all of one's heart, soul, mind and strength, and the Great Commission of *going* to make disciples of all the nations (*panta ta ethne* all ethnic groups, not just nations proper) and baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The physical body of an individual believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit. This is but one reason why a man is to avoid sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:19). However, it is also clear that the body of Christ, the Church, is *also* the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells "within you" (1 Cor. 3:16-17) (*you* is plural in each of the four uses in these two verses).

This truth has profound implications for pastors and lay-people alike in addressing tensions and problems within the local church.

***Article IX I believe that only those who are, thus, members of the Church shall be eligible for membership in the local church.***

All believers are “members” of the universal body of Christ and are spiritually joined with one another (Eph. 4:25). All believers should also be associated with a local fellowship of believers (Heb. 10:25). The Christian life, under normal conditions, was never meant to be lived in isolation apart from mutual accountability and support.

It is difficult to make a persuasive argument from the Scriptures for the modern understanding of church membership. The idea of “official” membership seems to be a cultural accommodation. However, the concept of “membership” seems less strange as we understand two things about the nature of the Church. First, the level of commitment believers are to have toward one another and their common mission is sacrosanct. Second, church membership is one good (but imperfect) way to guard the integrity of the Church.

Paul exhorted Timothy to pay close attention to himself and his teaching (1 Tim. 4:16). Why? Because the way a person lives his life, and the doctrine he holds, has eternal consequences. Therefore, inasmuch as a local church has an official membership, it must be made up only of those who are deemed to be genuine believers with orthodox beliefs by the spiritual leaders of the church.

***Article X I believe that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of the Church and that every local church has the right, under Christ, to decide and govern its own affairs.***

I do affirm that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of the Church, and that every local church has the right, under Christ, to decide and govern its own affairs. I affirm a modified form of congregational church government. A plurality of biblically qualified elders is the model I think most clearly depicts the leadership of the early church. This seems to be the pattern in the book of Acts as Christianity initially spread throughout Asia Minor.

Paul appointed elders in “every church” (Acts 14:23) and also left Titus in Crete with the command to appoint elders in “every city” complete with a list of qualifications for such men (Titus 1:5-9). These elders (qualified men only, 1 Tim. 2:12; 3:1-10) were to function as spiritual overseers for the larger body of believers, being either appointed or affirmed by the local church. The pastor is the primary teaching and preaching elder, giving most of his time to this task (1 Tim. 5:17). Thus, he should ideally derive all or part of his income from this work.

Some argue that congregationalism in its purest form is a democracy. While I believe that the congregation should always be approached with input in major church decisions, such as a potential pastoral candidate, or making a major philosophical or practical shift in ministry emphasis, I also believe that it is highly impractical (and unbiblical) for the local church to be a purely democratic. It is good and necessary to have checks and balances in place for elders, such as congregational approval and annual re-affirmation of elders and other leadership from the body. However, we cannot escape the plethora of New Testament teaching that gives substantial authority to the elders to lead and govern the local church.

The wording of Article X clearly allows for the local church to decide which shade of congregationalism she will adopt, whether it be elder led, elders and deacons, etc., and how it will be worked out in the local assembly.

This form of polity affects my practice of ministry by serving two important functions. First, it provides me with a sense of accountability. Second, it serves to enhance my familial affection for the body. In the first case, this polity provides a framework whereby the pastor should be unable to function as an autocrat. A plurality of biblically qualified elders with a view toward the good of the church and glory of God should not allow this. In the second case, a congregational form of polity serves to give me a greater sense of responsibility and concern for the body as a whole.

Each member of the body of Christ belongs to all the others (Rom. 12:5) and each one has a different function which serves to complete the glorious picture of Christ's body on earth. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church (Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:18) and will have supremacy in all things. Those who govern the earthly church must always be mindful of the rightful place of *the* Head of the Church. Each local, faithful, expression of the body of Christ explicitly represents the Lord Jesus Christ.

