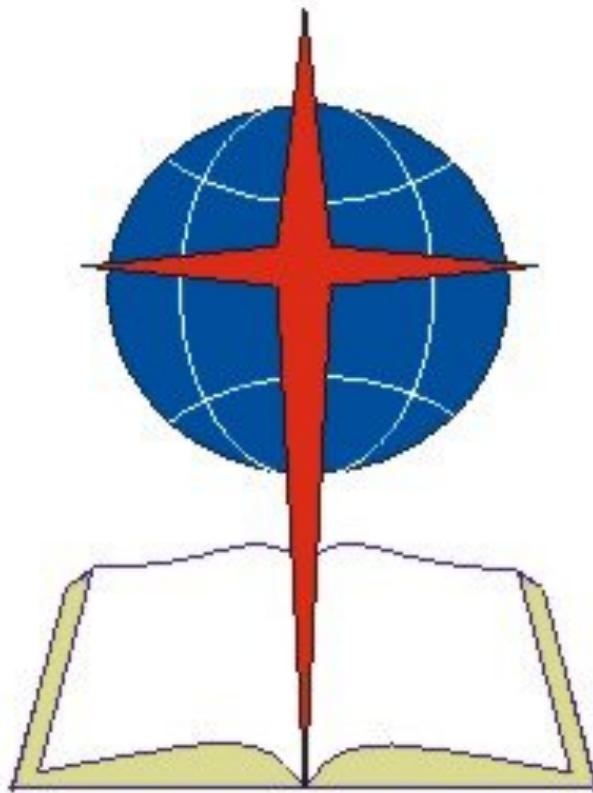


What We Believe

Doctrine and

Faith Documents

3rd Edition



First Baptist Church
Vicksburg, Mississippi
2020

Table of Contents

Explanation and Dedication...3

Sections:

1. The Journey of Being a Christian...4
2. A Baptist Catechism - Questions on Doctrine, Faith and Practice...10
3. The FBCV Articles of Faith (1839)...27
4. The SBC Baptist Faith and Message (2000)...28
5. A Statement of Traditional Southern Baptist Doctrine of Salvation...37
6. The Ordinances -- Baptism and The Lord's Supper...40
7. Why I Am a Baptist...45
8. Meaningful Church Membership and Membership Process...51
9. FBCV Financial Stewardship and Mission Cooperation Convictions...53
10. Terms For a Better Understanding of Southern Baptists...55
11. Terms For a Better Understanding of World-Wide and “New Age” Christianity...63
12. Timeline of First Baptist Church Vicksburg...81
13. Timeline of Great Baptist and Southern Baptist Convention Events... 82
14. General Eras and Epochs for Christian History...87
15. Creeds and Confession of Faith...89
 - The Nicene Creed, A.D. 325
 - The Creed of Athanasius (late Fourth Century and early Fifth Century)
 - FBCV Adapted Christian Confession of Faith, A.D. 2017

Resources...93

What We Believe Doctrine and Faith Documents. 1st Edition - 2017 and 2nd Edition - 2018.

What We Believe

“Didache”

(*did-akh-ay'*)

(In early Christianity the elements of instruction to followers of Jesus Christ; teaching; that which was taught)

Apostolic Doctrine...beliefs

Christian Faith...deeds

Church Practice...ministries

Explanation

What We Believe is a book of doctrine, faith and practice. It serves to guide the believer of Jesus Christ and member of First Baptist Church Vicksburg (hereafter FBCV) or a member of any local church to know what the Bible teaches that we should believe. The contents of this book, if studied seriously by the believer of Jesus Christ, will help develop that individual into a mature follower of the Son of God and a more faithful member of a local church. These results are the intended goal.

What We Believe is designed to be used by individuals, families and study groups. We are called to be a doctrinal people, knowing and living what the Bible teaches as true doctrine and right living. The goal of the leadership of FBCV in providing this document is to enable every user, however used, to be discipled and resourced as a Christian to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ.

What We Believe has eleven sections and is compiled with the most important matter first: what it means to be a Christian, how to become one and live as a follower of Jesus Christ. Then the Catechism follows (the focus of the work) and the remainder of the book is various supporting materials.

Dedication

This document is dedicated to the Charter Members of Vicksburg Baptist Church (more commonly known today as First Baptist Church Vicksburg). Their faith in God the Father, desire to fulfill the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to follow the Holy Spirit to organize a Baptist congregation in the river city of Vicksburg is humbling. On October 16, 1839 this band of twenty-six believers, sent out from the Antioch Baptist Church, organized the church which we call FBCV today. The first pastor R. N. Prentice served less than a year before his death in August 1840 and is buried in the Antioch Cemetery in the present-day Goodrum community in Warren County. (Cunningham 1-2)

Our desire in this Dedication of *What We Believe* is to keep alive their vision of a faithful and vibrant Baptist congregation in our city and county. May we be found faithful in love, faith, hope, doctrine, worship, commitment and ministry to honor the Lord Jesus Christ. To God be the Glory!

SECTION ONE

The Journey of Being a Christian

Chapter One

What it means to be a Christian

What does the Bible say? Have your Bible at hand to read the scriptures referenced in this section.

Read **Acts 11:26**. Very importantly we discover that the disciples (believers in Jesus Christ) in the church at Antioch were first called Christians (*like Christ*). What do you think it means to be a *disciple*?

A disciple is a person who follows Jesus. A disciple and a Christian are the same thing. A fuller definition of a disciple is "a believer in Jesus Christ who is learning to be like Christ, enabled by the indwelling Holy Spirit, all to the glory of our God and Father."

A Christian is a person on a journey. They follow Jesus and should go where He goes. Like any journey, being a Christian has a beginning, a continuance, and a destination. Let's take a look at the beginning.

The Truth about our sin and the need for a Savior

If we were to take a long trip to New York City or Los Angeles, we would begin the journey by getting in the car or airplane. Just getting in the car or airplane is not the journey, but the beginning.

The beginning of being a Christian is called *salvation*. When a person is saved from something, they are removed from a certain danger and brought to safety. It's like a person in a burning building. *Salvation* for them is when the fireman rescues them and brings them to safety outside the burning building. From what do we need to be rescued?

The Bible tells us that we need to be rescued from *sin*. ***Sin is whatever we do that displeases God and breaks His law***. Read **Romans 6:23**. Can you list some sins that you have committed?

Romans 3:23 tells us, "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (NKJV). Every person alive today has sinned or done something that displeases God. Because we have sinned, we are in danger. Remember **Romans 6:23**. The penalty, or the danger, of sin is death...being separated forever from God. Since we have sinned (and all human beings have sinned), then we need to be rescued from the danger of sin and brought to safety. Because we have sinned (and all of us have), we need *salvation*.

We sin because we are born with the nature of sin in us, being born in the likeness of the first Adam. We were born with the urge and desire to sin against God and others. When we were saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ, God changed our nature. He gives us a new nature like that of the Second Adam, Jesus Christ. By the abiding Holy Spirit, He works the desire, power and love to trust and obey Him daily. We are saved from sin by Jesus and unto Him to do His good works, all to His honor and glory (Ephesians 2:8-10). See Pages 30-31 The Baptist Faith and Message Articles III to V and Page 37 A Statement of Traditional Southern Baptist Doctrine of Salvation Article Two for fuller explanations of sin and the need for salvation.

Chapter Two

Begin the Journey

Being a Christian has a specific beginning point. This point is when a person hears the Gospel, is convicted of sin (unbelief) by the Holy Spirit and places his or her faith in Jesus (commits to follow Him). If we are going to begin the journey of being a Christian, we must understand, believe, and receive the *salvation* God offers through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. It is God's great desire to begin this journey of salvation or new life (2 Peter 3:9).

1. **We must believe that God loves us and has a plan for our life. (Read *John 3:16*)**

John 3:16 tells us that God loves us and desires for us to live with Him forever. That is the first truth that we must believe. We must believe that God loves us and wants to rescue us from the danger of sin. Though He is a holy God, He desires that we know Him by becoming a new person, a believer.

Read *John 10:10*.

Jesus came to give us the best life possible here and now. We can be rescued from the danger of sin and live *the greatest life ever* through Jesus Christ. That's what God wants for us.

Read *John 14:3*.

Jesus promised to give us life forever in heaven. We can be saved from the danger of sin and spend the all of *eternity in heaven* through Jesus Christ. That's what God wants for us.

2. **We must believe that sin separates us from God. (Re-read *Romans 6:23*)**

Joshua 24:19 and Isaiah 6:3 tell us that God is *holy*. That word means that He cannot have anything to do with sin. Because we have all sinned, we are separated from Him, unless we have been saved by Jesus Christ. That's the great danger of sin.

Read *Ephesians 2:8-9*.

We cannot rescue ourselves from the danger of sin. *We can't do enough good things to make up for our sin*. The only way for us to be rescued from sin is for God to do it. Only He can take us to safety. That's why Jesus Christ came. God the Father only through His Son Jesus saves a lost sinner.

3. **We must believe that Jesus wipes out the danger of sin. (Read *John 14:6*)**

Jesus said that He was the only way to have a relationship with God. Without Jesus Christ, we will always be separated from God. We need Jesus to save us!

What does *2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15 and 1 Peter 3:18* tell us about Jesus?

Jesus never sinned. He never did anything that displeased God, but He died on the Cross to pay the penalty of our sin. When on earth, He was good enough and did enough to save us from our sins. Remember the person in the burning building? Suppose that the only way for the fireman to rescue that person was to take that person's place. He sacrificed his life so that the person might be rescued. That's what Jesus did for us. The fireman sacrificed his/her life so that we might be rescued from the penalty and power of sin and brought to safety by His life in us through a personal relationship.

4. **We must believe that Jesus gives peace with God when He places us in a personal relationship with Him. Read *John 1:12-13 and Romans 5:1-2*.**

When God saves us and establishes this personal relationship with Him, we are now reconciled to God. This reconciliation brings peace and places us in His family as "sons and daughters in faith."

Chapter Three

Join God's Family

The Journey Continues

The beginning of the journey in being a Christian is *salvation*. The middle of the journey is what we do (how we live) once we have become a Christian. It is living for God every day of our lives. As a Christian, we live for God because He is our Lord and Savior and we are part of His family.

God's Family

Read *Ephesians 1:5* to find about God's family. When we receive God's Gift of salvation (Jesus Christ), He adopts us as His own children. He brings us into His family. He is our loving Father, and we are His sons and daughters through faith. Isn't it exciting to know that you are a member of God's family?

The Church

When you think of Church, what are some of the words you would use to describe it? Most of all, remember that Church is not a building or organization, but the people of God in Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us that Church is like a family "get-together." The members of God's family get together in Bible studies, discipleship classes and worship services to **learn** more about God, to help each other be **better** children in the Family, and to celebrate being in God's family.

John 3:3 tells us that when we receive *salvation*, we are like newborn babies in God's family. Like newborn babies, we need our family to help us grow up. That's what the Church does. It helps us grow up as Christians.

Baptism

Baptism is one way that we tell others publicly that we have received God's Gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is also how we tell others that we are part of God's family.

Read *Acts 2:41*. Why and when were the people baptized?

Read *Acts 8:36-37*. Why and when was the Ethiopian man baptized?

Baptism tells others that you have been rescued from the danger of sin. Baptism does not bring you salvation, but it shows others that you are part of God's family. Baptism is the first way that you can tell others that you are a Christian, and it is the first opportunity you have to obey God as His child.

The picture of baptism by immersion (*being immersed or placed under the water*) is in three parts.

- **First**, when you enter the water, you are publicly portraying by this confession of faith your life before receiving Christ. It is a picture of your need for *salvation*.
- **Second**, when you are immersed under the water, you publicly portray by this confession of faith the perfect life and death of Christ on the Cross for you and of your receiving Christ's forgiveness for your sin.
- **Third**, when you are brought up out of the water, you publicly portray by this confession of faith Christ's resurrection from the dead and of your new life as a Christian; reminding us that God buried our old sinful life when we trusted Christ and were raised us to a new life in Christ, being a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Start the Journey of Being a Christian

Romans 5:8 says: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

The Bible teaches us that we must receive all that Jesus has done for us to start the journey. It's like someone has bought you a present. They've put your name on it and placed it on the kitchen table. The present is yours, and it will always be yours. The only thing left is for you to do is **receive** the present and open it.

The last phrase of **Romans 6:23** says, “but the **free gift** of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” God is offering you the free gift of salvation, but you must receive it. Jesus died on the Cross for your sin. That's His gift to you. But you must **receive** that gift in order to be saved.

Here's how we all must receive God's Gift of Salvation:

Repent of our sin (Read **Acts 3:19**). Repentance is more than feeling sorry for the bad things we do. Repentance is making a commitment to turn away from sin and take hold of what God offers us through Christ.

Trust (Believe) Jesus to rescue us. This is **faith**. Faith is not just believing certain facts about God. **James 2:19** tells us, “You believe that there is one God. Good! But the demons believe that too, and they tremble with fear.” Even the devil believes facts about God! Faith is not just believing facts.

Faith is giving (entrusting) our life (body, soul and spirit) to Jesus Christ. It is trusting Him completely to give us the most wonderful life. It is asking Him to wipe away our sin. **Romans 10:9-10** tells us, “*if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.*”

If you have not already received God's Gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, then you can do that right now. **Romans 10:13** says, “Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Through prayer, we ask Jesus to save us. Here's a prayer that you can pray right now to receive God's Gift of salvation.

“Lord, I know that You love me and I have sinned and need forgiveness. I believe that Jesus died for my sins, was buried and raised from the dead. Forgive my sin and make me right with You. I give Jesus my life and strive to obey Him in all that I do. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.”

On your journey of living life as a Christian, it is important that you get involved in God's family, the the local church. It is also important that you obey Him and let others know that you are a Christian by being baptized. New-born believers need to take the first step of faith and obedience.

Chapter Four

Get to Know God Better and Be Like Christ

Going the Right Way

On our journey as a Christian, we have to know that we are going the right way. If we were traveling to New York City or Los Angeles, we would have a map to tell us which way to go. As a Christian, God wants us to get to know Him better so that He can tell us the right way to go. How do we get to know God better and be like Christ?

Read the Bible Every Day

The Bible is what God has directed to be written by His Holy Spirit-inspired servants. The Bible is God's living and powerful words to us. Read **2 Timothy 3:16-17**.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God’s way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.”

The Bible teaches us what is right and wrong. It gets us ready to do everything that God wants us to do. Right now set a time every day to read your Bible. Develop the needed discipline of reading His Word daily.

Pray All the Time

Prayer is conversation with God (talking to and listening to Him). We learn what God wants when we talk and listen to Him. Read **Psalm 116:2, Luke 18:1, Romans 8:26 and Philipians 4:5-11**. What does God do when we pray?

God is always listening for our prayer. He wants to help us because He loves us. Prayer is like breathing. When you breathe out, you talk to God. When you breathe in, you listen to God. God wants to listen and talk to you. The Bible is filled with many examples and teachings about prayer.

Ephesians 6:18 says, “*Pray at all times.*” We need to pray all the time. The more we pray, the more we learn about God who loves us.

Prayer -- A Simple Reminder and Exercise

The human hand has five fingers. Each finger reminds us of how to pray and for what to pray. Your hand serves as a visible reminder that God wants us to pray and His arm extends to our praying hearts and hands.

- Pointer finger. We must **praise** God from whom all blessings flow. Prayer should include praise for who He is.
- Tall finger. We stand the tallest when we are humble in **thanksgiving** to God for all His blessings.
- Ring finger. We are to **pray for (intercede)** our family and friends, those persons close and known to us.
- Pinkie finger. We are to **petition** God our Heavenly Father for our personal needs.
- Thumb. The hand has its strongest grip when the thumb clinches against the other four fingers. **Confession** of sin is the clinching action of a strong spiritual grip in prayer and life.

Look at your hand and allow it to be a reminder and teaching tool for daily prayer to God. The holy habit of prayer must be developed by believers.

Chapter 5

Do What God Says

The more we get to know God and the more we become like Christ, the more we know what He wants. On our journey, we must follow God's instructions and do what He wants. We learn what God wants through Bible Study and prayer, but here are some things that we know God wants us to do.

Go to Church

Read **Hebrews 10:25**. What does it tell us about the importance of going to church? God wants us to go to church and meet with other members of His Family. He wants us to spend time with other Christians. If you aren't going to church right now, start this Sunday.

Love Others

Jesus said that God's greatest command to us is: "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself.*" (Matthew 22:34-40). God wants us to love others. What are some ways that we can show Christian love to someone else?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Tell Them about Jesus

One of the greatest ways to show love to others is to tell them about Jesus. To tell someone about Jesus is to tell them what has happened in your life. Tell them how you received God's Gift of salvation. Tell them how they can receive that same gift. Make a list of people to tell about Jesus.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

The Destination of the Journey

We are on a wonderful journey of following Jesus. One day we'll reach our destination: **Heaven!** In heaven, we will be transformed into our new eternal bodies, and never feel any sorrow or pain. There will not be any **sin** in heaven, as we will be in the presence of Jesus. But the greatest thing about **heaven** is that we will walk and be with Jesus forever.

SECTION TWO

A Baptist Catechism

Questions and Answers on Doctrine, Faith and Practice

Introduction:

From the earliest times of His general revelation to man and His special revelation in the call of Abram, the choice of the Hebrews as a chosen people, and the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the question and answer format has been utilized to impart, disciple and perpetuate faith in God. Moses instructed Israel in the observance of the Passover that when a child asked a question, the answer was to remind and instruct the child and all listeners of God's mighty works and His Law (Deuteronomy 6:20).

The earliest Christian leaders developed the question and answer format to disciple believers in Jesus Christ. The various branches of the Christian faith for the past two thousand years have utilized the question and answer format for the purpose of discipleship. These formats or schematics are most often called "catechisms," from a Greek word meaning "to make hear," thus "to instruct." It comprised part of what is called The Didache, "elements of instruction or what is to be taught." This FBCV document is "a Baptist catechism."

This section can be utilized by parents to teach their children in the rudiments of the faith and by small group leaders to guide discussions of what Christians must believe and what Southern Baptists adhere to as interpretations of Holy Scripture and normative biblical theology and practice. No single document can incorporate every possible question and answer pertaining to Christian theology and practice. The staff and leadership of FBCV acknowledge such limitations. FBCV expresses deep appreciation and recognition of historic biblical and theological question and answer formats. We seek to walk in this clear path of historic true faith.

Content of Questions:

I. Life's Purpose and Holy Scripture (Question 1-3) . . . Page 11

II. What We are to Believe About God (Questions 4-38) . . . Page 11

The One and Triune God (4-6)

God's Eternal Plan, Creation and Providence (7-12)

Sin in the Human Race (13-19)

God's Covenant of Saving Grace and Christ the Mediator (20-28)

God's Conversion of Sinners and The Benefits of Salvation (29-35)

Further Benefits (36-38)

III. The Responsibility of Man (Questions 39-107) . . . Page 15

The Moral Law and A Brief Summary (39-42)

The Ten Commandments (43-81)

Transgression and Penalty (82-84)

God's Commands in the Gospel and The Word of God (85-90)

The Ordinances - Baptism and Lord's Supper (91-97)

Prayer and The Lord's Prayer (98-107)

IV. The Doctrine and Duties of the Church (Questions 108-139) . . . Page 22

The Doctrine of the Church (108-110)

The Duties of Believers as the Church and Related Issues (111-139)

I. Life's Purpose and Holy Scripture.

1. Why did God make us and what is our purpose on earth?

Our main purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Among the sayings of the Church Fathers (great Christian leaders in the second to fourth centuries), none is better known than Augustine's, "Thou has formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee." (Tozier 31)
Psalm 16:5-11, 144:15; Isaiah 12:1-2; John 10:14, 17:3; Philippians 3:8-14; 2 Timothy 1:12

2. What did God give us to glorify and enjoy Him?

The Word of God is the divinely inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and is the only rule and resource to direct us on how to glorify and enjoy Him. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21

3. What do the Scriptures principally teach?

They teach us what we are to believe concerning God, and what He requires of man. No other books and materials are to be considered divinely inspired and authoritative like Holy Scripture.
Deuteronomy 4:2, 10:12-13; Psalm 19:7-14, 119:105; Luke 24:44; John 5:39, 20:30-31; 1 John 1:4

II. What we are to believe about God.

The One and Triune God.

4. What is God?

God is Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable (immutable) in His being. He is all wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. He is uncreated. He who is, has always been and forever shall be. His most important attribute is love. Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 4:15-19, 32:4; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9

5. Are there more Gods than one?

There is only one God, the living and true God. Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6, 45:21-22; John 17:3

6. How many Persons are there in the Godhead?

The Godhead is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are one God, same in substance, equal in power and glory; indivisible in nature, distinct in works. John 1:1-4, 14:16, 17:5; 2 Corinthians 13:14

God's eternal plan and creation.

7. What are the decrees of God?

His decrees are His eternal plan, according to the purpose of His will for His own glory. He has foreordained what comes to pass, but is in no way the author of sin. Psalm 33:11; Ephesians 1:11-12

8. How does God carry out His decrees?

God carries out His decrees in creation and providence. He is sovereign over all the universe.
Psalm 86:8-10, 148:8; Isaiah 14:24, 40:26; Daniel 4:35; Acts 2:23, 4:24-28; Revelation 4:11

9. What is the work of creation?

The work of creation is the making by God of all things from nothing, by His powerful word, in the space of six days, and all very good. He is the sole Creator, being assisted by none; except the Scriptures teach that Christ is Co-Creator. Genesis 1:1-2:3; Psalm 19:1-6, 33:6-9; Hebrews 11:3

10. How did God create man?

God created man, male and female, in His own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with rule over the creatures. Mankind is the highest of His creation. Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:1-9

Providence.

11. What are God's works of providence?

God's works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful preservation and control of all His creatures, and all their actions. Inherent in providence is His providing for mankind. Proverbs 16:33

12. What act of providence did God exercise toward man in the state in which he was created?

When God created man, He entered into a covenant of life with him, on condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil on penalty of death. Genesis 2:16

Sin in the Human Race.

13. Did our first parents continue in the state in which they were created?

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were left to the freedom of their will and fell from the state in which they were created by sinning against God; being totally responsible for their sin. Genesis 3:6-8, 13

14. What is sin?

Sin is a failure to measure up to what God requires, or any disobedience to His commands. James 4:17

15. What was the sin by which the first parents of all mankind fell from the state in which they were created?

The sin of the world's first parents, causing them to fall from the state in which they were created, was eating the fruit that God had forbidden. Genesis 3:6-13; Leviticus 5:17; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 John 3:4

16. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first disobedience?

Since the covenant of life was made with Adam and for all his descendants, all mankind descending from him in the ordinary manner, sinned in him, and fell with him in his first transgression. Romans 5:12-21

17. Into what state did the fall bring mankind?

The fall brought mankind into a state of sin and misery, as Adam is the head of the human race. In God's plan of Jesus Christ, His Son is the head of the redeemed race. Genesis 4:1-26; Ephesians 1:3, 2:1-10

18. What is the sinfulness of that state into which man fell?

Man's fall includes the guilt of Adam and Eve's sin, the lack of the righteousness which he had at first, and the corruption of every part of his nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; with all actual sins which flow from it. Psalm 51:1-5; Romans 3:9-31, 5:12-21; Colossians 3:10; James 1:14-15

19. What misery did the fall bring upon mankind?

This fall brought upon mankind loss of communion with God, and His wrath and curse, so that we are justly liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to punishment in hell forever. Sin brought separation from God with Adam and physical death entered into the world. Romans 6:21-23, 8:18-23

God's Grace -- His unmerited favor.

20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the state of sin and misery?

Solely out of His love and mercy, God desires all sinners to be saved unto everlasting life, and be placed into a covenant of new life to deliver them out of the state of sin, misery and judgment; to be saved by the only Redeemer or Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. God's great desire is for man to have life and freedom. Grace is God's powerful love which wipes away our sin and gives us eternal life, all fully undeserved. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 7:36-50, 15:11-32; John 8:34-47, 14:6; Acts 13:48; 2 Corinthians 5:12-21; Ephesians 1:4-5, 2:8; Colossians 1:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Titus 3:4; Hebrews 9:15; 2 Peter 3:3-9

Christ the Mediator: His Person and Natures.

21. Who is the Redeemer?

The only Redeemer of God's saved (regenerated ones) is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God became man, and so was and continues to be God and man, in two distinct natures and one person forever. Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:14-18, 3:16, 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5-6

22. How did Christ, the Son of God, become man?

He became man by taking to himself a body and a soul like ours, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin. Luke 1:26-35, Titus 2:11

Christ the Mediator: His Three Offices.

23. What offices does Christ fill as our Redeemer?

Christ as our Redeemer (Savior) fills the offices of a prophet, priest, and king, in His humiliation, salvation and exaltation. Acts 2:33, 3:22-23; 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:1-3, 4:14-15, 5:5-6

24. How does Christ fill the office of a prophet?

He fills the office of a prophet in revealing to us by His Word and Spirit, the will of God for our complete salvation. Luke 4:18-19; John 4:41-42, 20:30-31; Acts 1:1-2, 8; Hebrews 1:1-3, 2:3

25. How does Christ fill the office of a priest?

He is our priest in His once offering up of Himself to God as a sacrifice, to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God; and in making constant intercession for us. Hebrews 7:25, 8:1-6, 9:24-28, 10:12

26. How does Christ fill the office of a king?

Christ fills the office of a king in making us His willing subjects, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies. Psalm 2:6-9, 110:1-2; Colossians 1:13, 2:15

Christ the Mediator: His humiliation.