***Article XI I believe in the personal, premillennial, and imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and that this "Blessed Hope" has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer.***

I affirm this statement in its entirety. While believers may strongly disagree on the exact timing of certain end-times events, most evangelicals are in agreement on the basics. First, no one knows the exact *time* of Christ's return (Matt. 25:13). Second, in the same way that Christ *ascended* from earth into heaven on the fortieth day after the resurrection, so also

will Christ *descend*, returning in bodily form (Acts 1:11). Third, Christ will judge unbelievers and reward believers (2 Peter 2:9, 3:7). Fourth, believers will dwell with Christ for all eternity in a new heaven and a new earth where pain, tears, sorrow, and suffering are entirely absent (Rev. 21:4).

Revelation Chapter 20:1-10 contains the bulk of New Testament evidence leading to a pre-millennial view of Christ's return. I believe that Christ will return before the inauguration of the millennium. Toward the end of the church age, there will be a time of great tribulation (Mark 13:7-8; Matt. 24:21). At the end of this tribulation Christ will return to the earth.

I hold to a posttribulational rapture. I find no explicit Scriptural support to suggest that the church will be taken out of the world *before* the tribulation in a *secret* rapture. Scripture does teach that we shall be "caught up" in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17) and that we shall be changed into our resurrection bodies, "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

Throughout church history, three different positions on the millennium have been postulated. Postmillennialism was the most popular view in the first millennium of church history. Augustine and other prominent church leaders affirmed this position. This model rests upon an overly optimistic view of the church in the world. It teaches that the gospel will be successfully spread to all people so that the reign of Christ will be complete (Isa. 45:22-25; Matt. 24:14). Then, once "heaven on earth" is established, Jesus Christ will return. Early postmillennialists believed in a one-thousand year reign of Christ that began with His first coming and ends when "heaven on earth" is established.

When the "reign of Christ" proved to be incomplete at the end of the first millennium, postmillennialism was revised to make the one-thousand year reign *figurative* rather than

*literal*. The popularity of this optimistic view of the Church and man has waned in the past century with the realities of two world wars and the undeniable fact that the world is *not* being transformed by the gospel. Postmillennialism teaches that conditions on earth (moral, spiritual) will greatly improve as the return of Christ nears. This is in stark contrast to amillennialism and premillennialism which teach that conditions will *worsen* as we approach the second coming of Christ.

The most convincing reason to reject this view is found in the fact that the Bible *never* speaks of an earthly reign of Christ without His physical presence, something that is at the heart of this view. Also, this view does not take seriously the clear descriptions of the state of the church just prior to Christ's return (Matt. 24:10-13).

The amillennial position teaches that there will be *no* earthly reign of Christ. The final judgment will follow immediately after the physical return of Christ. Both the postmillennial and amillennial positions agree that the thousand-year reign of Christ in Revelation 20:4-6 is symbolic. Amillennialists do not hold to an unwarranted optimism as do those in the postmillennial camp. Also, in this view the return of Christ could indeed occur at any moment.

In defining the term "imminency" as it relates to Christ's return, we must take seriously the many Scriptures that speak of the *sudden* and *unexpected* coming of Christ (Matt. 24:42-44, 50; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 12:40; Titus 2:13; Heb. 10:25; Rev. 1:3; 22:20).

However, the Bible also clearly teaches that there are some signs which will precede the return of Christ, such as the preaching of the Gospel to all nations (Matt. 24:14), the Great Tribulation (Mark 13:7-8), the work of false prophets and false Christs (Mark 13:22), the

large scale salvation of Israel (Rom. 11:25-26), the coming of the Man of Sin and rebellion (Rev. Ch. 13), and signs in the heavens (Mark 13:24-25).

In my view, there remain some unfulfilled signs yet to be seen before the return of Christ. Yet, it is equally true that the return of Christ *will* be sudden, taking place at an *hour we do not expect*. Therefore I admit that it is possible that the above mentioned signs have already begun to take place. I do affirm that Christ could, and might, come at *any* moment. However imminency may be technically defined, it is clear that *all* believers must always keep one eye toward heaven as we eagerly await the return of our Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20). My belief in Christ's return has a vital bearing in my personal life and ministry.