27. In what did Christ's humiliation consist?

Christ's humiliation consisted in being born, in a poor circumstance; in being subject to God's law; in undergoing the miseries of human life; the wrath of God and the curse of death on the cross; in being buried; and continuing under the power of death for a time. Christ's purpose was simple. As the Son of God, He humbly, obediently, and voluntarily offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins and the world. Matthew 1:18-25; Romans 3:24; 2 Corinthians 8:9, Galatians 1:4-5, 4:4; 1 Peter 3:18-22; 1 John 2:1-2

Christ the Mediator: His exaltation.

28. In what does Christ's exaltation consist?

His exaltation is His rising again from the dead on the third day, ascending into heaven, sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and coming to judge the world at the last day. Acts 1:11, Ephesians 4:8

God's Conversion of Sinners...The Divine Work of the Holy Spirit.

29. How do we experience in the redemption purchased by Christ?

We are made to share in the redemption purchased by Christ by the miraculous application of it to us by the Holy Spirit. He causes us to be saved (born again or regenerated). God alone can and does save sinners who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Man can never make himself or herself right (or reconciled) with God, despite how good one is or how many good works he or she may do. The Holy Scriptures teach a God-caused salvation which is received by the faith of a repentant sinner. Titus 3:4-7

30. How does the Spirit apply the redemption purchased by Christ?
The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ when we place our faith in Christ, and He unites us to Christ in conversion. We are put into an eternal unbreakable union with Him. He gives the believer assurance of salvation and eternal security. John 10:28-30; Romans 10:4-17; 1 Corinthians 1:9
31. What is eternal security (perseverance of the believer)?
Eternal security is the God-caused assurance that once He saves a repentant sinner, this believer is eternally secure in being saved. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. Ephesians 1:13
32. What is His conviction?
Conviction is the work of God's Spirit by which He convinces us of our sin and misery, enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ by faith, freely offered to us in the Gospel, the good news of God's love for all. All who are convicted of sin, repent and are saved by God share in justification, adoption and sanctification. John 16:7-12; Acts 2:37, 26:12-18
33. What is justification?
Justification is an act of God's unmerited grace in which He pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight for the sake of the righteousness of Christ alone, which is credited to us and received by faith alone. His atoning work on the cross is a completed, once for all time, work of God in His Son for us. Romans 3:21-26, 4:5-8, 5:1-2, 19; 2 Corinthians 5:12-21; Galatians 2:6, 3:1-9
34. What is adoption?
Adoption is an act of God's unmerited grace by which we are received into His family. We then have a right to all the privileges of His sons and daughters (spiritual children). John 1:12-13; Romans 8:17
35. What is sanctification?
Sanctification is the work of God's unmerited grace by which we are renewed throughout life in the image of God and enabled more and more to die to sin and live to righteousness. This process of the indwelling Holy Spirit makes us more like Jesus Christ in all of life. Romans 6:1-14, 18; 2 Peter 3:18

Further Benefits of Salvation in Life and Death.

36. What benefits in this life accompany and flow from justification, adoption and sanctification?
The benefits in this life which accompany and flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification are assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, progress in holiness, and perseverance in it to this life's end. Romans 5:1-11, 14:17; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:3-12; 2 Peter 3:18
37. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?
The souls of believers at their death are made perfect in holiness and immediately go into heaven. Their bodies, being still united to Christ, rest in their graves until the resurrection. Heaven is a real, promised, unblemished, reserved and eternal home of the saints of our Heavenly Father. John 5:28-29, 14:1-6
38. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?
He will return to the earth to complete God's redemption plan with the Rapture of the Church, the millennial reign on earth and final judgment of His, ours and Israel's enemies. At His Coming, Christ will immediately raise up the bodies of deceased believers and rapture up into glory all living believers. He will graciously reward them according to their works of faith, and they will enter into the full enjoyment of God forever. Matthew 25:29-44, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

III. The Responsibility of Man.

The Moral Law of God.

39. What is the duty which God requires of man?

God requires man to love Him and obey His revealed will. Micah 6:8; Galatians 5:14; 1 John 5:1-5

40. What law did God at first reveal to man for his obedience?

In the Garden of Eden, God first revealed obedience to Adam and Eve as the moral law. Romans 2:1-16

41. Where is the moral law set out briefly?

The moral law of God is set out briefly in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) and the Great Commandment (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Matthew 22:34-40). These divine commandments summarize how the believer is to love God whole-heartedly and his neighbor as himself. The Old Testament Law and its commands have been fulfilled totally in Jesus Christ. Luke 4:14-27; Acts 13:29; Romans 15:4-6

42. What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?

The sum of the Ten Commandments is "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." John 13:34-35

The Moral Law: The Ten Commandments. The New King James Version is used in this section.

43. What is the preface to the Ten Commandments?

Exodus 20:2...*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

44. What does the preface to the Ten Commandments teach us?

The preface teaches us that God is the Lord and our God and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all His commandments. Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 13-25, Luke 1:74-75; 1 Peter 1:14-19

45. Which is the First Commandment?

Exodus 20:3...*You shall have no other gods before me.*

46. What does the First Commandment require of us?

It requires us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God and our God; and to worship and glorify him accordingly. 1 Chronicles 28:9; Psalm 86:10, 97:9; Isaiah 45:20-25; Matthew 4:10

47. What is forbidden in the First Commandment?

The denial of, or failure to worship and glorify, the only true God; and it forbids giving that worship and glory to any other which is due to God alone. Psalm 14:1, 53:1, 81:10-11; Romans 1:18-25

48. What do the words "before me" in the First Commandment teach?

"Before me" in the First Commandment teach us that God, who sees all things, takes notice of and is much displeased with the sin of having belief in any other god. Deuteronomy 4:24, 30:17-18

49. Which is the Second Commandment?

Exodus 20:4-6...*You shall not make for yourself a carved image -- any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, nor that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

50. What are the duties required in the Second Commandment?

It requires us to receive, observe, and keep pure and entire all religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in His Word. Deuteronomy 12:32; John 4:23-24; Colossians 2:11-23; Titus 2:11-15

51. What is forbidden in the Second Commandment?

It forbids the worship of God by images, or any other way not taught in His Word. His worship must be in spirit and truth. Use of religious objects and materials must be guided by this principle. Psalm 100

52. What are the reasons attached to the Second Commandment?

The reasons are God's authority as our Lawgiver, the fact that we belong to Him, and the zeal He has for His own worship. Exodus 19:5, 34:14; Psalm 45:11, 95:6, 96:10; Isaiah 54:5; 1 Corinthians 10:14

53. Which is the Third Commandment?

Exodus 20: 7... *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.*

54. What is required in the Third Commandment?

It requires the holy and reverent use of God's name, titles, attributes, ordinances, Word, and works. Deuteronomy 10:20; Psalm 29:2; 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; 1 Corinthians 11:27-28; Revelation 4: 11

55. What is forbidden in the Third Commandment?

It forbids all unworthy use of anything by which God makes Himself known. Matthew 5:33-37, 23:29

56. What is the reason attached to the Third Commandment?

Though the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not allow them to escape His righteous judgement. Deuteronomy 28:58-59; Isaiah 42:8, 48:11

57. What is the Fourth Commandment?

Exodus 20:8-11... *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.*

58. What is required in the Fourth Commandment?

It requires the keeping holy to God such set times as He has appointed in His Word, in particular, one whole day in seven. Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 31:13-17; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Nehemiah 13:15-22

59. Which day of the seven has God appointed to be our weekly sabbath or day of worship and rest?

From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day to be the weekly sabbath. Thereafter He appointed the first day of the week, to continue to the end of the world, as the Christian sabbath/or Lord's Day. Mark 2:27-28; Luke 24:1; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10

60. How is the sabbath to be sanctified?

The sabbath/or Lord's Day, which is given for man's good and as a pointer to his eternal destiny, is to be kept holy by resting all that day from our work and recreations, and spending the whole time in the public and private worship, except the time spent in works of necessity and mercy. 1 Corinthians 16:2

61. What is forbidden in the Fourth Commandment?

It forbids the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the misuse of the day by idleness, sinful acts, unnecessary thoughts, words or works about our worldly affairs and recreations. Physical rest and worship of God are the main purposes of the Sabbath. Isaiah 58:13-14; Amos 8:4-6

62. What are the reasons attached to the Fourth Commandment?

The reasons are God's allowance of six days for worldly tasks, His claim to special ownership of the seventh, His own example, and His blessing of the sabbath day. Exodus 31:15-17; Leviticus 23:3

63. Which is the Fifth Commandment?

Exodus 20:12...*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.*

64. What is required in the Fifth Commandment?

It requires us to preserve the honor of our parents and perform the duties belonging to everyone in their various positions and relationships in life. Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 5:21-24, 6:1-9; 1 Peter 2:17

65. What is forbidden in the Fifth Commandment?

It forbids us to neglect or to do anything against the honor and duty which belongs to everyone in their various positions and relationships in life. Matthew 15:4-6; Romans 13:8; 1 Peter 3:1-12

66. What is the reason attached to the Fifth Commandment?

The reason is a promise of long life and prosperity (so far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good) to all those who keep this commandment. Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:2-3

67. Which is the Sixth Commandment?

Exodus 20:13...*You shall not murder.*

68. What is required in the Sixth Commandment?

It requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life and the life of others. Ephesians 5:28-29

69. What is forbidden in the Sixth Commandment?

The Sixth Commandment forbids us to take our own life or to take unjustly the life of our neighbor, or anything to these ends. Genesis 9:1-7; Deuteronomy 32:29; Matthew 5:21-26; 1 John 3:10-15

70. Which is the Seventh Commandment?

Exodus 20:14...*You shall not commit adultery.*

71. What is required in the Seventh Commandment?

It requires us to preserve our own and our neighbor's chastity in heart, speech, and behavior; calling for marital fidelity, true and loyal in spirit and deed to our spouse. Proverbs 5:15, 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

72. What is forbidden in the Seventh Commandment?

It forbids all impure thoughts, words, and actions. Matthew 5:27-32, 19:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5

73. Which is the Eighth Commandment?

Exodus 20:15...*You shall not steal.*

74. What is required in the Eighth Commandment?

It requires us to obtain lawfully, and to further, the wealth and material well-being of ourselves and others and protect what belongs to others in deed and intent. Leviticus 20:15; Ephesians 4:28, 6:5-9

75. What is forbidden in the Eighth Commandment?

It forbids whatever involves or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbor's wealth and material well-being. Deuteronomy 24:7, 10-22; Proverbs 28:19-27; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:8

76. Which is the Ninth Commandment?

Exodus 20:16... *You shall not bear false testimony against your neighbor.*

77. What is required in the Ninth Commandment?

It requires us to maintain and promote truth between men, and our own and our neighbor's good name, especially when called to bear witness. Proverbs 14:5; Zechariah 8:16; Acts 25:10; 3 John 12

78. What is forbidden in the Ninth Commandment?

It forbids whatever misrepresents truth, or is injurious to our own or our neighbor's good name. This commandment honors truth-telling, even prohibiting slander and other forms of verbal wrong. Leviticus 19:16; Psalm 15:3; Proverbs 6:16-19; Luke 3:15; Romans 12:9; Ephesians 4:25; James 4:11

79. Which is the Tenth Commandment?

Exodus 20:17... *You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant nor female servant, his ox nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.*

80. What is required in the Tenth Commandment?

It requires full contentment with our own condition, and a right and generous attitude toward our neighbor and all that belongs to God. This commandment centers on controlling desires of the heart because sinful thoughts can be sinful acts. Psalm 34:1; Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:6; Hebrews 13:5

81. What is forbidden in the Tenth Commandment?

It forbids all discontent with our own state; envying and grieving at the good of our neighbor, together with all evil longings and desires for things that belong to him. Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 10:10; Galatians 5:26; Colossians 3:5; Titus 3:1-3; James 3:14-16; 1 Peter 2:1-4; 1 John 5:21

The Moral Law: Transgression and Penalty

82. Is any man able to keep the commandments of God perfectly?

No mere human person, since the Fall, is able to keep the commandments of God perfectly in this life, but breaks them daily and/or often in thought, word, and deed. Genesis 8:21; Romans 3:9-23, 6:23

83. Are all transgressions of the law equally sinful?

Some sins, because of their nature and the circumstances, are more sinful in the sight of God than others and have deeply immediate and long-lasting consequences. Ezekiel 8:6-15; Matthew 11:20-24

84. What does every sin deserve?

Some sins will be more severely punished than others, yet each sin deserves God's wrath and judgment. Being saved means that we will not face His wrath. Ezekiel 18:1-4, 22:23-31; Matthew 25:41; Luke 12:47-48; Romans 6:23; Galatians 3:10-14; Ephesians 5:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; James 3:1; Jude 4-15

God's command in the Gospel.

85. What does God require of us, that we may escape His wrath and curse, due to us for our sin?

To escape the wrath and curse due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and repentance leading to life together with diligent use of all the outward means by which Christ gives to us the benefits of redemption. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38, 20:21; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25; Colossians 3:16

God's command in the Gospel: Faith.

86. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

Faith in Jesus Christ is a divine work by which we receive and trust Him alone for salvation as He has freely offered to us in the Gospel. It is believing, entrusting, and taking His Word into our hearts and lives. The believer's faith is in God and His Word which teaches clearly that without faith it is impossible to please God. Romans 4:16, 10:9-10; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:7; Hebrews 11:6

God's command in the Gospel: Repentance Leading to Life.

87. What is repentance unto life?

Repentance is a divine work, by which a sinner having truly realized his/her sin and grasped the mercy of God in Christ, turns from sin with sorrow and turns to God with full resolve and effort after new obedience. Godly repentance is not a good deed or resolution of man. Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25-26

The Means of His Love and Mercy.

88. What are the outward and ordinary means by which Christ gives the benefits of redemption?

His benefits of redemption are His Word, worship, and prayer, and all these are made effective in the salvation of the believer by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-42; Titus 3:4-7

The Word of God.

89. How is the Word of God (the Bible) made powerful unto salvation?

The Spirit makes the reading, especially the preaching and teaching of the Word, an effective personal means of convincing and converting sinners, and building them up in holiness and blessing, through faith and obedience to salvation and sanctification. The Holy Scriptures have one singular unifying theme, the salvation of God through faith in His Son. From Genesis to Revelation they give clear testimony to His Son, Jesus Christ. Nehemiah 8:8-9; Isaiah 40:5; Romans 10:14-17; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21

90. How is the Word to be received so that it becomes powerful unto salvation and sanctification?

We must read and hear the Word with diligence, preparation and prayer; receive it with faith and love; place in our hearts; and practice it that it may become effective to salvation. Psalm 119:1-2, 11, 18, 105

The Ordinances. See Pages 32, 40-44.

91. Do the ordinances become effectual means of salvation?

No. The ordinances are special symbols of His sacrifice and salvation. They do not have any power in them or in the one who administers them, but only by the blessing of Christ and the working of His Spirit in those who participate in them by faith. 1 Corinthians 1:12-17, 3:7, 11:17-34

92. What is an ordinance?

The ordinances are commands of Jesus Christ to His Church. They are visible signs that Christ and the benefits of His new covenant are represented in, received by and applied to believers. Ordinances are public confessions of a believer's faith in Jesus Christ, as the Crucified, Risen and Returning Son of God. Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 1:22-26, 10:14-22

93. Which are the ordinances of the New Testament? See Pages 40-44 for more information on ordinances. The ordinances of the New Testament are only, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These fulfill the place of Circumcision and the Passover in the Old Testament. Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Baptism.

94. What is Baptism?

Baptism is the ordinance, of solemn admission into the Church on earth, in immersion with water in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism signifies (publicly and powerfully) our being spiritually buried to the old life and being raised to a new life (saved by and into Christ), and having a share in the benefits of His covenant of grace, and our pledge to be the Lord's. Matthew 3:16, 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-42, 8:36-39, 16:33, 19:5, 20:1-9, 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21

95. To whom is Baptism to be administered?

Baptism is not to be administered to any outside the Church on earth, until they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him. Baptism is for only believers in Jesus Christ. Thus Believer's Baptism is not the sprinkling or baptizing of infants, babies, or any who has not professed Christ as Savior. Believer's Baptism is the public confession of a believer in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Acts 8:12, 38

The Lord's Supper.

96. What is the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance in which, by giving and receiving bread and drink according to Christ's command, His death is proclaimed, and those who receive rightly are by faith (and not by the mouth in a physical manner) recognizing His body and blood sacrifice for our sins, with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. The Lord's Supper also declares the Return of Christ to the earth and our blessed hope to be with Him one day forever. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:17-34

97. What is required to receive rightly the Lord's Supper?

It is required of those who would receive rightly the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves as to their knowledge of the meaning and object of this ordinance, their faith to feed upon Christ, and their repentance, love and new obedience; for observing it in an unworthy manner would bring judgment on themselves. The divine intent of the Supper is to cleanse and edify the worshiper, not to condemn or judge without the offer of cleansing and renewal. 1 Corinthians 11:17-32; Hebrews 11:4

Prayer.

98. What is prayer?

Prayer is "holy conversation with God," an offering up of our praises and desires to God, for things agreeable to His will in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankfulness of His mercies. Prayer is a great and merciful gift of God to the believer and the Church. Jesus prayed while on earth to fulfill the ministry to which His Father sent Him to fulfill. Prayer is seen in every aspect of His life, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection. Matthew 6:5-13, 7:7-12, 19:21, 27:46; Luke 6:12, 18:1

99. What guidelines has God given us in prayer?

The whole Word of God directs us in prayer, but the special example is that which Christ practiced Himself (Matthew 11:25; Mark 1:35, 14:32-42; Luke 6:12-16, 18:1; John 17). He taught His disciples a model prayer, commonly called the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). Nehemiah 1:4-11; Psalm 10:17, 32:5-6; 62:8, 103:1-5, 136:1-26; Daniel 9:4-19; John 16:23-24; Acts 1:12-14, 4:23-31, 9:31, 12:5-19, 16:9, 20:36; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18; 1 John 1:9; Jude 20; Revelation 5:8, 8:3, 11:16

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13).

100. What does the preface of the Lord's Prayer teach us?

The preface of the Lord's Prayer (*Our Father in heaven*) teaches us first to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence as children to a father able and ready to help us; and secondly, that we should pray with and for others. Matthew 7:7-9; Romans 8:15; Ephesians 1:3, 3:12-20; 6:18

101. What do we pray for in the first request?

In the first request (*Hallowed be your name*), we pray that God may enable us and others to glorify Him in all in which He makes Himself known; and that He would overrule all things for His own glory. To pray or say this phrase is to recognize the holiness and greatness of God. Romans 11:33-36

102. What do we pray for in the second request?

In the second request (*Your kingdom come*) we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, that the kingdom of grace may be advanced and ourselves and others brought into it and kept in it; and that Christ's return and the kingdom of glory may come quickly. Matthew 12:22-29; Romans 16:20

103. What do we pray for in the third request?

In the third request (*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*) we pray that God, by His grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey and submit to His will in all things, as His Son did on earth in the Garden of Gethsemane and the angels do in heaven. Prayer should never be viewed or used as a means to "get something from God or persuade Him to change His mind so we may be prospered and wealthy," but to place ourselves before Him that He may change our mind or heart to do His holy will. Psalm 67:1-3, 99:3, 100:3-4; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 22:39-46; Acts 13:1-14; Colossians 4:2; Hebrews 10:5-10, 10:36, 13:20-21; 1 Peter 4:2; 1 John 2:17; Jude 20; Revelations 4:11, 5:8-14

104. What do we pray for in the fourth request?

In the fourth request (*Give us today our daily bread*) we pray that by God's free gift we may receive a sufficient share of the good things of this life, and enjoy His blessing with them. Matthew 6:31-34

105. What do we pray for in the fifth request?

In the fifth request (*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*) we pray that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins. He encouraged us to ask, so by His grace, we are enabled from the heart to forgive others. Psalm 51:1-9; Matthew 18:21-35; Ephesians 4:32; 1 John 1:7, 5:14

106. What do we pray for in the sixth request?

In the sixth request (*And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one*) we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted. Psalm 19:13-14; Matthew 4:1-12, 26:41; Luke 22:31-32; John 17:15; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, 7:23, 10:13; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6:11-7:1, 11:12-15, 12:7-9; 1 Timothy 1:18-20, 5:15; Hebrews 2:14-18

107. What does the conclusion attached to the Lord's Prayer teach us?

The conclusion attached to the Lord's Prayer (*For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever, Amen*) teaches us to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise Him, ascribing kingdom, power and glory to Him. In testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard, we say, *Amen*. The Greek word, *amen*, means "to agree with, affirm, exclaim the truth of and believe, 'it is and shall be so.' " 1 Chronicles 29:10-13; Daniel 9:4-19; Luke 18:1-8; 1 Corinthians 14:16; 1 Timothy 1:17, 6:15-16; Jude 24-25; Revelation 1:4-20, 4:8-11, 5:18-14, 7:9-17, 11:15-18, 15:2-4, 22:20

IV. The Doctrine and Duties of the Church:

108. What is the local church?

A local New Testament church in Jesus Christ is an autonomous congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word; and seeking to extend the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through congregational processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the biblical offices of pastor and deacon are limited to men as qualified by Scripture. See *The Baptist Faith & Message VI*, Pages 31-32.

109. What is the biblical purpose of the local church?

The local church under the loving servant leadership of its pastors, deacons and other key leaders should seek to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:16-20) and the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40). The New Testament actions of evangelism, discipleship, missions, fellowship, worship and prayer must be done under the perfect guidance of the Holy Spirit. Each local church determines how best to accomplish these tasks in its culture and context, following the clear dictates of the Word of God. The local church is God's primary means of accomplishing His work on earth. Matthew 16:13-19; Acts 13:1-3; Ephesians 1:23, 3:1-13; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 1:6

110. What is missions?

Missions is the local church and Christian organizations moving beyond themselves in the Name and power of Jesus Christ to show His love, share the Gospel and extend His Kingdom locally and globally. See *The Baptist Faith & Message XI*, Page 33.

111. Why should the believer be involved in missions?

Involvement in local and global missions is one way a believer grows in faith, serves the Lord, fulfills the purpose of the church and brings Him glory. Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 9:36, 11:19-26, 15:30-41, 20:20

112. Why is membership in a local church important?

The Church is the spiritual and physical Body of Christ. Thus all believers are connected to Him and should show all diligence to His Body. Failure in faithfulness to the local body shows spiritual problems and a need for renewal. Romans 12:5-21; 1 Corinthians 3:5-17, 12:12-28; Colossians 1:18-23, 2:19

113. How can a believer be a faithful member of his or her local church?

See Page 45 for spiritual and practical actions which demonstrate faithfulness to Christ in His church.

114. How can a believer serve God in daily life?

A believer serves God daily by following the Holy Spirit in the love and power of Jesus. He leads His followers to fulfill their earthly purpose by being like Him and in ministering to others. Luke 10:25-37

115. What are spiritual gifts?

Spiritual gifts are God's divine enablements to each believer who has at least one spiritual gift. These gifts, when used genuinely, edify the church and glorify the Savior. 1 Corinthians 12-14; 1 Peter 4:7-11

116. Why should the believer discover, develop and deploy her or his spiritual gift?

Each believer, to become a mature follower of Jesus Christ, must understand and exercise how God has gifted them to serve Him in and through the local church. Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-15, 5:15-21

117. What is tithing, should the believer practice it and why must believers be generous?
Tithe means “tenth.” In the Old Testament it was the basic giving standard for Israel. Many Christians teach that tithing is not found in the New Testament, but Holy Spirit-led generosity beyond a tithe is clearly seen. The earliest Christians were generous with their time, abilities, money and materials. Deuteronomy 26; Malachi 3:10; Nehemiah 10:37; Matthew 23:23; Acts 4:32-37; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7
118. Why should the believer be involved in the public community and government?
Christians are saved to be salt and light to a lost world. Our commitment to God in Christ extends into the public realm. We are to “be in the world, but not of the world.” Matthew 5:13-16, John 17:11
119. How can the believer be involved in the public community and government?
Christians can be involved in the public realm of the local community, neighborhood, schools and businesses and serve in the local, state and federal governments. We can demonstrate our faith by membership and involvement in organizations and activities in the community, but not to violation of conscience or corruption of our witness. Matthew 22:15-22; Romans 13:1-10; 1 Peter 2:11-17
120. What cautions should the believer exercise in being involved?
We must remember that membership and commitment in the community and civil organizations can never replace what God has called us to do foremost through the local Body of Christ, the Church. Secular commitments may be ways in which believers serve God, but these activities can never take precedence of a believer’s foundational relationship to Christ and His Church. Romans 12:1-2
121. Should a believer serve on a jury and participate in the justice system in the community, state and nation?
Following the dictates of godly conscience, a believer has a biblical command to serve his fellow man in truth, justice and fairness. All societies, especially democracy, need committed believers in Jesus Christ to be active in the judicial system. Deuteronomy 24:14-22, 25:1-3; Psalm 15:1-5, 33:10-17, 112:1-10; Proverbs 6:19, 11:1, 16:11, 19:5, 21:28; Isaiah 56:1; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:8; Galatians 5:14; Titus 3:14
122. How can a believer express his or her patriotism, love for country?
Believers show their patriotism by voting in elections, serving in the military, paying taxes, supporting good laws and public officials, opposing evil laws and corrupt officials, obeying laws for the common good and being involved as opportunities arise. Proverbs 3:1-2, 6:16-19, 16:12-15, 19:28, 20:8, 25:5
123. What is the rule for faith and practice for a believer in matters of conscience and secular involvement?
Christians must obey God, first and foremost, and not man. The believer must act according to biblical convictions of godly conscience imparted by the Holy Spirit. Acts 5:29, 26:19-23; Hebrews 12:25-29
124. What is the biblical view of marriage?
Marriage is a divine covenant established by God between a man and a woman based on companionship of love and commitment for life. See The Baptist Faith and Message Article XVIII, Pages 35-36.
125. What is the biblical view of parents, children and relationships?
Love and respect must be given to all members of the family, nuclear and extended. Parents should model, instruct and respect their children in the Word and ways of the Lord. Children must always respect and honor their parents, grandparents, siblings, and elders. The home is the most critical building block for strong social order and is to be graciously assisted by the local church. Psalms 127-128; Proverbs 3:19-26, 10:1, 17:21, 20:7; Acts 16:33; Ephesians 5:22-6:9; 1 Peter 3:8-9

127. Why must believers reject homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle and same-sex marriage as an expression of intimate relationships?