***Article XII I believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead; of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the Lord; of the unbeliever to judgment and everlasting conscious punishment.***

Apart from the relatively few believers who will experience the rapture (1 Thess. 4:15-17), all people will face physical death. Physical and spiritual deaths are the most basic results of original sin. Because we live in a fallen world and because God has not yet completely removed the curse of death (1 Cor. 15:26), believers still experience physical death. For believers, death is not to be feared, for it has no power in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, neither is death a friend. God created man to live, not die.

Upon a believer's death, the human spirit is immediately separated from the body and ushered into the presence of God to enjoy the mansions Jesus has prepared for them (John 14:2-3; 2 Cor. 5:8). Here the souls of believers will joyfully dwell in the presence of God

until the Second Coming of Christ when they will be reunited with their glorified resurrection bodies (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess. 4:14-16).

Upon the death of an unbeliever the human spirit is also immediately separated from the body and enters into eternal punishment. While a difficult doctrine to accept, the Scriptures are clear that eternal punishment is what awaits all unbelievers. Hell is conscious, eternal, and, in every way, horrible (Matt. 25:41; Mark 9:48). Hell was created for the devil and his angels, not people (Matt. 25:41). According to Jesus there is but a small gate that leads to life. Those who do not enter by the narrow gate will suffer eternal conscious punishment. This clear teaching destroys the unfounded hope of those who would espouse the doctrines of universalism (that all are saved in the very end) or annihilationism (that Christians will be saved, but that unbelievers will simply *cease to exist* rather than suffer eternally).

### **III. Personal Views On Current Doctrinal Issues**

#### **1. Satan, Demons, Spiritual Warfare**

The Scriptures are clear that there is a continual war of sorts that occurs in the heavenly places which our eyes cannot see. The Apostle Paul used warfare language freely in his writings. He spoke of the devil as a very real foe who schemes against the saints of God (Eph. 6:10-18). He must be opposed in the strength and armor of God alone. Clearly the enemy of our souls is out to destroy the Church, but even more strategically, *individuals* within the body of Christ.

Peter spoke of the devil as an enemy who earnestly seeks out people to devour (1 Peter 5:8). He is a sinister foe who is able even to masquerade as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14).

Believers must be on constant guard against the schemes of Satan, appropriating the offensive and defensive weapons at our disposal (2 Cor. 10:4).

## **2. Homosexuality**

Homosexual behavior and lusts are clearly a violation of God's revealed will for human beings. In Romans 1:18-31, Paul uses the example of homosexuality to demonstrate what happens to a people who "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (v.18). Homosexual behavior and other degrading passions are what happens when God gives a people "over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity (v.24).

However, the church must be careful not to be controlled by personal disgust for homosexuals any more than she is disgusted with gossip, adultery, lying, hatred, anger, etc. The Scriptures do teach that "the (sexually) immoral man sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18), but Jesus died for the full range of sinners and sins equally.

Indeed Paul makes a powerful argument in First Corinthians Chapter Six when he speaks of those who shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Included in the category are (vv.9-10) fornicators, idolater, adulterers, the effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, the covetous, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers.

None of the unrepentant in the above states will go to heaven. However, the glorious truth of the Gospel is that God justifies repentant sinners who trust in Christ's finished work (1 Cor. 6:11). There is no behavior or human being that Christ will not save if he will come to Christ for forgiveness, repent of his sins and confess Christ as his Lord and Savior.

### **3. Abortion-Infanticide-Euthanasia**

Psalm 139:13-16 expresses God's opinion about life. All human life is sacred to God as each human being is made in the image of God. Our response to God's good workmanship should be one of praise to God. Abortion is an affront to God's majesty, glory, and creative power and is one of the greatest moral and social evils in the world today. It is a sad truth and difficult to fathom that each year in our nation's capital, Washington, D.C. there are more abortions than live births.

We are a soul-sick nation that has lost much of the moral bearings that have guided us in the past. Infanticide and euthanasia are equally as evil as abortion. In all cases, there is a complete disregard for the fact that God is the Author of life. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

The Church and individuals must carefully discern how they might be involved in these crucial moral issues of our day. At a minimum, the church must be committed to teaching her people a comprehensive Christ-centered world-view they might be able to discern the lies, faulty logic, and twisted values that many are promoting in our day. Then we must respond accordingly, graciously speaking and living the truth in a culture that has lost its moral bearings.

### **4. Divorce and Remarriage**

I believe that divorce should never be considered as an option in a Christian marriage. Restoration, repentance and reformation are *always* God's preferred design for the two individuals in a marriage relationship.

In the difficult cases where one spouse is a believer and the other is not, divorce is still not an option. On this ground *alone*, divorce is never justifiable in light of Scripture. Rather, if the woman is the believer in this case, she is to try to “win over” the unbelieving man (1 Peter 3:1-7), and may divorce only if the unbelieving spouse demands it (1 Cor. 7:12-15).

Divorce is *never* good. *All* parties suffer in every divorce. However, there are extreme cases given in Scripture which allow the possibility of divorce (though *never* as the preferred course of action). The two biblical examples of a possibly justified divorce are these: 1. When a spouse deserts the relationship, and 2. When a spouse commits adultery (1 Cor. 7:11, 15; Matt. 19:9).

It pains me to see Christians run to Matthew 5:32 to justify a divorce to an adulterated spouse. The parallel passage in the other two synoptic gospels does *not* include the exception clause (Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18). The synoptic gospels all agree that to marry a divorced person is to commit adultery.

Divorce and remarriage (with perhaps an exception or two) also constitutes the sin of adultery (Matt. 19:9). Many Christians who have been divorced, divorced and remarried, or who have married a divorced person do not even realize that they have either committed adultery or have caused another to sin in this way.

Some may argue that the sin of divorce and remarriage and the adultery that often accompanies it, are sins that, by the very nature of the covenant relationship of marriage, cause the person(s) to live in a perpetual state of sin. I am not aware of any biblical support for this position. I believe that these sins are equally “forgivable” when confessed as sin, and repented of as other sin (1 John 1:8-9).

When two believers divorce, except for adultery (as 1 Cor. 7:11-13 is speaking of desertion or demanding a divorce by the unbelieving spouse) they should either be reconciled or remain unmarried (1 Cor. 7:11). My personal conviction and admonition to believers who have divorced is to seriously consider Paul's call to singleness (1 Cor. 7:7, 11, 32-35). I see the application of these verses both to the unmarried as well as to those who have previously been married, but then divorced.

In certain cases I can also see the possibility of a biblically sanctioned remarriage after divorce. Since there are clearly cases where divorce *is* biblically justified and there is no clear prohibition for such a one not to remarry, it follows that remarriage after *certain* divorces must be allowed.

However, my personal counsel to those who are seeking to remarry after divorce is to prayerfully consider the following three conditions: First, the divorced person must be sure to confess the sin of divorce and whatever he or she may have contributed to it. Second, the divorced partner should be certain that there is no chance for reconciliation, e.g. the former spouse has either died or remarried. Third, the divorced person seeking remarriage has seriously considered God's call to singleness.

The binding covenantal nature of marriage is such that any departure from it must be done cautiously, humbly, biblically, and as free from emotional considerations as possible. Marriage is a sacred institution (Matt. 19:6) and God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). The *practical* difficulties of implementing these ideals in a God-honoring way in the church are strong arguments for the intended permanence of marriage.

## 5. The Role of Women in the Church

Genesis 1:27 teaches that men and women are created equally in the image of God. Before God, men and women have equal value and worth. Therefore men and women have equal value and worth in the church as well. This, however, does not mean that men and women should serve the body and our Lord in exactly the same way.