In the first two chapters of Genesis, God created humans of only two genders, male and female. He did not create a third gender, as is being promoted and protected by government and many entities in our society. This divine record also teaches us that He joined male and female in marriage for each other's fulfillment as humans, the procreation of the human race and the ultimate goal of bringing glory to Himself. The joining, supporting and protecting of same sex or varying unions in physical and marital relationships is to be rejected as unbiblical. In all instances in both Testaments, homosexuality and all perversions of God's original design for man and woman in covenant marriage are listed as sin. Biblical marriage is a man and woman united in God's sight in companionship and commitment. Within this framework of the original design of man and woman, sexual joys and blessings are to be experienced only within heterosexual monogamous covenant marriage. Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:1-9

128. Does God love the homosexual (LGBTQ) person?

The deepest truth of the Gospel is that God loves each sinner and desires to change them into a new creature through faith in His Son Jesus Christ. God in His grace in Jesus Christ extends forgiveness and hope to the person trapped in any behavior deemed non-biblical, destructive and contrary to His revealed moral law. To love someone biblically is not the same as approving or supporting their lifestyle. We must speak the truth in love to all who struggle. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Titus 2:11-15

129. What is sanctity of human life?

God is the Creator and Sustainer of all human life from conception to death. He has placed the highest value on human life by His creation and the salvation of lost souls by the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Believers must protect the life of the unborn (thus abortion is to be opposed) and defend all persons (the mentally and physically challenged, elderly, abused, widowed, orphaned, abandoned, chemically dependent, socially oppressed, incarcerated, self-degraded and sexually exploited). The sanctity of human life must be a strong conviction for believers in Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of Life. Genesis 1:26-28; Deuteronomy 5:17; Psalm 8:4-5, 78:5-8, 139:13-16

130. What day of the week (Saturday or Sunday) should Christians worship?

See The Baptist Faith and Message Article VIII, Page 32; and Questions 57-62, Pages 16-17. God makes every day special by His creative design, but the first day of the week, Sunday, has been made the fulfillment of all creation and the Old Testament Sabbath because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament believers began meeting for worship and fellowship on the first day of the week, designated The Lord's Day. Christians should strive to protect Sunday as a day of worship and rest.

131. What is religious liberty?

It is the freedom to believe, exercise and act upon religious convictions and conscience without interference or coercion from or by the government. A wise adage is, "Do not expect government to promote your religion, if you don't want government to promote somebody else's religion; and do not permit government to hinder somebody else's exercise of faith, if you don't want government to hinder your own." Religious liberty is freedom from all tyranny to worship and conduct one's self as he or she believes, the freedom to not worship if one so chooses, and the freedom of local congregations and religious organizations to be autonomous without governmental or other intrusion. It is not toleration of the government to allow religious activities with so-called "strings attached." Baptists have long maintained that God made man free to worship Him in an unhindered way apart from civil authority. Leviticus 25:8-22; Jeremiah 7:3-7; Matthew 22:15-22; 2 Corinthians 3:17; 1 Peter 2:4-10, 3:13-17

132. Why do Southern Baptists champion religious liberty?

We are inherently free to choose whether to worship God and follow Jesus Christ without efforts by the government to advance or hinder religion. Baptists have always had a historic commitment to religious liberty for all people. This conviction can be traced back to the 17th century England and Colonial America, where Baptist leaders called for complete religious freedom. Baptists believe that government is wrong to seek to control conscience and incompetent in spiritual matters. Acts 5:29; 1 John 2:17

133. What is separation of church and state?

The phrase "separation of church and state" is not in the U. S. Constitution. It is a shorthand phrase for the protections in the First Amendment and for a deeper truth: religious liberty is best protected when the institutions of the church and government remain separated and neither tries to perform or interfere with the essential mission of the other. People of faith believe government should not unduly restrict religion and religious expression; and religious institutions must not control civil government.

134. Why should the believer in Jesus Christ not participate in gambling and other games of chance?

Gambling is practiced in many forms in our culture. Some forms appear to be quite innocent, and sometimes a percentage of profits are used for a good cause. God's Word indicates that gambling in any form is contrary to His will for a Christian. The Christian's witness is at stake. Romans 14:1-23

First. Gambling puts faith in chance or luck rather than in the provision of God. Hebrews 13:5-6

Second. The person who gambles seeks to profit from another's loss. This borders on covetousness and stealing, rather than the attitude of helping and assisting other people by love. Exodus 20:17

Third. Gambling promotes greed by an emphasis on getting rather than self-sacrifice. It erodes the moral fiber of society, as it promotes theft by permission and entertainment. Gambling causes a man or woman to become deluded about their ability to earn money or possessions by games of chance or other activities such as athletic contests, races, etc. The Christian must be careful in all activities involved in gambling, games of chance, and "roll of dice or toss of the coin" because the seemingly innocent becomes the avenue of entrapment and often only realized when it is too late. 1 Timothy 6:3-10

Fourth. The Bible teaches that four ways are honorable to profit materially.

(1) Work. 2 Thessalonians 3:10.

(3) Inheritance. 2 Corinthians 12:14.

(2) Wise investments. Luke 19:1-27.

(4) Gift. Philippians 4:10-20.

Fifth. The Bible has many teachings on the right attitude, accumulation of and generosity about money. A sincere believer in Jesus Christ must realize the power and influence of money. With God's help one can develop rightful priorities involving money and material possessions. Matthew 6:19-21, 33-34

135. How should Christians view people who are different from them: minorities, ethnics, immigrants, etc.?

Followers of Christ must realize that He died for all human beings. While on earth, He served all races, nationalities, classes, and both genders. Jesus respected and ministered to all people and expects His Church to do the same. Racism, bigotry, prejudice, and others forms of hatred should not be displayed by His followers. Every believer is to strive to love all people, yet without compromise of biblical doctrines. Matthew 1:21, 28:18-20; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 4:18-19, 24:47; John 3:16, 4:27; Acts 1:8, 6:1-7, 10:1-11:18, 13:42-52; Romans 12:17, 13:10; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Galatians 2:1-16; Hebrews 13:12-13; James 2:1-13; 1 Peter 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 3-11, 3:4-15, 4:7-16; Revelation 5:9-10

136. What does the Bible teach about angels?

Angels are special created beings of God to minister His Word and works in heaven and on earth, and care for the people of God as He directs. They do not have all the qualities of mankind, being made different from man and for differing purposes. Angels are never to be worshiped, deified, venerated or

substituted for faith in God and Jesus Christ. Such acts are signs of evil and wrongful faith. Rebellious angels in heaven were cast to the earth and some are reserved in darkness until the day of judgment. Angels appeared in many forms in the Bible, but each appearance was to minister the Word of God and conduct His works on earth. Angels remain an important part of God's ministry to the Church and believers today. Genesis 18:2, 28:10-17, 31:10, 41:1; Exodus 23:20; Judges 6:11, 13:17; Job 4:18; Psalm 8:5, 91:11, 103:20; Isaiah 63:9; Daniel 7:10; Matthew 1:20, 4:6, 4:11, 24:36, 25:41, 28:2; Luke 1:5-38, 2:9, 22:43; John 1:51, 20:2; Acts 5:19, 7:35, 12:23, 27:23; 2 Corinthians 11:14; Galatians 1:8; Colossians 2:18; Hebrews 1:4, 1:13-14, 13:2; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 12:9, 20:1-10.

137. What does the Bible direct about miracles?

Miracles are manifestations of the power of God to accomplish His Word and work on earth. Hundreds of miracles are seen in the Bible. Many Old Testament men and women of God performed miracles by His power. Jesus Christ and His apostles worked various miracles to bring attention to Him as the Son of God and Savior of man. God in His sovereign way and time often chooses to break into humanity's plight (both with individuals and/or groups) to cause a work which can only be attributed to Him. Man cannot cause or perform miracles, only God. As with angels, we are to pray for the workings of God according to His will. Miracles are not to be demanded as a substitute for true faith and worship. Like any manifestations of God's love and power, miracles and the desire for the miraculous have been and are abused. The Church today must not elevate or promote miracles as the greatest of God's works over true love, faith and hope in Jesus Christ. After Creation the greatest miracles are the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea (Exodus 14), the Virgin Birth of Jesus (Luke 1-2) and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:4). Genesis 1-2, 7-8, 15:17, 17:17, 19:1; Exodus 16:1-36, 17:5; Joshua 4:23-5:1, 10:12-13; 1 Kings 18:45; 2 Kings 18-19; Psalm 78:12, 105:5; Isaiah 35:4-6; Joel 2:28-29; Matthew 13:53-58; Mark 1:40, 9:38-41; John 9:3, 10:40-42, 11:40-42, 12:9-11, 12:37-41; Acts 2:1-14, 2:22, 3:1-10, 4:21-22, 8:17-18, 9:36-43, 10:44-46, 13:11, 14:10, 19:11, 20:9, 28:5; Romans 15:18-19; 1 Corinthians 1:22, 12:4-11, 12:28; 2 Corinthians 12:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Revelation 13:13.

138. What does the Bible declare about Israel?

Israel is both the modern nation in the Middle East (its only democracy) and the historic chosen people of God in the Old Testament; being the second name given by God to Jacob (Genesis 32:28). The Church owes a great debt of gratitude to the Jewish people. Often the Church and many of its leaders have been misguided in opposition to God's chosen people (Genesis 12:1-3, 27:29). Today the Church should desire to see Jewish people saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16, 10:1). His people should respect deeply God's historical covenant people and not accept false doctrines such as replacement theology (God did away with Israel for the Church). Romans 9-11 teaches that God has an eternal plan involving the future restoration of Israel. Matthew 24-25 and Revelation show that in the last days God makes Israel a major part of what He is doing and always will until the end.

139. What is prophecy and is it still valid today?

Prophecy is "forth-telling or declaring of God's Word to individuals, families, the Hebrew people, nations and Church." It is not prediction of the future, but declaration of His Word and will. Inspired prophecy is a significant portion of the Bible. Biblical prophecy primarily relates to the future. Some prophecies are already fulfilled, some being so and the remainder subject to future completion. Prophecy speaks to Israel, the two comings of Christ, God's sovereignty over the nations, the Church, the resurrection, righteousness and judgment, Satan and end-times events. The Church is blessed with godly men who speak Holy Scripture to the Church and the world. Joel 2:28; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 3:24-26; 11:27-30, 21:10; 1 Corinthians 12:10; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11; 2 Peter 1:19; Revelation 11:18, 16:6, 18:24

SECTION THREE

FBCV ARTICLES OF FAITH (1839)

FIRST. We believe that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament were written by men divinely inspired and that they are the only infallible rule of Faith and Practice.

SECOND. That there is only one true and living God, revealed to us as the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, the same in essence and equal in every divine perfection.

THIRD. That man was created holy, innocent, and happy, but by disobedience of one man Sin entered into the world, and death by Sin, so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned.

FOURTH. That the only way of salvation is by grace through faith in the atonement and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

FIFTH. That it is the duty of all men to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

SIXTH. That nothing can separate true believers from the love of God, but that they will be kept by His power through faith unto salvation.

SEVENTH. That Christian Baptism is administered only by the immersion of believers in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that immersed believers only are entitled to partake of the Lord's Supper.

EIGHTH. That there will be a general resurrection of the dead, and general judgment when all mankind will be judged according to their deeds, that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

NINTH. That the Christian ministry is a divinely appointed means for the spread of the Gospel throughout all the world, and that it is the duty of all Christians according to ability to contribute to its support.

- These Articles of Faith were adopted in 1839 at the organization of Vicksburg Baptist Church (more commonly known today as First Baptist Church Vicksburg currently meeting at 1607 Cherry Street).
- First Baptist Church Vicksburg also accepts the *Baptist Faith and Message* as adopted by our Southern Baptist Convention (2000) as a declaration of faith and stated parameters of doctrine.
- First Baptist Church Vicksburg has an *Organizational & Administrative Handbook* which contains all doctrinal, legal, organizational and practical matters pertaining to the purpose and ministries of the Christian faith and the practice of that faith as understood and accepted by the congregation. The Ministerial Staff and the Executive Committee are responsible for the updating of and compliance with the *O & A Handbook*.

SECTION FOUR



The Baptist Faith and Message

A Statement Adopted by the Southern Baptist
Convention

On June 14, 2000, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a revised summary of the Southern Baptist faith. The committee's report says in part:

Baptists cherish and defend religious liberty, and deny the right of any secular or religious authority to impose a confession of faith upon a church or body of churches. We honor the principles of soul competency and the priesthood of believers, affirming together both our liberty in Christ and our accountability to each other under the Word of God.

The report seeks to "identify and affirm certain definite doctrines that Baptists believe, cherish, and with which they have been closely identified."

The Baptist Faith and Message (Adopted 14 June 2000)	
Preamble	Previous Versions
1. The Scriptures	10. Last Things
2. God	11. Evangelism and Missions
3. Man	12. Education
4. Salvation	13. Stewardship
5. Gods Purpose of Grace	14. Cooperation
6. The Church	15. The Christian and the Social Order
7. Baptism and the Lord's Supper	16. Peace and War
8. The Lord's Day	17. Religious Liberty
9. The Kingdom	18. The Family

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

- A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

- B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.
- C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.
- D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In

such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24, 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16, 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19;

1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21, 42 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9, 38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36, 38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7, 24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1, 13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

Southern Baptist Convention

SECTION FIVE

A Statement of Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God's Plan of Salvation

Preamble

Every generation of Southern Baptists has the duty to articulate the truths of its faith with particular attention to the issues that are impacting contemporary mission and ministry. The precipitating issue for this statement is the rise of a movement called "New Calvinism" among Southern Baptists. This movement is committed to advancing in the churches an exclusively Calvinistic understanding of salvation, characterized by an aggressive insistence on the "Doctrines of Grace" ("TULIP"), and to the goal of making Calvinism the central Southern Baptist position on God's plan of salvation.

While Calvinists have been present in Southern Baptist life from its earliest days and have made very important contributions to our history and theology, the majority of Southern Baptists do not embrace Calvinism. Even the minority of Southern Baptists who have identified themselves as Calvinists generally modify its teachings in order to mitigate certain unacceptable conclusions (e.g., anti-missionism, hyper-Calvinism, double predestination, limited atonement, etc.). The very fact that there is a plurality of views on Calvinism designed to deal with these weaknesses (variously described as "3-point," "4-point," "moderate," etc.) would seem to call for circumspection and humility with respect to the system and to those who disagree with it. For the most part, Southern Baptists have been glad to relegate disagreements over Calvinism to secondary status along with other important but "nonessential" theological matters. The Southern Baptist majority has fellowshipped happily with its Calvinist brethren while kindly resisting Calvinism itself. And, to their credit, most Southern Baptist Calvinists have not demanded the adoption of their view as the standard. We would be fine if this consensus continued, but some New Calvinists seem to be pushing for a radical alteration of this long-standing arrangement.

We propose that what most Southern Baptists believe about salvation can rightly be called "Traditional" Southern Baptist soteriology, which should be understood in distinction to "Calvinist" soteriology. Traditional Southern Baptist soteriology is articulated in a general way in the Baptist Faith and Message, "Article IV." While some earlier Baptist confessions were shaped by Calvinism, the clear trajectory of the BF&M since 1925 is away from Calvinism. For almost a century, Southern Baptists have found that a sound, biblical soteriology can be taught, maintained, and defended without subscribing to Calvinism. Traditional Southern Baptist soteriology is ground in the conviction that every person can and must be saved by a personal and free decision to respond to the gospel by trusting in Christ Jesus alone as Savior and Lord. Without ascribing to Calvinism, Southern Baptists have reached around the world with the gospel message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. Baptists have been well-served by a straightforward soteriology rooted in the fact that Christ is willing and able to save any and every sinner.

New Calvinism presents us with a duty and an opportunity to more carefully express what is generally believed by Southern Baptists about salvation. It is no longer helpful to identify ourselves by how many points of convergence we have with Calvinism. While we are not insisting that every Southern Baptist affirm the soteriological statement below in order to have a place in the Southern Baptist family, we are asserting that the vast majority of Southern Baptists are not Calvinists and that they do not want Calvinism to become the standard view in Southern Baptist life. We believe it is time to move beyond Calvinism as a reference point for Baptist soteriology.

Below is what we believe to be the essence of a "Traditional Southern Baptist Understanding of God's Plan of Salvation." We believe that most Southern Baptists, regardless of how they have described their personal understanding of the doctrine of salvation, will find the following statement consistent with what the Bible teaches and what Southern Baptists have generally believed about the nature of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article One: The Gospel

We affirm that the gospel is the good news that God has made a way of salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ for any person. This is in keeping with God's desire for every person to be saved. We deny that only a select few are capable of responding to the gospel while the rest are predestined to an eternity in hell. Genesis 3:15; Psalm 2:1-12; Ezekiel 18:23, 32; Luke 19:10; Luke 24:45-49; John 1:1-18, 3:16; Romans 1:1-6, 5:8, 8:34; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 4:4-7; Colossians 1:21-23; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; Hebrews 1:1-3, 4:14-16; 2 Peter 3:9

Article Two: The Sinfulness of Man

We affirm that, because of the fall of Adam, every person inherits a nature and environment inclined toward sin and that every person who is capable of moral action will sin. Each person's sin alone brings the wrath of a holy God, broken fellowship with Him, ever-worsening selfishness and destructiveness, death, and condemnation to an eternity in hell.

We deny that Adam's sin resulted in the incapacitation of any person's free will or rendered any person guilty before he has personally sinned. While no sinner is remotely capable of achieving salvation through his own effort, we deny that any sinner is saved apart from a free response to the Holy Spirit's drawing through the gospel.

Genesis 3:15-24, 6:5; Deuteronomy 1:39; Isaiah 6:5, 7:15-16, 53:6; Jeremiah 17:5, 9, 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18:19-20; Romans 1:18-32, 3:9-18, 5:12, 6:23, 7:9; Matthew 7:21-23; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, 6:9-10, 15:22; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27-28; Revelation 20:11-15

Article Three: The Atonement of Christ

We affirm that the penal substitution of Christ is the only available and effective sacrifice for the sins of every person.

We deny that this atonement results in salvation without a person's free response of repentance and faith. We deny that God imposes or withholds this atonement without respect to an act of the person's free will. We deny that Christ died only for the sins of those who will be saved. Psalm 22:1-31; Isaiah 53:1-12; John 12:32, 14:6; Acts 10:39-43, 16:30-32; Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:10-14; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-20; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 9:12-15, 24-28, 10:1-18; 1 John 1:7, 2:2

Article Four: The Grace of God

We affirm that grace is God's generous decision to provide salvation for any person by taking all of the initiative in providing atonement, in freely offering the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, and in uniting the believer to Christ through the Holy Spirit by faith.

We deny that grace negates the necessity of a free response of faith or that it cannot be resisted. We deny that the response of faith is in any way a meritorious work that earns salvation. Ezra 9:8; Proverbs 3:34; Zechariah 12:10; Matthews 19:16-30, 23:37; Luke 10:1-12; Acts 15:11, 20:24; Romans 3:24, 27-28, 5:6, 8, 15-21; Galatians 1:6, 2:21, 5; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 3:2-9; Colossians 2:13-17; Hebrews 4:16, 9:28; 1 John 4:19

Article Five: The Election to Salvation

We affirm that any person who responds to the gospel with repentance and faith is born again through the power of the Holy Spirit. He is a new creation in Christ and enters, at the moment he believes, into eternal life.

We deny that any person is regenerated prior to or apart from hearing and responding to the gospel. Luke 15:24; John 3:3, 7:37-39, 10:10, 16:7-14; Acts 2:37-39; Romans 6:4-11, 10:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20, 6:15; Colossians 2:13; 1 Peter 3:18

Article Six: The Election to Salvation

We affirm that, in reference to salvation, election speaks of God's eternal, gracious, and certain plan in Christ to have a people who are His by repentance and faith.

We deny that election means that, from eternity, God predestined certain people for salvation and others for condemnation. Genesis 1:26-28, 12:1-3; Exodus 19:6; Jeremiah 31:31-33; Matthew 24:31, 25:34; John 6:70, 15:16; Romans 8:29-30, 33, 9:6-8, 11:7; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; Ephesians 1:4-6, 2:11-22, 3:1-11, 4:4-13; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 1 Peter 1:1-2; 1 Peter 2:9, 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 7:9-10

Article Seven: The Sovereignty of God

We affirm God's eternal knowledge of and sovereignty over every person's salvation or condemnation.

We deny God's sovereignty and knowledge require Him to cause a person's acceptance or rejection of faith in Christ. Genesis 1:1, 6:5-8, 18:16-33, 22; 2 Samuel 24:13-14; 1 Chronicles 29:10-20; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Joel 2:32; Psalm 23, 51:4, 139:1-6; Proverbs 15:3 John 6:44; Romans 11:3; Titus 3:3-7; James 1:13-15; Hebrews 11:6, 12:28; 1 Peter 1:17

Article Eight: The Free Will of Man

We affirm that God, as an expression of His sovereignty, endows each person with actual free will (the ability to choose between two options), which must be exercised in accepting or rejecting God's gracious call to salvation by the Holy Spirit through the gospel.

We deny that the decision of faith is an act of God rather than a response of the person. We deny that there is an "effectual call" for certain people that is different from a "general call" to any person who hears and understands the gospel. Genesis 1:26-28; Numbers 21:8-9; Deuteronomy 30:19; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 8:1-22; 2 Samuel 24:13-14; Esther 3:12-14; Matthew 7:13-14, 11:20-24; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 9:23-24, 13:34, 15:17-20; Romans 10:9-10; Titus 2:12; Revelation 22:17

Article Nine: The Security of the Believer

We affirm that when a person responds in faith to the gospel, God promises to complete the process of salvation in the believer into eternity. This process begins with justification, whereby the sinner is immediately acquitted of all sin and granted peace with God; continues in sanctification, whereby the saved are progressively conformed to the image of Christ by the indwelling Holy Spirit; and concludes in glorification, whereby the saint enjoys life with Christ in heaven forever.

We deny that this Holy Spirit-sealed relationship can ever be broken. We deny even the possibility of apostasy. John 10:28-29, 14:1-4, 16:12-14; Romans 3:21-26, 8:29, 30, 35-39, 12:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:17; Ephesians 1:13-14; Philippians 1:6, 3:12; Colossians 1:21-22; 1 John 2:19, 3:2, 5:13-15; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 13:5; James 1:12; Jude 24-25

Article Ten: The Great Commission

We affirm that the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned His church to preach the good news of salvation to all people to the ends of the earth. We affirm that the proclamation of the gospel is God's means of bringing any person to salvation.

We deny that salvation is possible outside of a faith response to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Psalm 51:13; Proverbs 11:30; Isaiah 52:7; Matthew 28:19-20; John 14:6; Acts 1:8, 4:12, 10:42-43; Romans 1:16, 10:13-15; 1 Corinthians 1:17-21; Ephesians 3:7-9, 6:19-20; Philippians 1:12-14; 1 Thess. 1:8; 1 Timothy 2:5; 2 Timothy 4:1-5

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The list of signers already includes Jerry Vines, Jimmy Draper, Paige Patterson, Malcolm Yarnell, David Allen, Eric Hankins, Mark Howell, Steve Horn, Emir Caner, Adam Harwood, Chris Justice and MS Baptist Convention Board Executive Director-Treasurer, Dr. Jim Futral.

SECTION SIX

The Ordinances

The Baptist Faith and Message (2000):

Article VII Baptism and the Lord's Supper

“Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.” *See Page 32.

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#### **Our church accepts people for membership by:**

##### **Salvation and Believer's Baptism**

Those individuals who have received Jesus Christ into their life to forgive them of their sin and take control of their life today, and who wish to be baptized as a public profession (symbolic) of their acceptance of Christ.

##### **Believer's Baptism**

Those individuals who have previously accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, but have not yet been “biblically” baptized by immersion and wish to be baptized as a public profession (symbol) of their acceptance of Christ.

##### **Transfer of Membership**

Those individuals who are members of another Baptist church of like faith and belief.

##### **Statement of Faith in Christ and Believer's Baptism**

Those individuals who share our Baptist faith and convictions and have been previously “biblically” baptized by immersion.

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Introduction:

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper is a worship experience memorializing the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This guide is designed to answer frequently asked questions concerning baptism, Lord's Supper, and membership and represents First Baptist Church Vicksburg's (FBCV) understanding of these matters. Matthew 28:19-20

1. Why is it important for a believer to be baptized?

First, baptism is an act of loving obedience to the explicit command of our Lord. Christ commanded His disciples to baptize their converts on an ongoing basis.

Secondly, baptism is a public testimony of one's faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his/her sins. In the New Testament, when a person received Christ, the church gave public testimony to that fact through baptism.

Lastly, through baptism a believer identifies with a local fellowship of believers, the very Body of Christ. Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; Ephesians 1:22-23

2. Why was Jesus baptized?

The Scriptures expressly state that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. Why did Jesus submit to being baptized by John the Baptist?