First Timothy Chapter 2:11-13 is one of the clearest New Testament teachings on the biblical roles of men and women in the church. Here we see that women are never to be in authority over, nor are they to teach, men. The biblical doctrine of the Trinity presents a beautiful picture for how male and female roles and responsibilities in the church are equally valuable, but different. Like the functional subordination in the Trinity of the Son to the Father, and the Spirit to the Father and Son, so also when it comes to relations between men and women and their roles, there should there be a willing subordination of women to men. This was a pattern established at Creation (Gen. 2:18; 3:16) and is affirmed throughout the Scriptures (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22).

Using modern terms, I consider myself a complementarian, not an egalitarian. I affirm that in Christ, with regard to justification, there is no distinction between men and women, slave and free (Gal. 3:28). However, this does not in any way diminish the already established *differences* between men and women with regard to authority issues. Again, this has nothing to do with intrinsic value or the relative worth of a person's spiritual giftedness. Generally speaking, I believe that the Scripture allows women to fill all the roles in the life of the church that do not include teaching men, or the ruling and teaching functions reserved for elders.

## **6. Worship Styles I Prefer in the Church**

The kinds of worshipers the Father seeks are those who worship in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23-24). I want our church body to be the kind that is characterized by people who worship with the proper heart attitudes. This heart attitude must be directed by the truth of God as revealed in His Word. As such, I believe that the words and meanings of choruses and hymns must reflect the truth of God in order to be genuine worship.

I prefer both traditional hymns and some modern choruses in worship. There are some poorly written, theologically suspect, hymns. There are also some very weak choruses as well. On the other hand there are also some rich and profoundly moving hymns and choruses.

I believe it is important to pass on to our children the rich theology and poetic beauty of many older hymns. However, I also believe that God uses and inspires people in our own day to write music that is equally valuable. Under my leadership the church will always seek to bring a balance between these two.

## **7. Racism, Prejudices, and Ethnocentrism**

Racism, prejudice, and ethnocentrism will always exist in a fallen world. It will also always exist to some degree in churches composed of redeemed sinners. However, it is a sin to prejudge another person simply on the basis of their skin color or ethnicity (James 2:1-4; 4:11). Given our own American history, I believe it is important to make some attempt at understanding the black experience in our own culture and not dismiss lightly the charges of pervasive institutional racism that still come from our brothers and sisters of color, in Christ. Jesus died to save all different kinds of people (Rev. 5:9). While being grateful to God for the

culture in which I live, and my ethnic heritage, I must be ever mindful not to place my own cultural preferences, or myself, on a pedestal of superiority.

**8. The Church's responsibility towards justice, the poor, aliens, and other disenfranchised persons.**

The church will always have the responsibility of being a dispensary of compassion, love, and tangible resources to the poor, aliens, and other disenfranchised persons. The specific locations where individual churches reside will likely serve to dictate how these ministries of compassion might be fleshed out. But the truth remains that the church, just as Jesus modeled for us, has a responsibility to care for the "least of these" (Matt. 25:40). At a minimum, this means that the church must not turn a blind eye to pain and suffering around us (especially within our own churches), or anywhere in the world.

**9. How you relate as a pastor to persons from other cultures.**

I have been on numerous short-term mission trips around the world and have come to appreciate the diversity of God's people through these interactions. I think I relate well to people from other cultures and have appreciated my friendships with people from other cultures through the years. In Christ all of God's people are one body on equal footing. There is no distinction. Therefore, we must be careful to preserve the unity that exists (Gal. 3:28).

**IV. Attitudes Towards The Evangelical Free Church Of America: Please write a brief statement in response to the following questions:**

*1. The Evangelical Free Church of America purposely allows wide latitude in significant areas of doctrine (e.g. baptism, Lord's Supper, Calvinism and Arminianism, last things, the use of gifts of the Spirit, etc.). What is your attitude towards those whose views differ from yours on nonessential matters and how would you minister alongside them?*

I have no problem at all ministering alongside brothers and sisters in Christ whose views on certain “non-essentials” differ from my own. Obviously I have my own theological convictions, derived from my study of the Scriptures, which I hold dear. There are many “non-essentials” which are very important. However, uniformity of these beliefs should not be the litmus test for church unity.