In answer to that question, several reasons should be noted. First, Jesus was identifying His ministry with that of John the Baptist. Secondly, Jesus was setting an example for His disciples to follow throughout all generations. Lastly, Jesus was publicly dedicating Himself to His redemptive ministry. Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:21

3. Who should be baptized?

Baptism is only for those who have made a personal declaration of faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. A confession of faith in Jesus Christ was a prerequisite for New Testament baptism. Thus, only persons who are genuine followers of Christ are to be baptized. This is what is meant by “believer’s baptism.”

Further, a person living in known sin is not a proper candidate for baptism until there has been a demonstration of godly repentance.

It is the heartfelt desire of FBCV to minister to persons suffering from the consequences of sin and to help them respond biblically to whatever situation they face. In cases where some clarification is needed, please contact the pastor or staff member, where a minister can discuss your situation on an individual basis. Acts 2:41; 8:37-38; 10:43-48; John 10:27; 2 Corinthians 7:10

4. What is the meaning of baptism?

First, baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. God’s great redemptive event of all history-- the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ--is pictured and reenacted in the water baptism of every believer.

Secondly, baptism symbolizes the present spiritual death, burial, and resurrection of the believer. Through baptism the believer shows that he has died to sin, that his old life has been buried with Christ, and that he has been raised to walk in newness of life.

Lastly, baptism symbolizes the future bodily resurrection of all believers. Baptism, then, becomes an expression of one’s belief in the future bodily resurrection of all believers, which will occur at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Romans 6:3-4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 6:4-5; 1 Corinthians 15:52

5. How should a believer be baptized?

Immersion is the scriptural mode of baptism for several reasons:

First, the word translated “baptize” in the New Testament (Greek, *baptizo*) means “to dip, plunge, submerge, immerse.” The word had a First Century connotation of drowning at sea, to be severed from life by death.

Secondly, the two New Testament accounts of baptismal services clearly indicate that immersion was the mode of baptism employed (Jesus, Mark 1:9-10; Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:38-39).

Thirdly, immersion is the only method of baptism that pictures a death, burial, and resurrection. Sprinkling and partial immersion do not satisfy the New Testament definition of baptism.

6. Who has the authority to baptize?

The authority to baptize, both by precept and example, rests with Christ. As Christ is viewed as the Head of the church, the authority for the administration of baptism logically rests with the local church.

The authority to baptize has to lie somewhere; someone or group has to decide if a person is a true candidate for baptism. Therefore, we believe that the local church, rather than an individual or denomination, is the logical biblical authority for baptism. Matthew 3:13-17, 28:19-20; Ephesians 1:22; 1 Corinthians 1:14-16

7. Where should a believer be baptized?

As baptism is considered to be a church ordinance, it is appropriate that it be administered during a stated service of the assembled church. This serves as a public testimony to the fellowship of FBCV, but it also extends the witness of the believer's baptism to any who might observe or share in the service. We recognize that the purpose of an outdoor or special baptism service is to draw attention to the public nature of baptism as a profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

8. Why do we baptize “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit?”

First, Jesus instructed His disciples to baptize their converts in “the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” This trinitarian formula is the correct baptismal statement.

However, because of the alternate formulas found in the Book of Acts--“in the name of Jesus Christ” and “in the name of the Lord Jesus”--it is not mandatory that the Trinitarian formula be used.

Secondly, though, there are some heretical groups who specifically baptize “in the name of Jesus” as a way to “make a statement” that they deny the doctrine of the Trinity. Therefore, we baptize “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” as a way of affirming the biblical doctrine of the Trinity; reminding believers that our salvation has been promised, accomplished and applied through the work of the one triune God--Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 8:16; 19:5

9. Is infant baptism really baptism?

No. Infant baptism is rejected as non-scriptural for three reasons:

First, there is no example of infant baptism (also called paedo baptism) in the New Testament. Proponents of infant baptism often suggest that Christ's blessing the children included baptism (Matthew 19:13-15). However, there is no indication in the entire passage that infants were baptized. Also, it is not to be equated with the Old Testament rite of circumcision which was to be done on the eighth day of a male Hebrew's life (Leviticus 12:3, Luke 2:21).

Secondly, in the household baptisms of Acts (Cornelius, 10:24-28; Lydia, 16:15; Philippian jailor, 16:31-34; Crispus, 18:8), there is not the slightest indication that infants were baptized. In the Pastoral Epistles, letters from Paul to church leaders Timothy and Titus, no evidence is found of the baptism of infants or small children, simply because they were in Christian families.

Lastly, early church history does not support infant baptism. This practice is alien to the New Testament because only conscious professing believers were candidates for baptism. Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-15; Luke 18:5-17; Ephesians 2:1-10

10. How old should a child be before he/she is baptized?

Many parents struggle with this important question. Parents should know and constantly be talking with their children to determine what is best for them. Perhaps Wayne Grudem gives the most appropriate answer-- “they should be old enough to make a *believable* profession of faith. It is impossible to set a precise age that will apply to every child, but when parents see convincing evidence of genuine spiritual life, and also some degree of understanding regarding the meaning of trusting in Christ, then baptism is appropriate.” (*Systematic Theology*, 982). FBCV offers special instructional classes for children, grades 1-6.

11. If a baby dies or is killed, where does he/she go?

Unfortunately, some people share the superstitious belief that if a baby dies before being “sprinkled,” or “christened,” the baby is therefore lost and goes to hell. However, the Scriptures suggest that if a child dies before he/she reaches the age of understanding sin, knowledge of accountability to God, and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, he/she goes immediately to be with the Lord. In the marvelous grace of God, provision is made for the eternal bliss of this innocent child. 2 Samuel 12:22-23; Matthew 18:1-10

12. What is “baptismal regeneration”?

The term “baptismal regeneration” applies to those who baptize by immersion, but say that baptism is essential to or an additional component of salvation. The Scriptures do not teach that baptism is essential to salvation. However, the Scriptures do teach that baptism is essential to obedience. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” John 14:15; Luke 23:42-43; Acts 8:35-38; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 5:11-12

13. What if a person is genuinely saved after his/her baptism?

If a person realizes that his/her salvation actually came after their baptism, they should be re-immersed, for this first immersion was not really a baptism. Only when a person has already been saved is immersion genuinely New Testament baptism.

14. Why are baptism and the Lord’s Supper called ordinances?

Baptists have consistently used the term *ordinance* rather than *sacrament* because the latter term conveys the idea that baptism and the Lord’s Supper have saving power residing in the very act itself. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, however, are never to be regarded as a means of salvation. We believe Christ gave baptism and Lord’s Supper to His church, not as sacraments, but as pictures and affirmations of grace. Faithful obedience to His commands testifies of His grace. In some Christian circles this ordinance is called Communion.

The English word *ordinance* is derived from the Latin *ordinare*, which means “to set in order” in the sense of something being authoritatively ordered or decreed. Thus, baptism is a sacred and symbolical act divinely ordered and commanded by the Lord.

Baptists also believe that the Lord’s Supper is an ordinance. It too is a symbolic portrayal of the sacrifice and suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ and also points to His future return. The Lord’s Supper should be observed only by professing believers in Jesus Christ. It must be celebrated in the spirit of remembrance of His sacrifice, dedication to Him and anticipation of His Second Coming.

FBCV observes the Lord’s Supper on a regular basis (quarterly) or at special worship occasions. The Pastor, Staff, and Deacon Body are responsible for planning and guiding the Lord’s Supper. Matthew 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Luke 22:14-23; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

15. What if a person was baptized in another denomination?

A person can be received into membership at FBCV by statement of faith in Christ and previous baptism if the following conditions are met: (1) the person was genuinely saved prior to baptism; (2) the person was baptized by immersion; (3) the immersion was administered by a church that holds to a symbolic meaning of baptism (as explained in questions #4-5), and (4) the person understood that it was believer's baptism, a symbolic act of faith and obedience at the time of that immersion.

16. When is re-immersion inappropriate for a believer?

Baptism serves as the outward symbol of the beginning of the Christian life, i.e., it is the outward sign of an inward regeneration. Thus, for a person who has already been saved and scripturally baptized, to be re-immersed may give the wrong meaning to baptism. To make baptism signify a fresh "filling of the Spirit" is making baptism say something that it is not designed to say. Any person who is considering re-baptism should contact the pastor and/or church staff member to discuss their situation in private. Acts 2:41; Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:4; Romans 12:1-2

17. How does baptism affect participation in observance of the Lord's Supper?

Believers in Jesus Christ who have publicly confessed their faith in Him may partake of the Lord's Supper. Participation in the Lord's Supper is a public faith statement. In the New Testament no believer resisted baptism or neglected the opportunity to obey Christ in this way. New Testament believers were also eager to share with other followers of Jesus Christ in observing the Lord's Supper. Matthew 26:20-35; Mark 14:12-31; Luke 22:1-38; John 13:1-38; Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34. See Page 20, Questions 94-95.

18. Why should a believer participate in the Lord's Supper?

The Supper is a worship experience in which we remember what Jesus Christ has done for and in us. Every believer should prepare spiritually, participate genuinely and submit to the Lord obediently in this service. Each church should conduct the Supper in a fashion which honors the Lord and edifies the believer. See Page 32 for The Baptist Faith and Message VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

19. How often should a local church celebrate the Lord's Supper?

A local church should celebrate the Lord's Supper in a regular and defined way that is consistent with the faith and tradition of that congregation. The fifth Sundays of a calendar year and the Christian holy day seasons (Easter and Christmas) are used by many Baptist churches. However, a local church under the spiritual leadership of its pastoral staff and other key leaders (Deacons, etc.) should plan and conduct the Lord's Supper in a manner and frequency that is deemed best for their body of believers. In some Christian denominations the Lord's Supper (or whatever name they use for this memorial supper) is observed each Sunday.

20. Are there certain attitudes and determined outcomes from the observance of the Lord's Supper that believers should desire?

Yes. In 1 Corinthians 11 the Apostle Paul outlined to the Church at Corinth that the first focus of the Supper is on the death, burial, resurrection and return of Jesus Christ. Then he clarified a second focus which is on the individual believer. This focus should be on confession of sin, examination of one's life and renewed obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. This biblical focus forbids levity, carelessness and insincerity in the observance of this memorial supper in the Lord and with His people. See Page 20, Questions 96-97.

SECTION SEVEN

Why I Am A Baptist

R. Albert Mohler Jr. argues on behalf of his tradition.

Desiderius Erasmus, incredulous and finally exasperated Luther, once nicknamed the great Reformer *Doctor Hyperbolicus*. In Erasmus's view Luther could not resist taking every argument to extremes. We can only imagine what Erasmus would have said of the Baptists, who believe that Luther did not take his arguments far *enough*. Even the eloquent Erasmus might have been speechless.

Of course, neither Erasmus nor Luther ever encountered a Baptist. The movement we know today as Baptist emerged not on the Continent during the sixteenth century but in England during the seventeenth. The world has been less quiet ever since.

Every great movement probably begins in an argument of some sort, and the Baptists emerged in the context of an argument that was intense, significant, and sometimes deadly. Luther had started it. The Calvinists believed he had not taken it far enough. The English Puritans likewise became convinced that the moderately reforming Church of England was not taking the argument far enough. The Separatists (who would include Congregationalists and Presbyterians) believed that the Puritans who remained in the Church of England were not taking it far enough. The Baptists then separated from the Separatists because they were not taking it far enough. Since then, Baptists have not stopped arguing. They often argue among themselves, but more urgently, they argue for the necessity of conversion, for the believers' church, for the baptism of believers alone, and for liberty of conscience.

The Baptists did not claim to have reestablished Christ's church, but instead saw themselves as continuing the process of reforming the church through the establishment of true and godly congregations of visible saints—each entering into the covenant fellowship of the congregation by personal testimony of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and personal commitment to obey Christ in baptism and faithful discipleship.

Those early Baptists were determined to clarify that they affirmed without reservation the great tradition of classical Christianity. They wanted the world to know their affirmation of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, evident, for example, in the Nicene-Chalcedonian tradition. By 1679, Baptists in London adopted the "Orthodox Creed" intended "to unite and confirm all true Protestants in the fundamental articles of the Christian religion." But the Baptists were united in perplexity over the fact that other Protestants seemed reluctant to follow the logic of the Reformation to its conclusion. What did the famed *solas* of the Reformation mean, if the meaning and necessity of conversion could be so obscured, and the very nature of the church thereby so confused?

For Baptists, the foundation is the radical reality of conversion as the entry into the Christian life. Is this not the clear teaching of Christ himself, who told Nicodemus, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:7)? For Baptists, the necessity of conversion is the key to understanding the gospel and all of Scripture. The human race is divided between those who do not believe in Christ and those who do, between the once-born and the twice-born, between the rebels against God and those who have been conquered by the grace of Christ and belong to him forever.

Baptists reject the notion that a person who has not been born again is actually a believer. No doubt, this will sound alarming to those who understand the gospel and the church very differently. It was astounding and alarming to the Church of England in the seventeenth century.

In 1646, Baptist churches in London defined saving faith in these terms:

Faith is the gift of God, wrought in the hearts of the elect by the Spirit of God; by which faith they come to know and believe the truth of the Scriptures, and the excellency of them above all other writings, and all things in the world, as they hold forth the glory of God in his attributes, the

excellency of Christ in his nature and offices, and of the power and fulness of the Spirit in his workings and operations; and so are enabled to cast their souls upon this truth thus believed.

Such saving faith, the Baptists continued, “is ordinarily begotten by the preaching of the gospel, or word of Christ.” When you find real Baptists, you will find the preaching of the gospel—the declaration of the great good news that salvation and the forgiveness of sins are bestowed upon all who hear the word of Christ and believe, who rest from their labors to make themselves worthy of salvation and by grace through faith receive the mercy of God, by the merits of Christ alone.

This declaration explains Baptists’ sense of urgency in the preaching of the gospel. When Baptist churches come together, as Southern Baptists in the United States did in 1845, they establish mission boards and organize evangelism before doing anything else. The Southern Baptists did not establish a theological seminary until 1859 or a publishing house until 1891, but they did not leave their first meeting without establishing missions boards. Getting first things first among the Baptists means preaching the gospel for the conversion of sinners. Everything else will have to wait.

But the necessity of conversion ran into conflict with the prevailing understanding of the nature of the church, especially as that understanding accorded with either Catholic or Anglican ecclesiology. How could Christ’s church include those who were not Christ’s people?

The definition of Christ’s church as wholly regenerate is perhaps the most radical of all Baptist doctrines. The necessity of conversion leads to the affirmation of the church as the body of those who are converted, who have heard the gospel and been saved. Others among the Puritans and Separatists approached this affirmation, but the Baptists plowed right through the arguments, insisting there could be no other notion of Christ’s church than that it comprises the twice-born, regenerate believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who have individually professed their belief in Christ and demonstrated their regeneration through obedience to Christ and his commands.

With this affirmation, the Baptists transformed themselves into perceived enemies of the established churches and the civil order. The union of throne and altar rendered membership in the church and citizenship in the state effectively one and the same. The Baptists were accused of heresy and treason. Politically, as we shall see, Baptist logic severed the concept of citizenship from membership in an established church. One could be born an Englishman, but one had to be born again to be a Christian. The church consists only of Christians under the rule of Christ.

The powers that be—both civil and ecclesiastical—were scandalized. To monarchs, the threat was real. Can you have a stable national order (and a secure throne) if your subjects are not subservient to your priests? How can societal order be maintained if civil law and church law are totally separated? Can government wield true authority if the most it can threaten is execution? How could a person excommunicated by a church remain in good standing with the state? Are unbelievers and not-yet-believers part of *no* church?

The Baptists came to answer *yes* to every one of those questions. By the middle of the seventeenth century, Baptists had thought it through rather carefully, and they defined the church with these words:

Jesus Christ hath here on earth a [manifestation of his] spiritual kingdom, which is his Church, whom he hath purchased and redeemed to himself as a peculiar inheritance; which Church is a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world by the word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of the faith of the gospel, being baptized into that faith, and joined to the Lord, and to each other, by mutual agreement in the practical enjoyment of the ordinances commanded by Christ their head and king.

The concept of a regenerate church, like that of conversion, was evident to the early Baptists as they read the Bible. They observed the churches around them and concluded that a reformation was improbable if not impossible. One cannot reform what has not been rightly formed. The Baptist conception was radical, and they knew it. King James I of England was famously worried about creeping Presbyterianism. “No bishop, no king,” he reasoned. He rightly understood the Baptists as an even more pressing threat. The Baptists recognized no bishop, no mediatorial priest but Christ, and no presbytery. The Baptists did not invent Congregationalism, but they made it central to their ecclesiology.

They affirmed what Martin Luther would define as the priesthood of all believers, then proceeded to make clear that every rightly ordered congregation is fully empowered and authorized for ministry. No pope, no bishop, no presbytery, no permit needed or sought.

Francis Wayland, the influential president of the then-Baptist Brown University, when asked by an Episcopal bishop why Baptists were growing so fast on the nineteenth-century American frontier, responded, “We don’t ask permission.” He was likely tempted to add, “And we don’t have bishops.”

Baptists are often accused of lacking an ecclesiology, and many who have called themselves Baptists in recent times have lent credence to the charge. But such was not the case with Baptists in the formative era, who had carefully thought out an ecclesiology consistent with what later generations would call “New Testament principles.” Nor is it the case with those who today prize authentic Baptist identity and ecclesiology. The rightly ordered church is a body of regenerate believers, gathered by common faith and common confession and a church covenant that defines the commitments of church membership. This rightly ordered church appoints the elders and pastors needed for its ministry and organizes its work on its own authority.

One of the most venerable of our Baptist church covenants explains:

As we trust we have been brought by divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the influence of his Spirit to give ourselves up to him, so we do now solemnly covenant with each other, that, God enabling us: we will walk together in brotherly love; that we will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully warn, rebuke, and admonish one another, as the case shall require; that we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor omit the great duty of prayer, both for ourselves and for others; that we will participate in each other’s joys, and endeavor, with tenderness and sympathy, to bear each other’s burdens and sorrows; that we will earnestly endeavor to bring up such as may be under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; that we will seek divine aid to enable us to walk circumspectly and watchfully in the world; denying ungodliness and every worldly lust; that we will strive together for the support of a faithful evangelical ministry among us; that we will endeavor by example and effort to win souls to Christ; and, through life, amidst evil report and good report seek to live to the glory of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

As others have noted, the Baptists have not been ardent ecumenists. But they have always recognized that there are true Christians in other churches and communions. They have believed that no entity that lacks the preaching of the gospel is *any* church at all, and that even some churches that preach the gospel are, measured by the New Testament, wrongly ordered. Baptist are not Baptists for nothing.

The rightly ordered church as a gathered and covenanted visible assembly of the saints exercises a comprehensive gospel ministry. The Word of God is preached, the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are observed, church discipline is applied, and the congregation advances the gospel through missions and evangelism.

The practice of baptizing only those persons who personally profess faith in Christ became the defining issue for Baptist. Reading the New Testament, they concluded that infant baptism was no real baptism and that baptism, like

the Lord's Supper, was not a sacrament but an ordinance—an act commanded by Christ. The new believer, having given evidence of saving faith and a commitment to follow Christ, is baptized into the fellowship of the church, with the waters of baptism the context for the believer's profession of faith. Baptism is also the ordinance of entry into the membership and fellowship of the congregation.

The sixteenth-century Anabaptists in Switzerland had professed the baptism of believers only, but they had not generally practiced immersion. The early British Baptists concluded that texts such as Colossians 2:12 and Romans 6:4 clearly indicated the full immersion of the new believer in water, portraying the death, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Millions upon millions of Baptists have been immersed in water, with the words “buried with Christ in baptism” as the believer is lowered into the water, and “raised to walk in newness of life” as the believer emerges from the watery grave.

Baptists probably did not at first denominate themselves Baptists. It appears that others, probably derisively, affixed the label to the new movement of churches in England. In the next century, the Methodists would receive much the same treatment, due to their method of devotion. Eventually, the Baptists (and the Methodists after them) accepted the name. Why not? To the Baptists, the practice of believers' baptism was shorthand for their entire system of doctrine and ecclesial practice.

In the words of the London Baptist in 1646, the “plunging” of the body under water is “a sign,” and as such “must answer the things signified; which is, that interest the saints have in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and that as certainly as the body is buried under water, and risen again, so certainly shall the bodies of the saints be raised by the power of Christ, in the day of the resurrection, to reign with Christ.” Given the language of “plunging the body under water,” the Baptists could easily have been named the Plungers. I'll just be thankful for *Baptist*.

The necessity of conversion led logically to the concept of the regenerate church, which led in turn to the understanding of baptism of believers as the public profession of faith and entrance into the covenant assembly of the local church. In our time, other Christians are often scandalized by the insistence of Baptist churches that members be baptized, *by immersion*, as believers. Sometimes even Baptists fall into the practice of speaking of “rebaptism” as required. In fact, the historic Baptist position is that any act that claims to be baptism, but is not the baptism of a professing believer, is not actually baptism at all. Likewise, any baptism of a believer that is not conducted by full immersion in water is not a rightly obedient baptism. We do not “rebaptize” people, we baptize them.

By now you see the pattern. I did warn you in advance: It all started with an argument.

The radical idea of a believers' church, a regenerate assembly, came into conflict with several nearly universal assumptions of the age: that the church must be conjoined with the state, that baptism (of infants) was combined with notions of citizenship, and that the state bore responsibility for religious order, conformity, and orthodoxy. To think otherwise was considered both heretical and treasonous, subversive of both the nation and social stability.

To most modern people living in Western nations—and particularly to most Americans—the idea of a state serving as guardian of souls and protector of orthodoxy probably seems outlandish. To King James I and his bishops, the same idea seemed obvious, and the Baptists soon felt the fury of persecution.

The Baptists were hardly alone in experiencing religious persecution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What set them apart was the growing realization that their own theological logic required the recognition of religious liberty for all persons. They might have come to such conclusions apart from their own experience of persecution, but the threat of injury and imprisonment and death clarified their beliefs rather quickly.

One of the earliest Baptists, Thomas Helwys from Nottinghamshire, penned in 1612 a powerful tract title, “A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity.” In his handwritten inscription to King James I, Helwys wrote:

Hear O King, and diligently note the counsel of your poor, and let their complaints come before thee. The king is a mortal man, and not God, therefore hath no power over the immortal souls of his subjects, to make laws and ordinances for them, and to set spiritual Lords over them. If the king have authority to make spiritual Lords and laws, then he is an immortal God and not a mortal man.

O King be not seduced by deceivers to sin so against God whom thou oughtest to obey, nor against thy poor subjects who ought and will obey thee in all things with body life and goods, or else let their lives be taken from the earth. God save the king.

Helwys insisted that “man’s religion to God is between God and themselves. The king will not answer for it. Neither may the king be judge between God and man. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews, or whatsoever, it does not appertain to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.”

King James I saw otherwise, having argued, “It is the chiefest of all kingly duties . . . to settle affairs of religion.” Helwys, along with other early English Baptists, fled to the Netherlands. He would later return to England, suffer arrest, and die in the infamous Newgate Prison.

Robert Louis Wilken has referred to Helwys’s “compelling luminosity” in including not only Protestants and Catholics but Jews and Muslims in his defense of religious liberty. As Wilken noted, “If liberty of conscience is recognized for any, it must be recognized for all. Helwys had the clearness of mind to discern that as a matter of justice the ruling authorities must grant liberty of conscience no matter what faith people held.”

In the New World, Roger Williams would be driven by the same Baptist convictions to establish the colony of Rhode Island (originally known as Providence Plantations) on the principle of religious liberty. In 1644, he published his most famous book, *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution*. In it, Williams (a mercurial personality who would later declaim Baptist identity) argues that the king has no right to coerce belief, confession, or conviction. Williams saw the church as separate from the world, a vineyard that belongs to God alone. He insisted that the church in the world must be separated by a wall or hedge “between the garden of the Church and the wilderness of the world.”

Like Thomas Helwys, Williams extended religious liberty far beyond the imagination of his contemporaries—to the inclusion of “the most Paganish, Jewish, Turkish, or anti-christian consciences and worships.” His broadmindedness was not appreciated in London, nor for that matter in Boston, and the House of Commons ordered that *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution* be burned.

Later, President Thomas Jefferson, though considered an infidel by many Baptists then (and now), was presented with a 1,325-pound cheese made by Baptist women in Massachusetts and delivered to the White House by Elder John Leland in appreciation of Jefferson’s support for religious liberty. Writing to the Danbury Baptist Association in Connecticut in 1802, Jefferson had borrowed language from Roger Williams, defining “a wall of separation between church and state.”

In more recent times, Jefferson’s language of a “wall of separation” has been employed to mischievous ends by those who oppose *any* religious influence in civil society. But in its historical context, Jefferson’s assurance to the Baptists stood in contrast to the persecution Baptists had experienced at the hands of governments on both sides of the Atlantic.

In much of the world, religious persecution continues. In our own context, what Walter Lippmann called the “acids of modernity” threaten to burn through the entire society, consuming all religious conviction. An increasingly aggressive secularism, joined by forces aligned with moral progressivism, renders all traditional theistic beliefs subversive and retrograde. The entire inheritance of Christianity and Christendom is dismissed as inimical to the project of secular liberation.

Those of us who hold to traditional forms of Christianity, revealed religion, and religious authority find ourselves and each other in communities of conviction. We engage in conversation and common courage as we seek to remain faithful, making clear that our beliefs have public as well as private significance.

Perhaps part of our Baptist contribution is just to remain authentically Baptist, still refusing to ask permission. Period.

Why am I a Baptist? I must admit that having been born to Baptist parents has something to do with it. But no one becomes a real Baptist by birth—only by rebirth. I professed personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as a boy and was baptized, head to toe under water, into the membership of a Baptist church. Later, like most adolescents, I decided that I had better take a closer look at my own beliefs and look into the beliefs of others. I became an even more ardent Baptist, and I have spent my entire adult life in the Baptist ministry.

I believe that Baptists have something important—even crucial—to add to the Christian tradition and to strengthen Christian witness in the world today. Baptists are often a noisy part of the Body of Christ, but I hope we are a needed part as well.

In any event, don't expect us to ask permission. Put us in jail, take away our earthly goods, do your worst—we will not ask permission from the powers that be. Whatever happens in the unfolding of history, we will still be preaching the gospel, plunging believers under water, telling people about Jesus, and singing the old, old story of Jesus and his love.

As a young man, I heard an old Baptist say, "I was Baptist born and Baptist bred, and when I am old, I'll be Baptist dead." At the time, I thought these words trite, tribal, and woefully lacking in theology. Now, in my seventh decade of life, I hear them a bit differently, mixing gratitude to the church with defiance of the world. Given the way our world is going, I am ready to stand with that old Baptist, now long gone, and pledge to be faithfully Baptist, faithfully Christian, even unto death. No earthly permission needed.

—Source: *First Things* August/September 2020, pages 45-50.

—Copied by permission given on September 15, 2020.

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SECTION EIGHT

Meaningful Church Membership

Now that I am a member of FBCV or any local church, what should I do?

- * Attend worship services regularly
- * Read and study the Bible daily
- * Pray continually and sincerely
- * Participate in a small group Bible study weekly
- * Give tithes and offerings joyfully
- * Develop a daily quiet time with the Lord to grow spiritually
- * Use your spiritual gifts and talents faithfully
- * Serve in some ministry or missions area consistently
- * Fellowship with other believers frequently
- * Participate in the celebration of the Lord's Supper genuinely
- * Practice Christian faith, integrity and values publicly
- * Share your testimony (what God has done for you) obediently
- * Serve with your pastor, church staff and other key leaders graciously
- * Learn the meaning of church membership and fellowship relationally
- * Invite non-members to Bible study and worship services happily
- * Join a church when you leave to live in another place immediately
- * Live a Christian life to glorify God and bless FBCV gladly

Hebrews 10:19-25; Acts 2:41-47; John 21:15-17; Acts 28:20-31; Romans 12:1-21; Ephesians 4:1-16

Summary of the Christian life in 5 B's:

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved.

Be baptized (immersion) as a confession of salvation and obedience.

Become like Christ daily through spiritual growth for the rest of your life.

Be faithfully involved in a local church and its ministries.

Bring glory to God in all that we are, say and do.

Church Membership Process

On March 10, 2019 the Deacon Body and Pastoral Staff adopted a new Membership Process which has been affirmed by the church family. The Pastoral Staff had been discussing this need for over a year. The steps in this new process are:

- **Presentation for Membership.** A person can request membership during the Invitation Time in a Worship Service or in a private meeting with the Pastoral Staff. This process will continue to emphasize the Invitation or Public Decision Time in worship services and gatherings, but candidates will not be voted on for membership in FBCV at that time.
- **Counsel for Membership.** Each person requesting membership will be required to meet with a Pastor. This meeting will focus on the candidate's relationship to God, understanding of essential biblical doctrines, and readiness for membership in FBCV. This counsel may involve more than one meeting and take as long as needed for certainty of readiness to be recommended for membership.
- **Recommendation for Membership.** After the private meeting(s) with one of the Pastors, the candidate(s) will be presented to the church family for vote on membership by baptism, transfer of membership from a church of like faith and order or by statement of previous believer's baptism and/or membership in a Baptist church. Their recommendation will be made in a Morning Worship Service, a Wednesday Family Night Time, or a Business Meeting. After approval by the congregation, the new member's baptism will be scheduled (if required), his or her picture taken for church publications, and name added to the church membership roll by the Church Clerk.

Note: If the person requests membership in Step One (Presentation), they will not be asked to make a second public decision. The person(s) who begins with Step Two (Counsel) will be required to be presented publicly to the church family.

The rule of thumb is that "no person will be voted on for membership into FBCV until Counsel for Membership by a Pastor has occurred." This step is a safeguard for membership, increased biblical discipleship and a focus on the importance of local church responsibilities. This process retains the congregation's right to determine membership in the First Baptist Church Vicksburg (*Bylaws Membership Section 1-FBCV O & A Handbook* Page 8) with required counsel by the Pastors before presentation for membership.

SECTION NINE

FBCV Financial and Missions Stewardship Convictions

1. The Individual

- We believe each member should practice tithing and generosity to the Lord's work in and through the local church and its approved ministries and mission efforts.
- We believe each member should practice this faithfulness in financial stewardship according to the teachings of the New Testament: sincerely, joyfully and as the Lord has prospered the believer.
- We believe the pastors and key leaders (Deacons and Executive Committee) should practice generosity and lead the church by example.
- We believe each member is blessed of our Heavenly Father with material blessings to care for their family, minister to others in need and support directly the local church; doing all to the glory of God our Father.
- We believe each member should not give to organizations and causes beyond the local church (no matter how honorable or charitable) to the neglect of their local church.

2. The Local Church

- The congregation to which one belongs deserves the member's faithfulness of tithing and generosity to support that church's God-ordained and Holy Spirit-led practices of worship, fellowship, discipleship, evangelism, missions and prayer.
- As individual believers should be generous, the local church should structure its budget and giving decisions to reflect a magnanimous spirit to financially and practically support its God-ordained ministries of the Great Commission and Great Commandment. It is honorable to save money and practice frugality, but never to the expense of neglecting gospel opportunities to minister to individuals, widows and orphans in need; to mission endeavors and missionaries; to effective local and global efforts in the cause of Christ; to organizations (not namely Southern Baptist but trustworthy in their purposes and practices) such as Gideons International, Living Water International, BMDMI, etc.; and to causes to which the local church under recommendation from godly leadership can participate.
- FBCV has always structured its annual budget (\$1,435,200 for 2019) to reflect support for its staff members and employees, discipleship and fellowship opportunities, internal and facility needs, local and global mission efforts. The Executive Committee recommends an annual budget to the church family following the Bylaws as described in *The Organization and Administration Handbook*.
- In 2019 FBCV marks 10.25% of its annual undesignated offerings for the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program via the Mississippi Baptist Convention, 0.4% of undesignated offerings to local and global missions identified in its annual budget and 1.0% of undesignated offerings to the Warren Baptist Association. These percentages total 11.6 % of undesignated annual offerings. In addition to these budget decisions, the church has a variety of designated giving accounts which fund local and global mission efforts. The church seeks to wisely use its main facilities and the Mafan Building in local and global mission and ministry efforts. Faithful stewardship is at the heart of FBCV's core convictions.

- The church also faithfully supports the Southern Baptist Convention's two main annual offerings: the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions; the MBC's Baptist Children's Village at the Mother's Day and throughout the year; and the Margaret Lackey Offering for State Missions at the Labor Day season.
- FBCV also has a Missions Council which coordinates its many local and global efforts. This Council considers many mission and ministry requests, oversees the continuing works of these efforts, recommends financial and practical actions to the Executive Committee. This Council is comprised of the Pastor (Chairman), Associate Pastor of Missions, WMU Director, Men's Ministry Director, Executive Committee Chairman, Deacon Body Chairman, Local Missions Committee Chairman, Disaster Relief leaders, Medical-Dental Ministry leaders, FBCV Red Cross Shelter leader, Mercy Ministry leaders, and other deemed necessary to coordinate and guide the church's local and global efforts. Financial support for the Council comes from a range of sources: designated gifts, memorial and honor gifts, church investment funds' earnings, earmarked gifts from the church family by recommendation of the Executive Committee, etc. The Council meets quarterly or often as needed.
- All financial gifts to FBCV are received only into the annual budget, the accepted designated funds and those efforts/requests approved by the Executive Committee which may deem a gift unacceptable and return this gift(s) to the donor. FBCV seeks with all integrity to follow the federal and state laws pertaining to gifts to charitable institutions. If stated law does not address a gift(s) and situation, the Executive Committee and Pastor will agree on the best course of action pertaining to the gift(s).
- FBCV has an excellent brochure entitled *Gifts Over & Above* which identifies the many funds, scholarships and approved offerings beyond the annual budget. This brochure may be obtained from the church office.

3. Cooperative Efforts Beyond the Local Church

- FBCV believes in cooperation with other Southern Baptist Convention, Mississippi Baptist Convention and Warren Baptist Association churches. The history of the church since its organization in the first half of the nineteenth century has been to cooperate with like-minded churches and Baptist entities.
- FBCV shows this cooperative attitude by consistent and strong financial support, involvement of its members in the ministry of these denominational entities beyond the local church, service as trustees on boards and agencies of institutions of the SBC, MBC and WBA and continued prayer support for those entities, boards and agencies deserving of all encouragement and involvement.
- FBCV expects all entities, boards and agencies in Baptist and evangelical life to conduct itself rightly in accord with the highest biblical standards, legally according to its mandated purpose and exemplary in all its daily activities and relationships.
- FBCV reserves the right by congregational approval to withdraw, decrease or increase support with all organizations beyond itself. The Executive Committee is tasked with these financial decisions.
- FBCV organizes and conducts many mission trips and endeavors throughout the year. Individual members participate on trips and endeavors with sister churches, organizations and groups. This kind of mission involvement is highly encouraged and FBCV often financially assists her members in these endeavors. In recent years FBCV has averaged \$300-400,000 thousand dollars in annual mission giving. These gifts are given in accord with church policy and expected to be used mightily by the Lord in His gospel works.

SECTION TEN

Terms for a Better Understanding of Southern Baptists

Association A local geographical gathering of Baptist churches who associate to accomplish gospel ministry. This group chooses their own officers, doctrine and organizational structure. It is one of four autonomous entities in Southern Baptist life and work; the other three are the local church, state convention and the national convention. In the earliest days of Baptist beginnings in the 1600's, associations of local churches were formed.

Associational Missions Director (AMD) The employee, most commonly an ordained minister, is elected by an association to guide that Baptist entity. AMDs may be fully supported financially by the associational or bivocational. In some cases the AMD is employed or supported by a state convention and/or NAMB. An AMD may be called Associational Missions Strategist. Older names are Associational Missionary or Superintendent of Missions.

Autonomous A word meaning *self-governing or self-directing*. In Baptist life a strong tenet is that each local church is autonomous. It is not governed by a regional council of elders, bishops, etc. or any convention from outside the local congregation.

Baptist A distinctive people of God who are Protestant, Evangelical, and mostly of the Free Church persuasion which emphasizes the Bible as the only rule and guide for faith and order, a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, local church autonomy, believer's baptism by immersion, a strong commitment to evangelistic activities and missions. This type of evangelicals is the third large body of Christians in the world, ranking only behind the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches; being the largest Protestant body in the United States. Several theories attempt to explain the origin of Baptist churches; the most commonly accepted is that Baptists were Nonconformists or Separatists in England during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. These believers sought to return to the biblical roots of believer's baptism, separation of the church and crown, freedom of worship in conscience and spirit and other basic tenets commonly accepted by most Baptists today. English Separatism took several different forms; one being the Pilgrims who came to the American colony in the 1620's. The English Separatists who became Baptists in England were influenced by European Anabaptist, the classical Reformers (Luther, Calvin, Knox, etc.) and other Christians who sought to purify the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. Today there are hundreds of different types of Baptist denominations and groups in the USA and worldwide.

Baptism The immersion of a believer into water. In many denominations and churches baptism means "sprinkling or pouring." Baptists have always accepted that immersion (submersion of the person into water) is the accepted proper mode of baptism. Other types of non-biblical baptism are sprinkling, effusion, wiping, anointing. Some charismatic sects teach a spiritual baptism after conversion by faith in Christ called baptism of the Holy Ghost, usually accompanied with emotional phenomena and ecstatic utterances.

Believer This word means a Christian. It is someone who believes in Jesus Christ as God's Son and Savior. An unbeliever is someone who has not believed (trusted) Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

Bible The Holy Scriptures are revelation of God. Baptists accept that the Bible is the written Word of God, being inspired by Him through chosen human authors and being infallible and innerant. Baptists also believe it is the only rule or source book for faith and doctrine. All experiences and traditions are evaluated in light of the Bible. The Bible as accepted by Protestants is comprised of two testaments or parts (the Old and the New). The Old Testament has 39 books and the New Testament has 27 books. Baptists and most other Protestants do not accept the Apocrypha, a compilation of 14 books written between the time of the close of the OT (Malachi) and the beginning of the NT

(Matthew). The Roman Catholic Church and others accept the Apocrypha as inspired. Inclusion of the Apocrypha in certain Bible translations remains a contentious issue in Christianity.

Born Again A favorite term of most Baptists which means that a person has believed (trusted) Jesus as God's Son and Savior, thus by the grace of God in the miracle of salvation they have a new life, spiritually born again (from above by God's power and grace; literally "re-fathered" with God now being their Heavenly Father). John 3:1-21

Brotherhood (Men's Ministry) The general name of a ministry in a local church geared to minister to men and boys. The organization takes different names and shapes in local Baptist churches.

Business Meeting (Conference) The general name of a meeting held, usually monthly, by local Baptist churches to conduct business such as financial decisions, organizational reports and a decision(s) on a variety of matters pertaining to that local church's membership, ministry, and relationships to other entities. Some churches have these meetings quarterly or annually. These meetings are usually held on Wednesday evenings.

Church Clerk The person elected by a local church who is responsible for a variety of important duties on behalf of the congregation such as keeping an accurate membership roll, recording the legal minutes and actions of the church in business meetings and any other duties deemed necessary by the church.

Church Council (Leadership Team) A group of people in a local church generally comprised of the pastor, staff members, key mission and organizational leaders who plan and oversee the church ministries and programs. This group generally recommends an annual calendar to the church. The church council can take various forms and responsibilities, depending on the particular local church's context and needs.

Church Planting (New Church Starts) A strong conviction and organizational effort of the SBC, state convention and local churches based on the need for more churches and a desire to fulfill the Great Commission.

Committee A group of members elected by their local church to conduct business on behalf of or to gather information to recommend to the congregation. In most churches two types of committees are elected: permanent and temporary (ad hoc). Baptists rely on committees due to the congregational nature of the church. Some churches prefer *team* to the title and work of committees.

Communion. See Lord's Supper. See Pages 32 and 44.

Congregational One of four major types of church government (polity). Baptist churches are generally congregational in nature, meaning that the authority of the local church rests in the membership of that church. The other three types are hierarchical, episcopal and presbyterial. Some Baptist churches have in recent years adopted the presbyterial model.

Convention In Southern Baptist life and work this term means the national body comprised of messengers of cooperating churches. It also means the organized body in a particular state (i.e. Mississippi Baptist Convention, Alabama Baptist Convention, etc.). The four autonomous entities in Southern Baptist life and work are the local church, the association, the state convention and the national convention (Southern Baptist Convention).

Cooperation An important principle of Baptist life, meaning that Baptists within a local church choose to join, associate, participate and support other churches and entities to seek to accomplish together what one local church could not do by itself. Cooperation in Baptist life means that the local church does not give up any of its

independence; it simply chooses to express its love and faith with interdependence with other churches and entities such as the local association, state convention, national convention or other mission bodies.

Cooperative Program Adopted in 1925 in Memphis, Tennessee, the Cooperative Program is the unified giving program of Southern Baptist Convention. Each church chooses an amount or percentage of its monies to send to their state convention which is then distributed according to that state convention's budget with includes SBC mission causes. A local church may choose to send its mission money to the national convention and local association. The Cooperative Program is the antithesis of “societal giving” which chooses one or some entities and gives to that or those rather through the SBC unified giving method.

Deacon In Southern Baptist life one of two church biblical offices; the other being pastor. The role of the deacon is 1 Timothy 3 with the beginnings of deacon work being seen in Acts 2. The word means *servant* or *minister*. Baptist churches have differing number of deacons, depending on the size and needs of the local church. Deacons are laymen who assist and support the pastor and church staff. Their duties and responsibilities vary from church to church. In many Baptist churches deacon bodies (boards) have unspoken governance.

Disciple A biblical term for a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ. It means a person who has faith in Jesus is one who is learning, imitating, following Jesus as Savior and Lord. The intended purpose of God in Christ is that a disciple will spiritually mature to become a discipler and later become a disciple mentor.

Discipleship Training The general name for Southern Baptist local church efforts to train, mature and grow believers to become more grounded in their faith and Christian living. The name and structure of discipleship training varies from church to church. Most Southern Baptist churches have this ministry on Sunday evenings. More and more Baptist churches are using other days of the week and various means to accomplish this biblical mandate. In FBCV these are called Equipping Groups (E-Groups). In other churches they are Life Groups, D-Groups, etc.

Doctrine That which is to be taught and preached in a local church as being truth; the beliefs of a church. Baptists believe the Bible is the source of all doctrines. Another importance of doctrine (dogma) is that it formulates deeds; remembering that belief determines behavior.

Eternal Life or everlasting life. The quality and quantity of life that God gives through faith in Jesus Christ.

Evangelism The act of sharing, telling and showing the Good News of God's love in Jesus Christ. Evangelism takes many forms with the same purpose of sharing the story of Jesus.

Faith The personal response of a sinner convicted by God to trust or believe Him. Faith is the same as belief or trust. Faith is believing that Christ is who He said He is, that He will do what He said He will do and entrusting one's self to that, expecting Him to be faithful to that. Faith is also used to describe the embodiment of Christian doctrine and religion to distinguish it from other major religions of the world. Faith in God is to please Him.

Fasting The religious act of going without food or withholding one's self from some activity or object to more spiritually focus on God, seeking to better understand His will and ways. Fasting is a spiritual discipline of denying oneself some pleasure in this world to be drawn closer to God. It can aid a believer's spiritual growth (maturity) and is generally done for a short period of time for a specific purpose.

Grace The gift of God to man of His divine favor and inner power necessary to salvation. The grace of God was proven in His Son Jesus Christ. This gift of God's love is God giving to sinful man what he or she does not deserve.

A person cannot earn grace; it being a gift of God. A repenting sinner who trusts Jesus Christ as God's Son and personal Savior is miraculously saved (eternally changed or born again) by God's grace. We can only accept His grace. The acronym GRACE illustrates it: **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**.

Great Commission The command of the risen Jesus to His Apostles to go into all the world to evangelize and disciple (Matthew 28:18-20). The faithful Evangelical church takes seriously His Great Commission.

Holiness This is the purity of the heart and life, being undefiled, separate from sin. Holiness is one of the most important attributes of God. In turn He seeks to make sinful mankind holy through salvation. When a person is saved by trusting Jesus Christ, they are made holy in the sight of God. Then Jesus Christ by His indwelling Holy Spirit in the believer acts to cause a believer to live out in a practical way daily the holiness of our God-given character. Sanctification is the living out of that holiness in daily life in light of who Jesus is. It is a practiced purity and a great challenge for all believers because of the corrupt world in which we live. Perfected or total holiness is achieved only when a believer dies and is taken to heaven by God and His holy angels. Heaven is God's eternal holy home. John 14:1-6; Philippians 3:20-21; Revelation 21-22

Immersion Baptism by complete submersion of the body in water. Immersion is the accepted mode of baptism among Baptists, using a Trinitarian understanding...done in the Name of the Father, Son and Spirit. Baptists hold strongly to Believer's Baptism (to baptize only believers).

Incarnation The belief that God became a man in Jesus Christ; the OT God took on human flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. Born of a virgin, and as the Second Person of the Triune Godhead, Jesus was God incarnate (literally, *in flesh*). His incarnation is foundational to Christianity; one cannot be a Christian denying it. John 1:1-18

Invitation Hymn (Public Decision Song) The song traditionally sung after the pastor's sermon, calling any person to make a public decision of trusting Christ as Lord and Savior, seeking church membership or responding to God's call pertaining to that person's life. Some churches call this song the altar call. An older term is, "opening the doors of the church." In some contemporary churches this public decision time or activity is held in different ways.

Invocation Generally the first or special prayer asking for (invoking) God's blessings on the service or event.

Justification This is a pivotal idea in the doctrine of salvation. If a person is to be justified, he or she must plead not guilty and show that the opposition has no case against him or her at all. Because of Jesus' sufficient and substitutionary atonement for our sins on the Cross, when we put our faith in Him for what He has done for us, we are pardoned by God the Holy Judge. The righteousness of God in Christ is charged to us. We are then justified or made right with God through Jesus Christ. Our eternal death sentence because of unbelief has been paid by Jesus when He died on a cross outside Jerusalem.

Letter An older term still used by most Baptist churches to determine one's membership in a church. When a baptized believer of another Baptist church desires to unite with a Baptist church, it is common to say, "I join by letter." This means that the receiving church will contact by letter, card or electronic medium requesting that the membership of the person be sent to the requesting church. This process means that the believer does not have to be re-baptized each time he or she joins a Baptist church.

License An older term used by many local churches to approve a man who has publicly stated that he has been called by God to be a minister of the gospel. This approval conveys encouragement and support of this minister. Many Baptist ministers are ordained without being licensed. In Mississippi ordination is stated explicitly as a requirement to perform wedding ceremonies.

Lord's Supper One of two church ordinances most commonly accepted by Baptist churches; the other is baptism. Other names are Communion and Eucharist. Baptists believe that the Lord's Supper and baptism are symbolic commands of the Lord Jesus, Head of the Church, to identify with, worship and obey Him. Participation in the Lord's Supper does not convey saving grace, but is to be conducted in reverence, self-examination and thanksgiving for His sufficient sacrifice for sins and His Second Coming. Baptist churches conduct the Supper in a variety of ways and times. Many churches observe the Supper on quarterly or at special occasions such as Easter and Christmas.

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering See Special Mission Offerings of the SBC on page 55.

Membership The fact of belonging to a local Baptist church by baptism, letter or statement. Baptist churches by their congregational nature emphasize membership. The membership of most churches are divided or understood to be two types: resident members and non-resident members (persons who reside away from the locale of the church). See pages 45-46 for actions for meaningful church membership.

Messenger In Baptist life and work this word designates church members who are elected to the three other Baptist entities (association, state convention and Southern Baptist Convention). Messengers attend these meetings not as delegates who are instructed how to vote or participate, but as members who vote their conscience at these meetings and then report back to their local church. Their sending church may or may not accept the actions of the entities to which the messengers were sent. The number of messengers to each Baptist entity's meeting is determined by the Bylaws of that organization; usually by degree of financial support or number of members.

Missions A general term for Christian activities on a local or global nature, any effort or activity in Christ's Name and power to spread the gospel, meet people's needs, edify local churches, and establish His kingdom's influence on the earth, all to the glory of God the Father. Missions can be the formal organization in a local church by age groups or other means and any loosely organized, extemporaneous efforts to help others. Baptists are a missional people.

Mission Boards and Agencies The Southern Baptist Convention own six mission boards and agencies. They are operated by trustees elected by the SBC at its annual meeting. Their locations and presidents in 2019 are:

- ▲ International Mission Board - Richmond, Virginia (President Paul Chitwood)
- ▲ North American Mission Board - Alpharetta, Georgia (President Kevin Ezell)
- ▲ Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission - Nashville, Tennessee (President Russell Moore)
- ▲ LifeWay Christian Resources - Nashville, Tennessee (President vacancy due to retirement of T. Rainer)
- ▲ GuideStone Financial Resources - Dallas, Texas (President O. S. Hawkins)
- ▲ Executive Committee of the SBC - Nashville, Tennessee (President Ronnie Floyd)

*The Woman's Missionary Union is an auxiliary of the SBC - Birmingham, Alabama (Sandra Wisdom-Martin)

Moderator The person designated by the local church or Baptist entity according to their Bylaws who is responsible for conducting business meetings or gatherings where legal and financial decisions are being made. It is common in many Baptist churches that the Pastor or the Deacon Body chairman serves as the Moderator.

Ordinance A religious rite or ceremony in the Protestant Church not considered a sacrament (Roman Catholic theology). Southern Baptists accepted two ordinances – Baptism and Lord's Supper. They believe these ceremonies are symbolic in nature, neither imparting grace or completing salvation. They are symbols (pictures) of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and His Second Coming. The believer partakes of these ordinances in obedience, faith and love. Ordinances are powerful testimonies to the Lord Jesus Christ and the partaker's faith. Primitive Baptists and a few other Baptist groups accept foot-washing as a third ordinance.

Ordination (Laying on of Hands) The act of setting aside a man elected by a local church as a deacon or a man called of God to vocational ministry by a “laying on of the hands ceremony.” The biblical basis for this ceremony is found in both the Old and New Testaments. Baptist churches perform this ceremony in a variety of ways. The purpose is to set aside or formally recognize those called of God to be ministers, missionaries and biblical officers of the local church (pastors, staff ministers and deacons). Ordination has a legal significance in that states recognize ordained ministers of the gospel as having the right to perform wedding ceremonies. The federal government also recognizes ordination by a tax law involving housing allowance which must be approved by the local church.

Pastor The general term used by Baptists to designate the main minister of a local church. Baptists historically have preferred this term over elder or bishop due to Catholic, Anglican and other ecclesiastical meanings. In the New Testament three terms are used to describe local church's main spiritual-worship-pastoral leaders (pastor, bishop and elder). Baptists will use terms such as senior pastor, executive pastor, associate pastor, teaching pastor, etc. to designate the work of their main minister and other staff members.

Prayer The simplest and best definition of prayer is “conversation with God – talking and listening to Him.” It is an essential element of the Christian life. The Bible contains the evidence that all believers, even our Lord Jesus, prayed to God. It also teaches how, why and when the believer should pray. Prayer encompasses five major aspects: Praise to God, Thanksgiving to Him, Confession of sin, Petition of personal needs and Intercession for others. Prayer is a spiritual discipline which enables a believer to spiritually grow and become more like Jesus Christ. This element is one “practiced secret” of the Christian life, a strong local church and effectiveness in local and global missions and ministries. The best known prayer in Christianity is the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13).