For example, it is not necessary for a brother in Christ to understand or affirm the sovereignty of God in salvation from first to last, *in order* to be saved. I believe I have a sound, biblically informed idea of the general way in which God works salvation in the life of an individual. However, if I were to explain these concepts to a new convert, he or she might either deny this teaching or respond like the man who said he didn't know *much*, but one thing he knew; that he once was blind, but now he could see (John 9:25).

Individuals within the body of Christ must always live side by side with one another in grace, charity, and humility. My commitment to my Lord and the church is to proclaim faithfully, and with integrity, the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Therefore, when Scripture speaks, even on controversial subjects, I will do my best to correctly divide the Word of Truth (2 Tim. 2:15), but I will not bend Scripture to serve any theological agenda.

Without love, even the most gifted preacher or teacher is nothing more than a loud gong or a clanging cymbal (1 Cor. 13:1). Therefore, the love of Christ must compel us in all that we do in ministry to, and among, one another.

**2. Are you in harmony with the principles, purposes, and policies of the Evangelical Free Church of America?**

Yes, I am in harmony with the principles, purposes, and policies of the Evangelical Free Church. The EFCA is the fellowship of churches which most closely resembles my own understanding of biblical priorities of ministry and mission.

**3. Are you personally committed to the doctrinal statement of the Evangelical Free Church of America? If you have reservations about any elements of the Statement of Faith, please indicate what they are.**

I am committed to the doctrinal statement of the Evangelical Free Church of America. I have no reservations, though I (humbly) proffer that some of the wording, in the interest of greater theological precision, could be improved upon at some point in the future. In addition, while I affirm the premillennial coming of our Lord Jesus, I question whether this detail is worthy of inclusion in such a concise, fundamental statement of faith. I see no mention of this detail in any of the basic historic creeds of faith. Overall, however, I believe the twelve-point statement of faith of the EFCA is an excellent summation of evangelical belief and I affirm the wisdom and courage of the Free Church pioneers.

**4. Is it your intention and desire to work in cooperation with the EFCA and the district in which you serve?**

Yes, it is my intention and desire to work in cooperation with the EFCA and the district in which I serve. I continue to serve on the Hidden Acres Camp Board and have enjoyed organizing Des Moines metro Free Church pastors' gatherings.

The camaraderie among the Central District pastors is widely known and I take full advantage of opportunities to interact with my brothers at conferences, retreats, and whenever

the occasion may arise. I enthusiastically support the work of the EFCA around the world as well as in the Central District.

**5. Are you willing to follow and adhere to the congregational processes at the local church, district and national conference level in seeking changes in the programs of policies of the EFCA?**

Yes, I am willing to follow and adhere to the congregational processes at the local church, district, and national conference level in seeking changes in the programs or policies of the EFCA.

**6. If at any time you change your doctrinal beliefs and/or find yourself in disagreement with the statement of faith and/or policies of the EFCA, would you be willing to surrender your credentials to the EFCA?**

Yes, I agree to surrender my credentials back to the EFCA if I should come into disagreement with the theology and policies of the EFCA.

**7. Is there any area or issue in your life that, if known, would bring disrepute on the Lord of the Church?**

As long as I live in this body of unredeemed flesh I will always be subject to temptation and the possibility of committing sins. I do my best, by the grace of God, to exercise self control in all areas. Like the Apostle, I too want to discipline my body and not disqualify myself from the ministry (1 Cor. 9:27).

As a redeemed sinner who still sins, the possibility will always remain that I might bring a certain degree of “embarrassment” or “disrepute” to the pastoral ministry. With God as my witness, I am hiding nothing. I avoid the ever-present temptations which cyber space affords. I am faithful to my wife in every way, and listen carefully to her sixth sense. I

exercise great caution in relationships with women and earnestly seek to avoid not only the appearance of evil, but more importantly, every *kind* of evil itself (1 Thess. 5:22).