Priesthood of the Believer An important doctrine which teaches that each believer is a priest to and for God through the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ. Priesthood of the believer was a doctrine rediscovered in the Reformation of the Church in the sixteenth century and is held strongly by most Protestants today. Often misunderstood only as one's right to go to God directly through Jesus the High Priest, the often overlooked emphasis is the responsibility of all believers to go as servants (priests) for God into a world of great spiritual and physical needs to serve Him in the Name and power of Jesus Christ. Since the formation of the Baptist church in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, this doctrine is bedrock to Southern Baptists.

Religious Liberty The doctrine that God alone is the Lord of one's conscience and that He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of man and governments. This doctrine also means that the Church and state should be separate. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Salvation The act of God by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ His Son to make a sinner a new person; eternally changing them in relationship to Him. The verb means “to heal, rescue, make whole, or change.” When a repenting person trusts Jesus Christ, he or she is saved. The New Testament uses several different words to describe the salvation of God, each word having a special meaning and usage: born again, justified, made righteousness, delivered, adopted, saved, reconciled, made new and others. Salvation is one experience created by God which can be seen in three aspects: the past (we have been saved), the present (we are being saved) and the future (we shall be saved eternally in heaven). This term is special to Baptists, in that salvation is a personal experience and relationship created by God at the time of faith in His Son and Savior Jesus Christ.

Seminary A school for the education and equipping of men and women who are called and preparing to enter the gospel ministry and missionary work. For many years seminaries offered only graduate degrees (Masters and

Doctorates). In the last twenty to thirty years seminaries now offer course work for a baccalaureate degree. The Southern Baptist Convention owns and operates six seminaries. Their locations and presidents in 2019 are:

- ^ Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY (1859) - President Al Mohler
- ^ Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, TX (1908) - President Adam Greenlaw
- ^ New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in New Orleans, LA (1917) - President Jamie Dew
- ^ Gateway Theological Seminary in Ontario, CA (1944) - President Jeff Iorg
- ^ Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, NC (1951) - President Daniel Akin
- ^ Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, MO (1957) - President Jason Allen

Many seminaries exist which are non-Southern Baptist and all denominations have some type of theological training and equipping schools. Most seminaries in the US are fully accredited institutions of higher learning.

Special Mission Offerings of the Southern Baptist Convention (taken in the local church)

- ^ Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, SBC (provides one-half of IMB's budget)
- ^ Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, SBC (one-half of NAMB's budget)
- ^ Each State Convention has its own special offering for missions within its state or area. In Mississippi it is called the Margaret Lackey Offering for State Missions received during the Labor Day season. This offering is used only in Mississippi, being determined by the Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union and Convention Board. The Mississippi Baptist Convention also has a Mother's Day Offering for their Children's Village.

Southern Baptist Convention The largest Protestant denomination in the US founded in May 1845. The Convention is legally comprised of messengers from local churches who meet each June to elect officers, adopt an annual budget for Cooperative Program gifts, hear reports of its boards and agencies, experience worship and enjoy fellowship. The Convention's headquarters are located in Nashville, Tennessee. The SBC is a worldwide missions organization, consisting of approximately 40,000 churches in 42 state conventions in the USA cooperating in some financial fashion. The only requirement for being a SBC church is to support the Convention's missionary endeavors with financial gifts to the Cooperative Program and/or its boards and agencies. It is possible for a local Baptist church to participate in the other two autonomous entities (state convention and local association) in Baptist life without giving to the SBC; and vice-versa, a local church may give to the SBC and not to the local association or its state convention. The SBC has a current membership of approximately sixteen million.

Spiritual Growth (Maturity) Once a person is saved (having become a Christian), the daily spiritual goal is to become Christ-like or spiritually mature. This goal is a lifelong exercise of faith for each believer. The Father is always seeking to cause a believer to become more like the Son (mature or grow spiritually) by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit. He uses the spiritual disciplines such as worship, Bible reading and study, prayer, journaling, witnessing, fasting, solitude, fellowship, ministry to others and other such spiritual means as well as mature believers (mentors), experiences and development of spiritual gifts to grow a believer to a fully responsible follower of Christ. Baptist churches have some type of program(s) designed to teach and mentor all believers to mature in their faith.

Staff This term generally describes the pastor and all employed personnel in a local church. Depending on the size and organizational structure of a local church, a staff can consist of one pastor (minister) and up to several ordained ministers and many others employed by the church to oversee and direct its ministry. Staff members and responsibilities are divided along ministerial and non-ministerial responsibilities; with many designations following ordained and non-ordained duties. Generally the pastor is the staff leader in a local church.

Statement of Faith and Previous Baptism One of three ways that a believer may join a Baptist church; the other two being -- believer's baptism and church letter (proof) of membership. Statement means that a believer confesses that he or she is a believer in Jesus Christ and has been scripturally baptized, but has no record of that

baptism due to loss of church records by fire, natural disasters, human carelessness, etc. The local church accepts "their statement, word, or testimony" that he or she has been saved and baptized by immersion.

Sunday School An organization of Bible study, usually age-grouped or life situation-grouped in a local church and generally held before, during or after worship services on Sunday morning. Some Baptist churches call this organization Bible Study, Life Groups, etc. Historically Sunday School is a strong indicator of the church's size, leadership personnel and fellowship. Sunday School is one of Southern Baptists' strong convictions and activities.

Tithe The word means "tenth"; thus 10% of what we earn. A tithe is to be given to God to and through the local church where one worships, fellowships and serves. This tithe is one part of our worship and biblically it belongs to the Lord. Giving of one's tithes and offerings (gifts over and above the tithe) have always been God's way to meet the needs of His people on earth (the nation of Israel in the OT and the Church in the NT).

Trinity Although the word *Trinity* never appears in the Bible, it is a central Bible truth. Christianity is based on the revelation of one God who has manifested (revealed) Himself as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Mysteriously and wonderfully, God is one God, yet three revealed persons. They are one in unity and essence. They do not possess three different natures. The Trinity is a proper term because it expresses the biblical truth that God is "three in one." Corruptions of the Trinity have appeared since the revelation of God in His Son and Holy Spirit. The Church has always battled corruptions of the Trinity, as persons, churches, movements, etc. seek to alter one of the doctrines of the three Persons of the Trinity, making it less or more than what the biblical revelation of the Triune God is. The most common corruptions in Christian history occur with the Doctrine of the Son.

Vacation Bible School This Bible teaching and activities event is generally conducted by local churches in the summer for preschoolers and children over a week's time. VBS has proven to be one of the most effective ways to share the gospel with boys and girls and reach families. It may include classes for students and adults.

Witnessing-Personal Evangelism This activity is essential to an effective Christian life. It is the living of our faith in Jesus by doing good deeds of kindness and acts of service to others in Jesus' Name and power. It is also the telling or sharing the story of Jesus with others that they may understand who He is and be saved by trusting in Him as Savior and Lord. Successful witnessing through a believer's life and lips occurs by dependence on the Holy Spirit and leaving the results up to God. Witnessing has been described as "planting or sowing the seed of the gospel."

Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) An organization begun in 1888 in Baltimore, Maryland by Baptist women who had a great burden to support overseas missionaries. The headquarters today are located in Birmingham, Alabama and is an auxiliary of the Southern Baptist Convention (not being owned by the SBC, but supports the missionary work of the Convention). The WMU produces materials for women and girls; ministries and missionary support literature as well as helps to guide the SBC in prayer and financial support for SBC worldwide endeavors. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions are directed by the WMU. Many local SBC churches have both WMU and women ministry organizations. The current Executive Director is Sandra Wisdom-Martin.

Worship The response of a believer to God through praise, prayer, gifts, proclamation and personal dedication. It is both the public and private act of adoring Him as God through song, Scriptures and service. Worship is also a lifestyle of living one's faith in daily life. Many styles (types) of worship can be found in SBC churches: traditional, blended, contemporary, high church, informal, etc. Baptist do not have a pre-determined or set style of expressing praise and gathering with other believers. The biblical principle is to "worship Him in spirit and truth." In truth, a local church's vision, culture, size, leadership, resources and traditions determine their worship style and activities.

SECTION ELEVEN

Terms for a Better Understanding of Worldwide Christianity and “New Age & Cultic” Deviations

These terms are listed to compare and contrast with normative Evangelical and Baptist theology.

Absolution The remission of guilt and penalty for sin by a priest, following confession.

Adoption A legal term appropriated by theology, originating in Paul and signifying the act by which the privileges of a child of God are conferred upon the believer in Christ.

Advent The ecclesiastical season immediately before Christmas. In the Western Church (Rome) it is the four Sundays before Christmas Day. In the Eastern Church it is a much longer season, extending into January. The season is designed to observe Jesus Christ’s first coming, but also His Second Coming as Judge at the Last Day.

Affusion The pouring or sprinkling of water in baptism.

Agnosticism The doctrine that only material can be the subject of real knowledge and that all knowledge of such entities as a Divine Being, immortality and supernatural world is impossible. The word means *without knowledge* and is used of those who are skeptical of faith and religion. Today it is used to distinguish persons who are highly skeptical, but not atheist. At various times and ways agnosticism has influenced Christianity wrongly.

Anastasis A Greek word meaning “the resurrection.”

Anathema Anything damned, despised; Hebrew, “cursed.” 1 Corinthians 16:22, Galatians 1:8.

Anglican A term applied to the Church in communion with and recognizing the leadership of the see of Canterbury, whether in England or abroad. The Episcopal Church of the USA is part of this Anglican family. Anglicanism is the system of doctrine upheld by the fellowship of churches in the religious system under the see of Canterbury. They consider themselves the “Middle Way” (middle between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestants). The defined principles of the Anglican traditions finds its roots in the reign of Queen Elizabeth with the seeds being sown by her father Henry VIII’s break from the Roman Church and her brother Edward VI’s outstanding decisions to steer England in a Protestant vein; often called The Elizabethan Settlement.

Annunciation The announcement by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that she was to be the Mother of Christ, as recorded in Luke 1:26-38.

Anointing The act of consecrating by the application of oil, used in consecrating sacred objects or persons, as preparation for death, or in completing the efficacy of baptism.

Antichrist Against Christ. A powerful evil person to be conquered at Christ’s Second Coming. The principle of the Anti-Christ was present in the NT and today also.

Apocalyptic Pertaining to or in the nature of a revelation with emphasis on end-times.

Apocrypha Fourteen books excluded by Protestants from the Bible as not authoritative but worthy of study for their historical value; accepted by Roman Catholics.

Apologetics The defense of the Christian faith on intellectual grounds by trained theologians and philosophers. In the face of corruption and heresies, apologetics is greatly needed to define the faith.

Apostolic Of or pertaining to an apostle or according to the belief or practices of the apostles.

Apostolic Succession The doctrine of an unbroken line of succession in the episcopacy from the NT apostles to the present time, maintained in Greek, Roman, and Anglican churches.

Apostasy This word is the abandonment of the faith and practice of a religion; either by total defection, public defection or desertion by an individual. Usually it refers to the entire abandonment of Christianity.

Apostles' Creed A statement of faith used only in the Western Church. The title was first used around AD 390 with the current form first quoted in the eighth century. Though the creed is grounded in NT evidence, the formula itself is not of first century apostolic origin. The creed is central in many high churches or those of sacramental worship systems.

Apostolic Age The title in modern use for the first period of Christian history falling in the life-time of the Apostles; the first century of the modern history, generally ending with the death of Apostle John. True biblical doctrine is apostolic.

Apostolic Fathers The title is given to those men of the age immediately succeeding the NT Period whose works in part or whole have survived: Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hermas, Polycarp, and Papias.

Arianism The principal heresy which denies the true Deity of Jesus Christ, so called after the author, Arius. He maintained that the Son of God was not eternal, but created by the Father. This false doctrine flourished in the fourth and fifth centuries. It was the subject of early Church Councils which repudiated it. Modern adherents are Latter Day Saints (Mormon) and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Arminianism A system of theology that was taught by Dutch reformer Arminius in the late sixteenth century. It sets forth that the Divine Sovereignty of God is consistent with the free-will of man, that Jesus Christ died for all mankind and not just for the elect. It is the polar opposite of Calvinism in soteriology. It is a main tenet of the Methodist Church.

Athanasian The belief of Athanasius (293-373), who was a defender of the orthodox view of the divinity of Christ. He opposed and won over Arius at the Council of Nicaea. Arius held that Christ was created by but was essentially different from the Father. See his Creed on Pages 84-85.

At-one-ment This term does not refer to the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sins of the world, but means a concept that every human being and all creation is at one with each other. This concept teaches that all humans are together because "God" is flowing through everything and everyone.

Atonement The reconciliation of the sinner with God through the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

Awakening Proponents of new spirituality teach that man is waking up to the realization that he is God, that divinity is within him. It is man realizing what is already there ("God"). People should be led and taught to try to be awoken that they are God's people. This awakening primarily occurs through mysticism.

Baptism The ceremonial application of water to a person by either sprinkling, immersion, or affusion as a sign of the washing away of sin and of admission into the church as commanded by Christ in Matthew 28:19. Spirit baptism in some sects is a baptism by the Holy Ghost, not with water.

Bible The most important religious book to Christianity. The central conviction about the Bible is that it is a God-inspired revelation. He revealed the words of Holy Scriptures to the human authors such as Moses, David, Paul, etc. The Bible is mostly commonly accepted by Protestant as being 66 books (39 in the OT and 27 in the NT) which are the rule and source of all faith and belief. Some Protestants and the Catholic Church accept the Apocrypha (14 books written between the OT and the NT) as inspired by God, but the majority of Protestants due to Reformation have rejected the claims of the Apocrypha and other non-canonical writing as inspired and authoritative. The word *canon* which means “measure or standard” is often applied to those books which are authoritative and acceptable.

Binitarianism The false doctrine teaching that there are only two persons in the Godhead (Father and Son).

Book of Common Prayer (BCP) or Common Order The official service book of the Church of England containing the daily offices of Morning and Evening Prayer, the forms for administration of the Sacraments and other public and private rites, the Psalter and the Ordinal (material pertaining to the ordaining and ministry of a priest). It was first adopted in 1548 and has seen many revisions in differing countries.

Born Again, To Be The experience of a spiritual rebirth by the Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and only Savior of the world; John 3:1-16, 1 Peter 1:3-5.

Calvinism The theological system of French reformer and later Geneva resident John Calvin. It is the accepted theology of most non-Lutheran Reformed Churches. This system teaches that the Bible is all-sufficient source of knowledge for Christians, Christ died for the elect only, the denial of human free-will, absolute predestination, and certitude of salvation for the believer. It is the polar opposite of Arminianism. It is the principle tenet of the Presbyterian Churches and some other Protestant bodies.

Canon/Canonical From the Greek word meaning “straight rod or bar.” In Christian language it is used to define the list of inspired books which the Church regarded as composing the Holy Scripture; being used as a term to define approved Scripture since the fourth century. In the Roman Catholic and Eastern Churches it has a variety of meanings (church office, liturgical rites, church law, canticles, and prayers).

Canterbury The town in southern England which is the see of London, traditional headquarters of the Anglican Church. It first began as a religious center in AD 597 and has remained so to the present era.

Catechism The form or guide of instruction used in instruction of candidates for church membership, preceding baptism. The book containing items for such instruction.

Catholic A Greek word meaning “general or universal.” In Christian terms it has many uses: the universal church of all believers as distinct from local congregations; orthodox as distinct from heretical or schismatic; primarily in modern times to describe the Roman Catholicism with an emphasis of theological differences with Protestants.

Celibacy The state of being unmarried; required for Roman Catholic clergy.

Chakras Believed by New Agers to be seven energy centers in man, aligned along the spine, which open up during *kundalini effect* (powerful energy from meditation and the inner eye). Hindu in origin, manifestations include

uncontrollable shaking, writhing, convulsions, trance states, sensations of fire or electricity on or in the body, swooning, etc.

Chalice A cup used at Communion services believing to resemble the one used at the original Last Supper.

Charisma The unusual gift or ability (in Greek, it is the word for “grace”) enabling one to influence others.

“Christian Yoga” A type of Yoga that can be neutralized by performing a Christian rendition of it. But even Hindu yogis say there is no such thing as this type of Yoga because the exercises cannot be separated from their religious aspects. Yoga is the heartbeat of Hinduism.

Christocentric With Christ as the center.

Christology Any comprehensive teaching about Christ’s Person, Ministry and Works.

Church of Christ A denomination begun in the USA in the early 1800's by Barton Stone and Thomas and Alexander Campbell who desired a return to the primitive NT church; having an extreme emphasis on doing only “what the New Testament teaches” in matters of worship, missions, organizations, church order, etc.

Communion The Lord’s Supper. “Open” Communion is an ordinance open to all Christians; “closed” Communion is closed to all except those of a particular faith, belief or local church (only members of that local church may partake). The word is also used occasionally as a synonym for a denomination.

Confessing Church A term applied specifically to a group of German evangelicals who opposed the German Christian Church Movement who supported Hitler and the Third Reich. This group experienced great persecution and many were martyred for their stand against Nazi regime and its war. The term has been given generally to churches and groups in Christian history who emphasized personal relationship with God, vocal evangelism and freedom of worship, in opposition to formal or sacramental worship.

Confirmation The initiatory rite by which persons are inducted into the church, or the approval of authorities by which the election of bishops is ratified by the church.

Congregational The church polity that makes the authority of the local congregation supreme within its own area. This form of church organization takes on varying forms, depending on the church's context and tradition.

Congregationalism A form of church polity (government) which rests on the independence and autonomy of each local church. It professes to represent the principle of democracy in polity. This view is based on the belief that in Christ each member is a priest of His and He alone is the Head of the Church. The adherents to this polity interpret this view to the primitive church of the NT as the earliest and truest form of church government. This form began with the Reformation and is seen primarily in evangelical circles with varying degrees of understanding, depending on local church situations and traditions.

Consecrate To set apart as sacred certain persons, animals, places, objects, or times.

Consubstantiation The theory that, following the words of institution in the Lord’s Supper, the substantial body and blood of Christ join sacramentally with the bread and wine (which remains unchanged), the union remaining only until the purpose of the consecration is fulfilled. Applied often to Lutheran doctrine, it is denied by the Lutherans. The doctrine was formed in opposition to transubstantiation.

Contextual Theology The belief that the Bible, in and of itself, is not free-standing, but other factors (culture, ethnicity, history, and context) must be taken into consideration. Those factors have a major influence on a proper interpretation of the Bible, not its timeless principles of revelation as the inspired Word of God.

Contrition Sorrow and/or repentance for sin.

Conversion Religiously, a radical spiritual and moral change, commonly attending a change of belief, and involving profoundly altered spirit and conduct --“a change of heart.”

Council A formal meeting of bishops and representatives of churches convened for the purpose of regulating doctrine or discipline. The first church council was in Acts 15. The first general council was at Nicaea in AD 325 called by the Emperor Constantine. Many other councils have been called by popes, patriarchates, etc. They are often called synods. Their importance is seen in their definition of the Christian faith and opposition to heresy. Modern Christianity is indebted to these councils. Seven Councils were held from A.D. 325-787.

Covenant Sacred relationship between God and man. The designations “Old Testament” and “New Testament” indicate the Christian concept of the old covenant of works in Judaism being supplanted and fulfilled by the new covenant of grace through the work of Christ. The word is also used to describe biblical marriage.

Creed A concise, formal and authorized statement of important points of Christian doctrine; such as the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, etc. Commonly used today to describe a formal statement of theology which must be adhered to by a participant or member in order to belong or fellowship with a given church or denomination. The opposite view is a Confession of Faith which outlines what should be believed. In Christian history dissent or rebuttal of creeds generally led to punishment, banishment or death.

Cult/Christian Deviates A term applied to a large group of churches, groups, associations, organizations who have deviated from the Christian orthodox doctrines generally in one of several ways: corruption of the Trinity, acceptance of other writings beyond the Bible as divinely inspired of God, belief in a means of salvation other than “salvation by grace through faith,” control or deification of the founding leader, and other teachings and practice which place them at odds over the basics of biblical Christianity. Protestants consider Jehovah’s Witnesses, Latter Day Saints (Mormons), Christian Scientists, Scientology, Sun Myung Moon, Unitarianism, Worldwide Church of God, and others as deviates from the orthodox faith and practice. Many cults began in USA in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Decalogue The Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:1-17.

Defrock The banning of a priest or minister from his office.

Deism A system of theology teaching natural religion which was first developed in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this thought God is the first creator with no interest in continued relationship with the world. This theology devalues and undermines personal religion, rejects supernatural revelation, inspiration of Scriptures, main doctrines of Christian orthodoxy and eternal punishment and rewards. Deism was especially influential in France and Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Kant were Deists.

Diocese The territory of a church under the jurisdiction of a bishop.

Dispensationalism A system of theology which stresses God's dealing with mankind in seven dispensations since the beginning of time. The modern founder and propagator of this view was J. N. Darby and the Plymouth Brethren. This system has highly influenced modern Christianity, especially in conservative evangelical circles with the pre-millennial view of the Return of Jesus Christ. This system also has a high view of Israel as the ancient and covenant people of God. Christian dispensationalists were key supporters of the modern Zionist movement in the late nineteenth and all through the twentieth century. Dispensationalism can be seen in many denominations, but its predominance is in conservative evangelical groups. Many Southern Baptists consider themselves dispensationalists.

Dissenter In religious terms it describes those who separate themselves from the communion of the Established Church. The term today is generally limited to Protestants (sometimes called Non-Conformists). It can be used to describe any religious separation from organized religions. Early Baptists were dissenters of the Church of England.

Doctrine That which is taught as the belief of a church, group, ministry, etc.

Dogma The Greek word originally meant "good" and defined what was to be accepted as Divine Revelation and established by the Church as doctrine, practice and blessing for the Church. It is often used to describe clearly the Church's opposition to false philosophies or corruptions of the Christian faith. It lends itself to a view or reaction in life, not limited to religion, of a person being called "dogmatic."

Dominionism The doctrine that God's people will rise up as overcomers and put Satan and his minions under their feet (not the feet of Christ). Christ cannot return to earth until this reality has been accomplished. The rapture is discounted as myth, with the declaration that Christ will return, not for His people, but rather already in them (no physical return). Overcomers then will present to Christ a faultless world where He then will rule.

Eastern/Orthodox Church A term used to describe the Eastern, Greek, or Greco-Russian family of churches. The traditional dating of the split of the Eastern (Greek) Church from the Roman (Latin) or Western Church is AD 1054. It is family of churches who are independent in its internal administration, but all share the same faith and are in communion with one another. They acknowledge the primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Many factors (language, culture, theology, control, geography, politics, wars) led to the split of the Catholic (universal) Church into two major churches: Roman and Orthodox. World-wide Orthodox Church is divided into five patriarchates.

Ecclesiastical Pertaining to the church or the clergy; from the Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning "church."

Ecumenical/Ecumenicalism From the Greek meaning "the whole inhabited world" and applied to movements striving to gain unity of all believers in the Church of Jesus Christ, transcending differences in creed, ritual and polity. The modern form of this movement dates from the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910 which eventually led to the organization of the World Council of Churches. In 1927 at Lausanne a conference was held to promote unity among the diverse branches of Christianity. This reunion movement is opposed by most Protestant conservatives and the Roman Catholic Church struggles with their relationship to churches they call "separated brethren." As a rule today, persons/churches desiring ecumenicalism are liberal.

Ecumenical Councils The seven early church councils are Nicaea (I) in 325, Constantinople (I) in 381, Ephesus in 431, Chalcedon in 451, Constantinople (II) in 553, Constantinople (III) in 680, and Nicaea (II) in 787.

Election In theology it is an act of Divine Will exercising itself on creatures, among which it chooses some in preference to others. Often election and predestination are interchangeable. This system of theology teaches that God must first will the end and elect it, before ordaining it to that end. It is the central tenet of Calvinism which

stresses that God wholly without relation to faith or works chooses some for salvation. The system is polar opposite of Arminianism. It is found in many denominations and churches.

Emergent or Emerging Church. Postmodern congregations that follow a loose set of doctrines promoting redefinition of Christianity and incorporating into their fellowships some or all of the following: Roman Catholic mysticism and contemplative prayer, eastern meditation techniques, pagan religious practices such as walking the labyrinth, *Lectio Divinia*, mantra, etc. Emergent churches are highly ecumenical. They focus on social justice and cultural relevancy rather than the Gospel and the Word of God. Emphasis is most often on the social gospel as opposed to a personal gospel centered in faith in and discipleship of Jesus Christ. At heart of emerging churches is a desire to refine the gospel and the church. The terms *emergent* and *emerging* are often used interchangeably.

Enlightenment A term applied primarily to the eighteenth century in Europe when a movement of ideas continued from a previous age centered in scientific spirit and thoughts of Descartes, Locke and Newton. Its adherents distrusted all authority and tradition affecting intellectual matters. Leaders of the Enlightenment often clashed with the Church and many were avowed atheists or deists.

Episcopal/Episcopalian The name given to a member of any Church ruled by bishops, but especially the Anglican Communion. The Greek word *episcopoi* means “overseer or bishop.” This form of church polity is evident in many denominations world-wide. Depending on the particular system of polity, generally bishops have great control over local church leaders, worship and decisions.

Eschatology The doctrine of last things (*eschatos* means “end or last” and *ology* from “word or study of”). Various theological systems interpret biblical teachings differently, thus giving Christianity many views on the end of time events and interpretations. Dispensational theology in the late nineteenth resurrected teachings on eschatology which emphasizes a difference between the Rapture of the Church and Second Coming of Christ.