**V. Issues Related to Life-Style: The candidate will state his views and practices about the following:**

**1. Spiritual Disciplines**

I believe the spiritual disciplines of men in the pastorate are crucial to successful ministry. Prayer, study of the Word, meditation on the Word, and reading books that stoke the fires of faith, are a necessary part of my regular routine. Apart from these disciplines, and the treasures God gives through them, I would have nothing fresh off the front burner to offer my people; only the stale bread of days gone by. One of the *necessities* of pastoral ministry, especially in the isolation of small rural communities, is finding ways to keep one's spiritual fires burning.

**2. Stewardship, Personal Finances, and Debt**

Pastoral families, just as all of God's families, are called to give financially to the Lord and His work. This giving is to be done cheerfully, purposefully, regularly, and generously (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:6-8). My family gives more than ten percent of our income to the church and two missionary families we support. We seek to "honor the Lord from our wealth" (Prov. 3:9) striving always to be wise stewards of God's provision in our lives. We are committed to staying debt-free except for our home mortgage, or in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

### **3. Moral Purity**

Scripture admonishes God's people to watch carefully over our hearts for "from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23). Scripture also teaches that as a believer in Christ I am dead to sin and alive to God (Rom. 6:11-15). Christians are no longer *enslaved* to sin. However, this truth does not negate the necessity of keeping a vigilant watch over one's own heart and learning to have a healthy distrust over our own self-evaluation. Accountability and honesty with others is important to maintain high moral purity. Moral purity is crucial to an effective pastoral ministry.

I take seriously Paul's admonition to the believer who thinks he is standing firm to "take heed that he does not fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Each time I see another Christian soldier fall into moral failure I am struck by two things. First, I am struck by the absolute devastation it wreaks upon that man's life and ministry, public testimony, the church, marriage, children...even future generations of children. Second, I am struck by the reminder that I too, but for the preserving grace of God, am capable of almost any sin. May these realities keep me always near the cross.

### **4. Social Drinking**

I do not believe Scripture speaks directly to the issue of social drinking other than clearly to forbid drunkenness (1 Cor. 5:11; Eph. 5:18). One could argue from First Corinthians Chapter Eight that the possibility of being a "stumbling block" to a weaker brother should be enough to keep one from imbibing in social drinking.

If this is the reason used, it is worth pointing out that the weaker brother is the less godly one, not necessarily the one who occasionally has a social drink. The nature of alcohol

in modern day culture is far removed from that of the early church where alcohol did not carry the stigma that it does today. I would never *encourage* a believer to drink socially, but neither can I find any biblical evidence to suggest that this, in itself, is a sin. My wife and I abstain from the use of alcohol.

## **5. Accountability for Life and Ministry**

I believe accountability is an important element of pastoral ministry. I have a degree of accountability with my fellow church elders and they with me. I also have a few close friends with whom I can talk about anything, go to for counsel, or seek encouragement.

## **6. Marriage and Family Priorities**

The Scriptures hold a high view of marriage and family. My first *ministry* in this life is to my wife and children. If my marriage is not strong, my ability to function as pastor is greatly diminished. I place a premium on regular dates with my wife and personal time with my children. I am grateful to be a part of a church that affirms these same priorities.

I take seriously my role as spiritual leader of my family. My family normally gathers together each weekday morning for family devotions and prayer, as well as meal and bedtime prayer. In addition, after many years of neglect I have made a renewed commitment (as of Jan. 1, 2002) to pray with Karla every night (as possible) for the rest of our lives. This is how we began our married lives together and it is an important habit to re-establish as it serves the crucial role of promoting spiritual unity between us. I have also admitted my neglect in this area and shared this resolve (in the interest of accountability) with the entire assembly of Crossroad Church.

If I arrive at the end of my prime ministry years and have an estranged wife, and/or children who are disillusioned with the church and resentful of their father's ministry through the years, I will not consider my ministry a success regardless of *any other apparent* successes. By the grace of God and through the grace and kindness of a loving church, my family *is* intact and happy to be involved in ministry.