Eucharist Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper; the term is commonly used in sacramental religions.

Evangelical In a wide sense the term is applied to Protestant churches since the Reformation who base their teachings primarily on the Bible and Gospel and not church traditions; those who insist on a personal conversion which leads to a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ whose death atones for sin; those believers and churches who uphold the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures as the sole authority for faith and practice in the churches; those who have strong suspicions of the RC Church; those who generally oppose High Church doctrines; those who emphasize verbal proclamation of the gospel.

Excommunication Exclusion from the religious fellowship of the church. This church decision can be either permanent or temporary.

Fall of Man Man’s estrangement from God through sin, as symbolized by the disobedience of Adam and Eve.

Fasting Going without food or certain foods or abstaining from certain behaviors for a specified period to accomplish a spiritual goal such as knowing God’s will or being more conformed to a moral ideal.

Feast Day A day in the church calendar set aside for celebration, for feasting and not fasting, such as Christmas or Easter. These days are prominent in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Episcopal traditions.

Foot Washing The practice of washing the feet of fellow church members, sometimes as a ceremonial cleansing from defilement preparatory to worship; sometimes as an ordinance by Mennonites, Dunkards, the Church of God, and others. It is practiced by many Christians as an act of humility.

Fornication Sexual intercourse before and/or outside the bounds of covenant heterosexual marriage.

Free Church Often called Nonconformist Churches. These Christians refuse to conform to the doctrines, polity and discipline of established churches such as the Roman Catholic, Church of England or state-controlled churches. It is generally applied to Protestant bodies of varying persuasions in the Baptist, Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian and charismatic traditions. The Free Church fellowship has various world-wide groups and networks.

Free Will Man's power to choose between good and evil without compulsion or necessity.

Fundamentalist/Fundamentalism A movement in various Protestant bodies which began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially gaining popularity in the USA after WWI. It began as a reaction against European liberalism which had affected Protestant theology, churches, seminaries and denominations. The five points of fundamentalism are: the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Birth, His atoning and substitutionary death for sin and the bodily resurrection and return of Jesus Christ. The movement has splintered many times in the twentieth century. It is a term applied to all who profess a strict adherence to orthodoxy in the matter of biblical interpretation, to certain Bible translations or to ultra conservative church practices; derived from a series of 12 tracts entitled *The Fundamentals*, 1909.

General Baptist In the first two hundred years of Baptist life and work this term designated those Baptists which believed that Jesus Christ died to save all humans from their sins and saved those who trusted Him as Savior. The theological opposite of General Baptists are the Particular Baptists who believed He died only for the elect.

Gift of Tongues A spiritual gift of God to the Church for ministry and private worship as described 1 Corinthians 12-14; in recent history ecstatic speech and phenomena induced by religious excitement or emotion. Since the 1960's the doctrine of and debates concerning tongues has been intense in many circles.

Glossolalia Speaking in tongues--the psychological and religious phenomenon described in the account of Pentecost in Acts and 1 Corinthians.

Gnosticism The name from a Greek word meaning *knowledge*. It took many forms and had various leaders. At heart it taught that all physical or fleshly matter was evil. God was removed and unconcerned about the material world, only the spiritual world. Christ was to give a *knowledge* of God. He was a ghost (spirit) and not a real human being and thus never died as a sacrifice for sin. This thought has always been opposed heavily by orthodox Christianity. This heresy has continued in some form throughout history. Many scholars believe that Colossians and the Letter of First John in the NT addressed Gnostic influences on early Christianity.

Grace The gift of God through Jesus Christ to man of the divine favor and inner power necessary to salvation.

Great Awakening A name applied to three revivals in America: the First occurred in the 1730-40's under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield; the Second in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which affected Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist churches; the Third was a time covering 1875 until 1914. Excessive emotionalism and calls for Christian works and missions highlighted these times of religious fervor. The Awakenings have lingering positive and negative influences in USA.

Greek Church A term applied to the Eastern Church or the Orthodox Church, especially after their break with the Western Church or the Roman Catholic Church in AD 1054.

Hierarchy Government by priests or prelates, as in the Roman Catholic Church and hierchial polity.

High Church A term used to describe Christian worship and churches which are liturgical and formal in their style of worship and ecclesiastical organization. The theological opposites would be the NonConformist and Free Church of the Protestant Evangelical traditions.

Holiness A state of moral and spiritual purity and sinlessness, or a title designating persons set apart for religious service. In biblical theology holiness is a basic attribute of God and characteristic of genuine Christianity.

Immaculate Conception,The The dogma that the Virgin Mary was conceived free of original sin.

Immanence A term describing the presence of God in the world, as opposed to His transcendence.

Immersion The act of submerging a person into water who has confessed Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Churches and denominations which profess believer's baptism generally accept immersion as the scriptural mode of baptism. Immersion remains a source of contention among many Christian groups, as some insist on sprinkling.

Immortality Life after death, life imperishable, life forever.

Incarnation God's becoming man in Jesus Christ, John 1:1-18 and Galatians 4:4-7.

Individuality New spirituality advocates resent individualism, saying that it is the old way of viewing things. Believers must be collective and unified. Individual relationships with Jesus Christ are to be replaced with communities in which social justice is the focus.

Inerrant The quality of being without fault; applied to the original text of the Bible by some Christians.

Infallibility The authority of the Scriptures as incapable of error, or a term applied to the pope of the Roman Catholic Church whose decisions are binding on the RC Church.

Inner Light/Quakers The principles of Christian certitude consisting of inward knowledge or experience of salvation as held by the Society of Friends (Quakers). This system of thought was formed by George Fox in the mid-seventeenth century in England. He emphasized the immediacy of Christ's teachings, the irrelevance of church buildings and ordained ministers, refusal to take oaths or pay tithes, free worship with pre-arranged order, plain behavior and dress, pacifism, and inner purity. They were heavily persecuted and under William Penn's leadership founded Pennsylvania on a Quaker basis. They have been respected for their social responsibilities and ministries with prisons, the poor, injustice, race relations and reconciliation.

Inspiration, Verbal Signifying the supernatural influence upon the writers of the Scriptures by which divine authority was given their work and that places the Bible beyond error and makes it trustworthy.

Islam The word means *submission* to the will of God (Allah) in the religion founded by Muhammad (570-629). The adherents are called Muslim. Their doctrine is laid down in the Koran (Q'ran). It has two branches tracing themselves back to the disagreement of the rightful successor to Muhammad: Sunni and Shiite. The Islam teaching is

that Muhammad is the last great teacher. The chief practice is confession of faith in Allah and Muhammad, the prophet. This religion is world-wide and displays constant enmity with Judaism and Christianity. The radical branches of Islam are the main sources of terror in the world today.

Judgment, Judgment Day The act of judging by God on the last “judgment day,” when reward and punishments are to be declared. The preaching and teaching of His judgment is absent in liberal churches and “new age” religions.

Justification Freeing or being freed from the guilt or penalty of sin and restored to divine favor. God’s act by which men are declared righteous, because of the merits of Christ, Romans 5:1.

Kingdom of God Like many biblical words and teachings, the reader must determine the context and meaning of their use. In new spirituality the kingdom of God can be brought to earth through humanity becoming one, achieving a spirit of unity. Their use of this kingdom concept is non-biblical, as God is not the center of the kingdom and the basics of Christianity (deity of Christ, blood atonement, repentance, obedience, faith, etc.) are missing.

Laity Those members of the church who are not clergy; from Greek *laos* which means “people.”

Latin Church A term applied to the Western Church or the Roman Catholic Church, especially after its break with the Eastern Church or Orthodox or Greek in AD 1054.

Latin Vulgate The great Latin translation of the Bible from the Greek and Hebrew by Jerome (345-420). His work took twenty-three years to complete (382-405). This work eventually became the accepted Latin version of the Western Church and was affirmed by the Roman Catholic Church at Trent Council in 1546.

Laying on of Hands A rite of consecration and affirmation, having OT and NT precedence.

Liberal/Liberalism A term most often applied to persons, churches, denominations and theologies who deny one or some of the following: the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture; the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; salvation by grace through faith; the substitutionary atoning death of Jesus Christ; tendency to favor human freedom as opposed to strictness in interpretation of doctrines and practice; persons who are anti-dogmatic and humanitarian in their emphasis of Christian faith; often emphasizing the social gospel theme of the faith and a man-centered understanding and creativity versus a biblically conservative worldview. This thinking has greatly influenced every denomination or groups of churches in the last two hundred years. Liberalism is not limited to religion, but is seen in politics, governments, education and all world views. In Protestant circles it is the polar opposite of fundamentalism.

Litany Form of prayer made up of a series of petitions by the minister or priest, with congregational responses.

Liturgy/Liturgical In the Greek a word meaning “people” and “work” and is used to describe the services of churches and in some traditions is used to title the Eucharist. Most commonly it is used to describe church services with a written or tightly defined order of service.

Logos Christ the Word, eternally generated from the substance of God the Father; the second Person of the Trinity; being the uncreated revelation of God by the divine means and mystery in incarnation; John 1:1-4.

Lord's Supper The memorial supper commanded by Jesus Christ to His Church. Protestants generally accept a symbolic view of the Supper, though there are several theological views of the Supper exist. Catholic theology outlines that the Supper or Mass is to be viewed as Transubstantiation, the elements of the Supper are literally the

body and blood of Jesus Christ. The supper is often called Communion. The scriptural guidelines for the Supper are that it is to be eaten in recognition memorializing the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, personal examination of the believer and the declaration of His Second Coming. Protestant churches observe the Supper in many different forms and at varying times and frequency.

Lutheran The teaching of Martin Luther who taught that the Scriptures are the sole rule of faith, to which the Creeds and other traditional statements are all subordinated. Luther was a pioneer of Reformation who taught justification by faith alone. Lutheranism had a tendency to organize into state churches. Luther would agree and disagree with fellow Reformers on points of Lord's Supper, church-state relations, clergy responsibilities, biblical text and study, hymnody and worship. Lutheran Church is world-wide today.

Martyr Originally used of the Apostles as witnesses of Jesus' life and resurrection, but has spread to include those who undergo hardships for the gospel. Today it is used to define those who die for Jesus Christ.

Mass, The The central worship service of the Roman Catholic Church, consisting of prayers and ceremonies; sometimes the Holy Eucharist as a sacrifice.

Massorettes/Massoretic Jewish grammarians who marked on the Hebrew text of the OT between the sixth and tenth centuries. Their endeavors preserved a recognized OT text with marginal notes and instructions for copyists. They also preserved a pronunciation system for Hebrew from synagogues and schools. Their work gives us the accepted OT text called the Massoretic Text. Modern biblical scholarship of the OT is indebted to these scholars.

Mediation and Contemplation In a biblical sense the process of reflecting on the things of God and His biblical blessings and works. In the New Age sense it is to be in process to find one's divinity or seek to be in touch with a higher power who is not the God of Scripture. Like other words and activities from biblical Christianity, this practice has been hijacked to appear orthodox, but in fact, is non-Christian in its emphasis and goals.

Missions/Missionary Enterprise The conviction that the Church is spread the Gospel to other persons, nations and cultures, using a variety of means. The movement naturally leads to an anti-missions conviction with some churches and denominations. Beginning with the strong Protestant leadership of English and American churches in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the modern mission movement began. Among Baptists, William Carey is considered the "Father of Modern Missions." The nature of missions is always changing in method, but the same conviction that God's love in Christ is for all nations holds sway in missions-minded churches.

Modernist The word has two meanings. First, a movement in the Roman Catholic Church to bring tradition of their beliefs into a closer relation with the modern outlook of history, philosophy and other sciences, primarily in the nineteenth century. Second, this term is the sarcastic name given to liberals by most fundamentalists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due to their denials of the supernatural.

Monasticism The male religious establishments where men called monks (later women) sought to fulfill or lead a life of perfection in the world by fulfilling the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This lifestyle of exclusion from society revolved around Monks, the title given to the men who lived in monasteries. They are credited with copy and preservation of many biblical manuscripts. Between the fourth and sixteenth centuries this lifestyle flourished, but disappeared with the Reformation. Several revivals of the RC and Orthodox monastic life have been attempted in the last two centuries. The monastic life exists today in small numbers worldwide.

Monotheism Belief in one, and only one God, as opposed to polytheism or pantheism.

Mysticism A type of religion that puts the emphasis on an immediate experience of God, a direct and intimate consciousness of divine reality, without the intermediate stages or means often thought essential.

New Age In religious contexts, an all-encompassing spirituality, sourced in ancient practices that defies doctrinal definition. New Age religion incorporates teachings and practices from virtually any other religion or non-religion such as Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Wicca, astrology, alchemy, veganism, homeopathic medicine, tarot cards, crystal gazing and other means of “finding God within you or making Him to be whatever one senses is right.” New Age thoughts and practices are affecting the 21st Century Church in alarming ways.

New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) This doctrine teaches that certain contemporary apostles and prophets in the church are equal to or greater than the apostles and prophets who wrote the Bible and that to come into the fulness of Christ, the church needs to submit to them. Teachings of NAR are varied, but include Latter Rain, Five-Fold Ministry, Dominion, and Kingdom Now. NAR is to be rejected as non-biblical revelation and false doctrine.

New Reformation According to the “emerging church” a new reformation is needed about every 500 years. The last reformation was led by Martin Luther in breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church. Today a new reformation is needed to break away from biblical and traditional moorings to free the church by uniting all religions. Various personalities are called the “new” Luthers in this New Reformation, but a common denominator is that no Christ-centered theology appears and biblical principles are lacking or severely compromised.

New Thought Movements that try to merge classic occult concepts with Christian terminology and theology. Two examples are Christian Science and Unity Church. Such New Thought is repudiated by evangelicals.

Nicaea (The Creed of Nicene) The first great Church Council in AD 325 which defined orthodox Christianity to defend the faith against Arians. The Creed defined the person of Christ; anything which is orthodox or fundamentally sound in the faith. This creed and subsequent others are often the guides by which any teaching is evaluated. Accurate or orthodox Christianity today is often called Nicene. See the Creed on page 83.

Nonconformist One who does not accept established ways, such as a Protestant in England who does not belong to the established Anglican Church. Baptists and other evangelicals are historically considered Nonconformists.

Occult The means “hidden” and refers to spiritual practices utilized to contact the supernatural realm, specifically to contact the dead. Occult practices are forbidden by Holy Scripture and have been practiced throughout history.

Oneness and Oneness Blessing A false theology that God is in everyone and everything. The Blessing is an effort to bring blessing to millions of people around the world with the hope of changing people’s consciousness and thus the state of the earth. This Oneness experience takes place when a Oneness Blessing giver places his or her hands on a person’s head and seeks to impart a sense of awakening into the individual.

Ordinance A religious rite or ceremony not considered as a sacrament.

Organic Church. Often called a house church or simple church movement (which is not unbiblical in itself), but the main thought of this progressive or emerging church emphasis is “not to go to church” which is outdated and traditional. Organic church is seen as new, vibrant, and unique and sheds the stale ways of doing Christianity.

Orthodoxy Belief in doctrine considered correct and sound, or holding the commonly accepted historic faith of the Christian Church. “Orthodox” as a title applies to the Eastern Church.

Pacifism Opposition to all military ideals, preparedness, war, etc., being practiced by some Christians today.

Pantheism The theory that God and the created universe are the same. *God is and is in all things*. Pantheism is at the heart of Deistic theology; God is in everything. This false view fails to distinguish between God, the Creator, and His Creation. This view teaches that God will save all creation and be one with Him. Also this thought teaches that man, animals, plants and all physical matter are seen as equal; “all is one” and therefore all is deity.

Particular Baptists These were Baptists who were Calvinistic in their theology. They were theologically opposite of General Baptists who were Arminian. Gradually Particular Baptist gained influence in England and America. Their theological systems has had lasting influences on Baptists.

Passover The Jewish festival commemorating the time in Egypt when God “passed over” Israelite homes but required the death of Egyptian firstborn; Exodus 11-12.

Patristics/Fathers A branch of theological study which deals with the writings of the Fathers, men who wrote at the end of the first century (after the close of the NT) and over the next several centuries. These men are closely tied to the Apostles, being the next line of leading proponents of the faith. They give great insight to the earliest doctrines, growth, controversies, heresies and leaders of their eras. The church is deeply indebted to these men because of their gospel defense, record of church history, extensive Bible commentaries and developments in theology. The RC Church closes the Patristic age in the eighth century.

Peace Churches Churches historically holding a pacifist position, such as Friends, Amish, and Mennonites.

Penance An ecclesiastical punishment inflicted for sin, or a sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church.

Pentecostal Churches A strong current movement which began in the early twentieth century in southern California and Kansas among believers who sought a baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by the speaking in tongues similar to that of Acts. This movement has spread world-wide and influenced every denomination and aspect of Christianity. These churches generally are fiercely independent of mainline or evangelical churches, have many varying theological differences with each other and also place emphasis on physical healing. The term charismatic is often applied to both individuals and churches of this persuasion. Many Pentecostals are heavily Word of Faith.

Pietism A movement which began in the German Lutheran Church in the seventeenth century which devotion to prayer circles, Bible reading, inner spiritual devotion, and universal priesthood of the faithful. In many various forms and ways this theology has influenced Christianity. The Methodism of John and Charles Wesley was shaped by their devotional life. It continues to influence aspects of the modern Christian faith.

Plenary Full, complete; a plenary council is one attended by all its qualified members.

Polity A particular form or system of church government. Generally, the four forms of polity are hierarchal, episcopal, congregational and autocratic.

Pope The title in Latin for father (*papa*) is used exclusively for the Bishop of Rome. This person is considered the Head of the Roman Catholic Church as he leads in the place of the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ. Debates rage among all religions as to the meanings and latitude of the Pope’s place, influence, and role in world religions and affairs. The Roman Catholic Church view their understanding of his importance back to the Apostle Peter and Protestants trace the office back to the ascendancy of the Bishop of Rome Leo I at or during the fall of the Roman Empire in the mid-fifth century.

Post-Modern The fluid term applied to our present generation of religions, spirituality and worldviews where an emphasis is on the human being's desire to define life, faith and future in human terms without traditional or orthodox Christian principles. Often it mixes Eastern and non-Christian principles to produce what is called New Age; a term generally used to mean "everyone is right, regardless of what they believe; one man's god is as good as another's god" and often with an emphasis of expressing one's faith apart from a local church. Post-modern thought pervades every aspect of contemporary life, not just religion. A disdain and doubt for biblical doctrine and faith in Jesus Christ is heralded, whereas certainty of biblical truth is considered arrogant and hateful.

Predestinarian A believer in predestinarianism--that all events are predetermined by God and that each person's eternal destiny is fixed by divine decree.

Premillennialism Belief that the personal visible return of Christ will precede His reign for a thousand years on earth. Post-millennarians believe that the return will come at the end of the millennium.

Presbyterianism Church polity governed by presbyters (elders). The proponents did not regard its teaching as an innovation in the Reformation, but a simple rediscovery of the way that the apostles organized in the NT. In most Presbyterianism churches three offices are seen: elders, deacons and ministers. Depending on the church, tradition or denomination, the outworking of this polity is varied and grounded on their conviction that Scripture is the standard for all faith and practice. The Presbytery (a church court) is a collection of elders from local churches in a geographical area who govern church discipline, administrative duty, sacerdotal authority, and ordination.

Presbytery A church court or assembly having the ecclesiastical or spiritual rule and oversight of a district or the district itself. In the local church this directing group is the Session.

Reconciliation The process of being brought back into fellowship with God and fellow man.

Red-letter Christians A term promoted by emerging church leaders who say they follow the red letters of Jesus in the Bible. They focus on Christ's words of love and forgiveness, but disregard His words on sin, evil and judgment. In essence this term and thought de-emphasize the totality of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Redemption God's deliverance of man from sin and death through the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ.

Reformation A loose term which covers an involved series of changes in religion in the Western Church between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. The seeds of this reformation began before Martin Luther, but he is credited with delivering the blow of protest (hence Protestant) against the Roman Catholic Church on October 31, 1517. The reforms of the Church took varying tones, directions, and radical effects upon the Church in continental Europe, later going to England and continuing to the American Colonies. Luther, Calvin, Knox, Zwingli, and many others were key leaders. The English Reformation created Separatists. Some Separatists were Baptists who came to America. The term is strongly used by Calvinistic churches and leaders to describe their theological views and polity. In its latter stages a Counter-Reformation halted many reforms. The word is commonly applied to describe historical anti-Catholic sentiments. The word is used by Calvinistic church leaders to describe their church faith and practice.

Regeneration A new birth, re-creation, a radical renewal of life, or conversion.

Remission of Sin Pardon or forgiveness for sin by God through His conviction, one's confession and His cleansing.

Repentance Turning from a sinful to a godly life; a biblical essential for salvation taught by most Protestants.

Renaissance A revival or rebirth of interest in learning and appreciation of art in the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries in Europe. This revival had massive implications in religion; a renewed interest in Platonic thought, Christian mysticism, and emphasis upon man's ability to think, create, and cause action.

Replacement Theology The belief that the Christian church has replaced Israel, and Israel no longer has any significance from a biblically prophetic view. God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and David in the Old Testament were replaced, not fulfilled, by the life and work of Jesus Christ; His promise to Israel of an eternal covenant was not eternal after all. This view teaches that the Church of Jesus Christ is the Israel of God. This hurtful theology has led to tragic abuse and persecution of Jewish people throughout history by the Christian Church. Some Christians take this view to support opposition for the modern nation of Israel and support of anti-Israeli and Christian views.

Revelation What God makes known to men, as in Scripture. The view that God is the source of all truth.

Revivalism A type of religious worship and practice which centers in evangelical revivals or mass religious fervor, stimulated by intense preaching and prayer meetings, based on the conviction that God renews or revives sinners and the local church. The Methodist Movement of the eighteenth century under the Wesleys, Whitefield and others encouraged revivalism. This type of worship has influenced American Protestant churches and denominations. A key understanding in revivalism is the public proclamation of the gospel to call sinners to faith in Jesus Christ.

Sabbatarian One who believes that the seventh day should be observed as the Christian Sabbath.

Sacerdotal A term denoting a religious system in which everything is valued in relation to the ministrations of the priestly order.

Sacrament/Sacramental According to Roman Catholic theology it is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same and a pledge to assure us thereof." The Roman Catholic Church accepts seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony. The Eastern Church accepts the sevenfold enumeration of the sacraments. They are intended to maintain and deepen the union of the individual recipient with the Church as the Body of Christ. In Protestant Churches sacramentalism is rejected and various meanings of understanding and importance are placed on two "ordinances" – baptism and the Lord's Supper. Some fundamentalists hold that foot-washing is an ordinance.

Salvation The rescue of man from evil or guilt by God's power, that he may obtain blessedness.

Sanctification The work of the Holy Spirit by which the believer is set free from sin and exalted to holiness of life. The goal of sanctification is to be made like Jesus, being more thoroughly Christian in all of life.

Seeker-friendly. The emphasis in certain Christian circles and local church work to put more attention on making unbelievers comfortable in church and place less focus on discipling believers. In many cases anything which shows traditional Christianity (Bibles, stained-glass windows, steeples, pews, hymnals, certain attire, crosses, offering plates, etc.) are to be removed so that unbelievers will not be uncomfortable with these items.

Self-realization Full contact with the higher self, resulting in knowing oneself to be God. This teaching is centered in "enlightenment" that occurs often during meditation when the practitioner becomes aware of his or her divinity or connection with the higher power, but totally apart from the biblical revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Separatists As a title, it was first applied to Englishmen who separated from the Church of England in the late sixteenth century; the key leader being Robert Browne. They were also called Independents or Congregationalists. This view of Christianity emphasized believer's baptism, congregational polity, separation of church and state, married clergy, and other views conflicting with the Church of England. These views coalesced into groups who organized Baptist churches in England and later came to the American colonies. These Englishmen were persecuted heavily by the Church of England. Modern Baptists are the direct spiritual descendants of English Separatists.

Silence The abuse of normal thought as found in Hindu, Buddhist and Christian contemplative practice. The main issue is the goal of silence — either to hear God (Psalm 46:10, Habakkuk 2:20) through the indwelling Holy Spirit or to seek to reach a higher state to get in touch with one's self, the universe or the god within one's being.

Soaking or Soaking Prayer A method commonly seen in charismatic revival meetings where the participant receives a particular anointing present, normally through the laying on hands, and "soaks" in the supposed presence of God. Manifestations associated with soaking prayer can include slain in the spirit, uncontrollable shaking or laughter, being encompassed by a sense of heaviness, spontaneous visions, altered states of consciousness, etc.

Social Gospel and Social Justice A shift in the emphasis from gospel truth (repentance and faith in Jesus Christ) to more earthly endeavors like environment, empowerment, employment, entitlements, equality, and esteem-building programs promoted by global entities, liberal churches and like-minded organizations to benefit selected people groups. This agenda carries within itself a desire to punish certain groups for not supporting them and continuing to remain faithful to the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Social gospel is called by various names: liberation, just cause, fairness, equality, new world, transformational justice, kingdom on earth gospel, etc.

Society A term applied to one type of organization for mission endeavors among evangelicals. The society usually was group or member-controlled, rather than centralized as in most denominations. The Southern Baptist Convention moved away from a societal form of missions support to a centralized means with the adoption of the SBC Executive Committee in 1919 and the Cooperative Program in 1925. Societal mission organization is common today in independent or community churches or fellowship of these like-minded churches.

Spiritualists A name used in differing ways in Christianity. A primary use is to describe believers in Europe and later in USA during the sixteenth and later centuries who have descended into the following groups: Amish, Mennonites, Quakers, and others who emphasize the inner life or spirit and practice a lifestyle of separation from the world to accomplish it. These groups have made valuable contributions to Christian faith, primarily by stressing the need for purity from and distinctiveness to the world. They gave rise to The Counter Reformation, as opposed to the Magisterial Reformation (Luther, Calvin, Knox, etc.). Anabaptists were early leaders in this view of Christianity. This system of thought had influences on English Separatists, the cradle of modern Baptists.

Total Depravity The equivalent of original sin, every human faculty having an innate evil taint.

Transcendence The exaltation of God above the universe and His distinctness from it.

Transfiguration Change in form or appearance, such as the transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2-10).

Transformational While there is nothing wrong with this word, extreme care must be taken with its use. Contemplative religious use means that one experiences transformation from practicing contemplative silence or other disciplines, causing a change in consciousness brought on by altered states primarily through meditation. The focus is often inter-spiritual and universalistic. It is not used in the sanctification sense found in Romans 12:1-2.

Transubstantiation The doctrine that there is present in the Eucharist after consecration of the elements the substantial body and blood of Christ, with His whole soul and divinity.

Trinitarianism The central doctrine of the Christian faith which teaches that One God exists in Three Persons and One Substance: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This doctrine is held to be a mystery in the strict sense and only with God's help in mind, thought and faith can it be accepted. This doctrine has experienced the greatest of corruptions of any Christian theology. Groups deviate from this basic in three ways: challenging both the humanity and deity of the Son, disparaging the Holy Spirit as not from the Son and/or the Father; and corrupting the biblical views of the Father. This doctrine's corruption is the subject of most all Church Councils, divisions of Christianity and reason for cults. Triune immersion is a baptism in which the candidate is immersed three successive times, in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Most Baptist churches practice a single immersion of a believer with the Triune pronouncement when conducting the ordinance of believer's baptism.

Tritheism A heretical teaching about the Trinity which denies the unity of substance in the Three Divine Persons of the Godhead. This teaching was constantly opposed by the Church from the sixth century until the Middle Ages. Several variations of this heresy have occurred in modern times, primarily by pantheists, anti-Trinitarians and all Unitarians. Tritheism is the false opposite of biblical Trinitarianism.

Triune Having the quality of three-in-oneness; a reference to the Trinitarian God; 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Ultimate Reality Buddhist concept of God, a spiritual presence in all things.

Unitarian The theology that insists upon the unity or oneness of God, denying the doctrine of the Trinity.

Unitarianism A type of Christian thought and religious observance which rejects the doctrines of the Trinity and the Deity of Jesus Christ in favor of an uni-personality of God. They have no formal creeds; thus oppose the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture, doctrines of the Sin of man, atonement of Christ and eternal punishment and most aspects of organized religions and missionary work. They emphasize the importance of scientific methods, philosophy, non-Christian religions, and rationalism. Faithful Evangelicals repudiate this heretical teaching. This doctrinal system has gained influences in many American religious circles in the last century.

Universalism A corrupt doctrine that rejects eternal punishment, teaching that all pain of man is temporary (in this life), and ultimately all intelligent beings will be saved in the end by the universal Fatherhood of God, a final harmony of all souls with Him; every human being will be reunited with God, whether they believe in the biblical God or not; based on the thought that every human being has divinity and God is within them. Faithful Evangelicals repudiate this heretical teaching.

Unleavened Bread Bread made without yeast, necessary for Jewish Passover, and often used in Christian eucharistic services.

Vatican The term describes the modern residence of the Pope of the RC Church in Rome. It is a series of buildings, libraries and residences and thus is the headquarters of the RC Church. The name comes from the ancient site "Mons Vaticanus." A papal residence is said to have existed there since the sixth century.

Vatican Councils A title given to two modern councils which had massive and lasting impacts on the current RC Church: the First was held in 1869-70 and the Second was held in 1962-65. Both Councils dealt with Catholic law, discipline, faith and dogma, relations with other churches and papal authority.

Venial Sin In Roman Catholic doctrine, a slight offense that does not require the sacrament of penance, a sin that is not mortal (meriting eternal death).

Vestment Article of clothing worn by religious officiant.

Vicar Priest or incumbent of a parish; clergyman who serves as the deputy or substitute for another.

Vintage Christianity A deceptive term which sounds like espousal of biblical doctrine, but in fact most commonly refers to returning to former practices, a stopping short of return to the New Testament apostolic doctrines. These practices do not include historically orthodox biblical doctrine and practice, but emphasizes early century monks and mystics.

Virgin Birth of Christ The belief that Jesus Christ has no human father, but was conceived in the Blessed Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit as stated in two gospels (Matthew 1 and Luke 1). It has been a consistent tenet of orthodox Christian theology. The RC and Orthodox Churches thus venerate Mary above all other saints because of her devotion to God as a virgin and being mother of the Lord Jesus. The doctrine has come under considerable attack over the last several centuries by theological liberals who regard with suspicion anything considered miraculous. The Protestant Fundamentalists make it one of their five core statements of true faith.

Vocation Call to serve God, in one's work and life. Evangelicals believe that God has created each person for a purpose or vocation which glorifies Him, perpetuates His kingdom on earth and brings fulfillment for that person.

Vulgate Latin version of the Bible translated by Jerome, being completed over a fifteen-year period by A.D. 400.

Western Church Term for Christianity in Europe or America, or Roman Catholicism as opposed to Eastern Orthodoxy. The Judeo-Christian basis of the contemporary Western Church is under severe constant attack.

Word of Faith A post-World War II popular heretical phenomenon led primarily by a sect of USA charismatics who stress the place of faith as a guarantee from God. This system has many well-known leaders such as Bennie Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, Jesse Duplantis, Jimmy Swaggert, Myles Munro, T. D. Jakes, Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen and the late Kenneth Hagin who is credited as their "father." Faithful evangelicals repudiate the Word of Faith movement.

World Council of Churches The fellowship of churches which was organized in 1948 at Amsterdam to create an organization from many earlier attempts that practices ecumenicalism, promotes unity of differing Christianity splinter groups, and emphasizes the social aspect of the gospel. The WCC is generally repudiated by conservative Protestant churches because of their liberal actions and theology. In most countries there is national counterpart; in USA it is the National Council of Churches. The Southern Baptist Convention has always refused to unite with either organization because of massive doctrinal and practical differences.

Zionism The movement among Jewish people to return to their homeland, Palestine, to create a new state for their national freedom and practice of Judaism. The movement began in the late nineteenth century and many events (primarily British decisions and World War II horrors) in the early twentieth century led to the creation of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948. Theodor Herzl is considered the "father of modern Zionism." Christian Zionism is the current movement of evangelicals to stand with the nation of Israel, oppose semitism and foster a dispensational view of Scripture. However within the Christian Church divisions exist over how the Body of Christ should relate to the modern state of Israel and Jewish people and modern Judaism is divided over how to foster relations (political, economic, religious and humanitarian) with Christian groups.

SECTION TWELVE

Timeline of First Baptist Church Vicksburg

- 1791 The first Baptist church organized in the Mississippi Territory is the Salem BC. The Mississippi Baptist Convention markers on Highway 61 near Fayette commemorate these Baptist roots. In 1836 the current Mississippi Baptist Convention is organized at Washington, led by visionary missionary Ashley Vaughn.
- 1839 Antioch Baptist Church on Fisher Ferry Road organizes the first Baptist work in the city in October. The church is named Vicksburg BC. First pastor R. N. Prentice died in 1840 and is buried in Antioch Cemetery.
- 1861 The Vicksburg Baptist Church struggles during the American Civil War and Reconstruction.
- 1877 The third facility of VBC is constructed and remains in use until 1956 until damaged by fire.
- 1939 D. Swan Haworth is called as pastor. He is the visionary for the current facilities of FBCV, the Executive Committee leadership concept and many local mission and new church endeavors. He serves until 1951.
- 1952 John G. McCall begins a thirty-year pastorate and leads FBCV to build the present worship/educational facilities. Upon retirement he moves to Louisville, KY to serve on the faculty of the Southern Baptist Seminary and later at Mississippi College. In 1999 FBCV approved the McCall Ministerial Scholarship.
- 1956 A fire on Saturday after Thanksgiving destroys the facilities and forces FBCV to construct modern facilities.
- 1958 On July 6 the first worship is held and on July 13 the current worship/educational facilities are dedicated.
- 1975 A state-of-the-art Family Life Center is dedicated. Gene Allen is the FLC Building Committee Chairman.
- 1983 Gordon Sansing is called as pastor, coming from the First Baptist Church in Pontotoc, MS.
- 1989 FBCV celebrates its 150th Anniversary with former pastors Dr. Haworth and Dr. McCall present.
- 1991 Sansing leads the church family in a highly successful renovation program FORWARD BY FAITH. He leaves in 1997 to become the pastor of Forest Baptist Church. FBCV remains a strong SBC and MBC church.
- 1997 Eric Thomas is called as pastor and leads the church in various outreach activities; FBCV adopt RENEWAL BY FAITH. The current monthly Medical-Dental clinic is begun in October and is now in its fourth location. He leaves in 2003 to become pastor of First Baptist Church in Norfolk, VA where he still serves.
- 2004 Matt Buckles begins his current tenure as pastor, having served the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (1990-2004). The church starts the three-phase RENEWAL BY FAITH (an eight-year renewal program of all facilities). FBCV continues GOD'S CHRISTMAS GIFT, Upward Basketball and JOY Fellowship.
- 2006 FBCV receives the Mafan Building from Earnest and Camille Thomas in October as the permanent facility of the Medical-Dental Clinic and Mercy Ministries. Renovation of Mafan Building is led by D. D. Davidson, Richard Stuart and many others. Post-Katrina ministry in 2005-2008 is guided by David & Patty Baldwin.
- 2007 FBCV commits to New Church Starts ministry (Vancouver; Baton Rouge; Indianapolis; New Orleans; Vicksburg; currently Knoxville, TN); in December dedicates the extensively renovated Mafan Building.
- 2019 FBCV has many local and global mission efforts within cooperative efforts of SBC, MBC and WBA and other evangelicals; remains a "died-in-the wool" SBC church; and enjoys the blessings of many younger families.

SECTION THIRTEEN

Timeline of Great Baptist and Southern Baptist Convention Events

- 1560 English Separatists, Privy and Plumbers Hall Churches and leader Robert Browne
- 1593 Severe penalties enacted by the Church of England for the dissent of Separatists
- 1596 “True Confession” by Henry Ainsworth greatly influences Separatists
- 1611 First Baptist church on English soil in London upon return from Holland
- 1616 The founding of the JLJ Church in London
- 1638 First Baptist church on American colony soil – Providence, RI by Roger Williams
- 1682 First Baptist church in the South at Charleston, SC
- 1707 First association of churches in America at Philadelphia
- 1742 The Philadelphia Confession is written and influences Baptist life
- 1792 William Carey commissioned as missionary to India
- 1814 Triennial Convention organized in USA – primarily for foreign mission support
- 1821 First state convention organized (South Carolina)
- 1833 The New Hampshire Confession is adopted
- 1836 The Mississippi Baptist Convention is organized near Natchez
- 1845 Southern Baptist Convention is organized at Augusta, GA (May 8)
- 1845 Board of Domestic Work is created and located at Marion, AL
- 1859 First seminary (Southern Baptist Theological) begun in Greenville, SC
- 1863 The Board of Sunday Schools is created in Greenville, SC
- 1866 *KindWords* is the first publication of BSS and lasts until 1929
- 1873 Lottie Moon is commissioned as missionary to China
- 1874 The Board of Domestic Work is renamed the Home Mission Board
- 1877 Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is moved to Louisville, KY
- 1882 Home Mission Board is reorganized and moved to Atlanta, GA
- 1888 Woman’s Missionary Union is founded as an auxiliary of the Convention under the leadership of Annie Armstrong of Baltimore, MD
- 1891 Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay) is organized in Nashville; no agency did more to unify Southern Baptists in heart and mind
- 1890’s BYPU (Baptist Young People’s Union) movement begins
- 1894 “Week of Self Denial” by women in South for prayer and offerings

- 1907 Ridgecrest Conference Center is opened; becomes SBC entity in 1928
- 1907 Laymen's Missionary Movement founded; later called Brotherhood and was headquartered in Memphis until decommissioned in late 1990's; Committee on Civic Righteousness is appointed; becomes Social Service Commission in 1933 and later became full-time in 1947 and renamed the Christian Life Commission (morals/ethics)
- 1908 Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary began in Fort Worth, TX
- 1912 Lottie Moon dies in Japan en route to USA after 39 years in China
- 1914 Baptist General Convention of TX consolidates all its work under one executive board and is a model for SBC and many state conventions
- 1915 Education Commission is established, ceases in 1928; revived in 1931
- 1916 Gambrell Street BC in Fort Worth may have begun the first VBS
- 1917 The Baptist Bible Institute is opened in New Orleans (later becomes N.O.B.T.S.)
- 1917 The Executive Committee is adopted, being the organization to oversee the SBC between annual meetings, serving primarily as the channel for funding
- 1918 Relief and Annuity Board is organized; today it is Guidestone Financial Services of the Southern Baptist Convention (Dallas, TX)
- 1919 "Seventy-Five Million Campaign" is launched with mixed results, but became the forerunner for our tremendous Cooperative Program
- 1925 Cooperative Program & *The Baptist Faith and Message* are adopted at Memphis. It is known as one of the three most historic SBC meetings (1845 in Augusta and 1979 in Houston). The historic Cooperative Program remains the lifeblood of SBC missions.
- 1925 The SBC gained ownership of Baptist Bible Institute in New Orleans and the BSSB introduced literature to popularize Sunday School for all ages
- 1934 BYPU changed to Baptist Training Union and has classes for all ages
- 1940 Sunday School Board releases the *Broadman Hymnal*, a work which captures the allegiance of churches and unifies worship in the SBC
- 1942 SBC ended its territorial agreements in the USA via the California decision
- 1944 Golden Gate Theological Seminary began in Mill Valley, California
- 1946 BBI in New Orleans changes its name to N.O.B.T.S. and later relocates in the city
- 1951 Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary began in Wake Forest, NC
- 1951 Seminary Extension is begun as a tool for local training of ministers
- 1952 Glorieta Conference Center near Santa Fe, NM is opened
- 1954 "A Million More in '54" Sunday School campaign is successful
- 1956 The *Baptist Hymnal* is adopted

- 1957 Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary began in Kansas City, MO
- 1959 “Lexington Road Massacre” at SBTS occurs - 13 professors were fired
- 1960 Baptist Training Union is changed to Church Training (CT)
- 1960 Screven Memorial BC formed in NH, first SBC church in New England
- 1963 The Baptist Faith and Message is reformulated at Kansas City
- 1964 With a SBC church in Vermont, Southern Baptists are in all 50 states
- 1970 SBC voted to remove the first volume of Broadman Commentary
- 1975 A new *Baptist Hymnal* is released
- 1976 ACTION, a Sunday School enrollment campaign, is launched
- 1977 Bold Mission Thrust is adopted as a witness and missions emphasis
- 1979 Adrian Rogers is elected President at the convention in Houston and begins the conservative resurgence and leadership influence in the SBC
- 1980’s A turbulent decade of clashes and struggles for SBC direction and control
- 1985 Convention at Dallas messenger total is 45,519 (the largest ever) and Charles Stanley of Atlanta is elected President
- 1990 SBC defunds its part in the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a watchdog committee of many Baptist groups in Washington, DC. The organization stills exists in Washington, DC.
- 1991 A new *Baptist Hymnal* is released and met with great enthusiasm and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is formed (a SBC splinter group)
- 1995 SBC voted to reorganize its boards and agencies by name and purpose
- Sunday School Board becomes LifeWay Christian Resources
 - Foreign Mission Board becomes International Mission Board
 - Home Mission Board becomes North American Mission Board
 - Christian Life Commission becomes Ethics & Religious Liberty
 - Radio and Television Commission absorbed into NAMB
 - Brotherhood Commission absorbed into NAMB
 - Historical Commission and Seminary Extension into LifeWay
 - WMU remains an auxiliary of the SBC
- SBC also adopted resolution denouncing racism and called for racial reconciliation at this historic meeting in Atlanta. Evangelist Billy Graham was a keynote speaker.
- 1997 The SBC implements Covenant for a New Century, the convention reorganization plan
- 1998 *The Baptist Faith and Message* has the Family article added to it
- 2000 The present *Baptist Faith and Message* is adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention at Orlando, FL and CP celebrates its 75th anniversary; the Network of Mainstream Baptist is formed (a SBC splinter group)
- 2001 Southern Baptist Disaster Relief ministries highlighted after 9/11/01

- 2004 SBC withdraws from the Baptist World Alliance due to theological issues
- 2005 SBC responds to the history's greatest natural disaster, the tsunami in Indonesia, in a magnanimous fashion with money, materials and mission trips; Hurricane Katrina causes record damage to the southern coastline of the United States, destroying homes, churches and in particular the Gulfshore Baptist Assembly in Pass Christian, a retreat center owned and operated by the Mississippi Baptist Convention; i.e., Hurricane Camille destroyed it in 1969. On October 31, 2006 the MBC votes not to rebuild GBA at Pass Christian.
- 2006 SC pastor Frank Page is elected President of the SBC
- 2008 GA pastor Johnny Hunt is elected President of the SBC
- 2009 A new *Baptist Hymnal* is released
- 2010 Great Commission Resurgence is adopted at Orlando, Bryant Wright is elected as President of the SBC, and Frank Page is elected Executive Committee President succeeding the retiring Morris Chapman; Jerry Rankin retired as President of IMB. Geoff Hammond resigned as the President of NAMB and Kevin Ezell is elected NAMB President; OK Pastor Tom Eliff is later chosen as the new IMB President
- 2011 The SBC annual meeting is held in Phoenix with a focus on new church starts.
- 2012 Fred Luter, a New Orleans pastor, is the first African-American elected SBC President at the SBC annual meeting held in New Orleans; Great Commission Giving is adopted by the messengers at New Orleans
- 2013 Richard Land retires as Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission President and Russell Moore is elected his successor; Luter re-elected to second term in Annual Meeting at Houston, TX
- 2014 David Platt is elected as President of IMB upon Eliff's retirement and Arkansas pastor Ronnie Floyd is elected President of the SBC
- 2015 The SBC continues strong support for Sanctity of Human Life and biblical marriage; IMB makes painful decisions on reduction of missionaries to accomplish a balanced budget; Glorieta Conference Center near Santa Fe, New Mexico is sold amid much debate and lawsuits
- 2016 The SBC sees an upswing in mission giving; Golden Gate Theological Seminary near San Francisco relocates to Ontario, California and renames itself Gateway Theological Seminary; LifeWay Christian Resources agrees to sell its downtown Nashville facilities; Memphis pastor Steve Gaines is elected President of the SBC; the SBC Lottie Moon Christmas Offering Goal international missions is \$175,000,000
- 2017 Gaines is reelected President of the SBC; the SBC Annie Armstrong Offering for North American Mission giving almost a record amount; various SBC leaders are involved in the campaign and public support of Donald Trump who was elected USA President in November 2016, yet some SBC pastors and leaders spoke against or were concerned about him; SBC seminaries experienced increasing enrollments;
- the SBC continues its strong emphasis on new church starts across North America; the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering experiences strong support from local churches; the Cooperative Program, the unified giving plan of the SBC since 1925, continues to express a reduction in the percentage of local churches' giving, causing concerns among key SBC leaders.

- 2018 Charlotte, NC pastor J. D. Greer, is elected as SBC President, signaling a shift in younger leadership of the SBC's most prominent position; David Platt resigns as IMB President to accept a pastorate in Virginia; Paul Chitwood, a Kentucky Baptist Convention leader, is elected IMB President; Mississippi physician Rick Dunbar serves as President of IMB Board of Trustees; Jim Futral celebrates 20 years as the MBCB Executive Director-Treasurer; SWBTS President Paige Patterson is forced out and the ouster creates varied controversies within the seminary and convention; Frank Paige resigns as President of the SBC Executive Committee due to personal moral failures; Chuck Kelley, long-time President of NOBTS announces his retirement for June 2019; having given NOBTS solid leadership for twenty-three years; Thom Rainer announces his retirement for 2019 as President of LifeWay Christian Resources, causing another key leadership vacancy and key position search.
- 2019 Adam Greenlaw, a former Kentucky Pastor and Dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is elected President of SWBTS; Ronnie Floyd is chosen as President of the SBC Executive Committee; Jamie Dew is tapped as President-elect of NOBTS; J. D. Greear is re-elected as President of the SBC at the annual meeting in Birmingham, AL; controversies continue to swirl in regards to children and women sexual abuse in all denominations with the SBC often focused by news agencies and heart-breaking incidents and SBC President Greear pledges action on this serious spiritual, societal and gospel-integrity crisis; NAMB continues to lead the SBC in new church starts across the nation with a focus on SENDNORTHAMERICA, a program of targeting thirty US mega cities with new church start emphasis; SBC experienced an increase in the Lottie Moon 2018 giving to international missions. SBC Disaster Relief work continues to be active and highly respected across the nation. LifeWay Christian Resources announces the closing of its "brick and mortar stores," a move causing varied emotional reactions but acknowledged as a casualty of internet-technology shifting sales in American society; in February Dr. Jim Futral, the Executive Director-Treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention since September 1998, announces his retirement for October. At the annual meeting in June, the Messengers passed Resolution Nine in a controversial fashion. This Resolution promotes the Critical Race theory which is deemed by many Southern Baptist as an anti-Christian view of race relations and reconciliation. This controversial matter will continue to arise in SBC life. The Louisiana Baptist Convention elects Rex Horn of Lafayette as their new Executive Director.

Controversies connected to political correctness — the intentional move of Western society away from traditional Judeo-Christian values and convictions — continue to dominate life and news in the United States. The evangelical and conservative branches of Christianity are often targeted and struggle with fairness from national news media, LGTBQ groups/forces, liberal and socialistic political platforms and the emerging trend of declining religions influence in Western countries. However committed evangelicals continue to forge ahead with responses of love, truth, action and resources grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In this "mixture of wheat and tares" in American religious life the forces of opposition to Christian faith and opportunities for Christian ministry continue to be evident, often clashing at the ballot boxes, city halls, school board meetings, public forums, denominational offices, university systems, political gatherings and other places where these deeply divergent and conflicting world views meet.

Islam in many forms continues to reign terror over nations, societies and religions, especially Judaism and Western Christianity. The world today struggles with its relationships with Islamic countries because of economic, religious and cultural differences. Radical Islam seeks constantly to dominate through terror, threats of violence and military actions.

SECTION FOURTEEN

General Eras and Epochs For Christian History

New Testament or Apostolic Period (First Century AD)

Patristic or Post-Apostolic Fathers (100-300 AD)

Recognition of Christianity and Council of Nicaea – AD 313 and 325

Decline and Fall of Rome and Rise of the Bishop of Rome (mid-400's)

Christian Expansion into Europe (400's to 1200's)

Rise and Spread of Islam (700's and beyond)

Early Middle or Dark Ages (Prominence of monastic lifestyle)

Split of Eastern and Western Christianity – AD 1054

Middle Ages – dominance of the Roman Catholic Church

Inquisition by Roman Catholic Church (first stages in 1200's)

Renaissance (1400-1500's)

Reformation – October 31, 1517

Great English Translations of the Bible (1520's to 1611)

Enlightenment – Age of Reason – 1700's

First Great Awakening in USA (1720's - 1740's)

American Revolutionary War in USA (1775-1783)

Second Great Awakening in USA (1780's to early 1800's)

American Civil War (1861-65)

Vatican I (1869-1870)

Great Expansion of the Christian Missionary Age (1865-1914)

Third Great Awakening in the USA (1875-1914)

Modern Industrial Age (1860's to 1900)

Spread of Theological Liberalism (1850's to mid-1900's)

Start of Modern Pentecostalism (began in Topeka, KS and Los Angeles, CA in 1906)

Rise and Spread of Communism (1917 onward)

World War I (1914-1918) & World War II (1939-1945)

Vatican II (1962-1965)

Korean War (1950-1953) and Vietnam Wars (1965-1973)

Current World Clashes of Nations, Ideologies and Religions (Post-Vietnam era)

September 11, 2001 (terrorists attacks on USA and resulting Mid-East wars on terrorism)

Post-Modern Christianity (our world today has every conceivable religion, perversion of the Christian faith, worldwide persecution of Judeo-Christian values, extremist Islam and secularism as driving forces)

SECTION FIFTEEN

THE NICENE CREED A.D. 325

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
One the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE CREED (COMMONLY CALLED) OF SAINT ATHANASIUS

Quicumque Vult... 'whoever wishes (to be saved)'

Whoever will be saved:
before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith.
Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled:
without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the Catholic Faith is this:
That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.
For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son:
and another of the Holy Ghost.
But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one:
the Glory equal the Majesty co-eternal.
Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.
The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate.
The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible:
and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.
The Father eternal, the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.
And yet they are not three eternal: but one eternal.
As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated:
but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.
So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty:
and the Holy Ghost Almighty.
And yet they are not three Almighty: but one Almighty.
So the Father is God, the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God.
And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.
So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord.
And yet not three Lords: but one Lord.
For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity:
to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;
So are we forbidden by the Catholic Religion:
to say, there be three Gods, or three Lords.
The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten.
The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created, but begotten.
The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son:
neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.
So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons;
one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.
And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other:
none is greater, or less than another;
But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together: and co-equal.
So that in all things, as is aforesaid:
the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.
He therefore that will be saved: must thus think of the Trinity.
Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation:

that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
For the right Faith is that we believe and confess:
that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;
God, of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds;
and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world;
Perfect God, and perfect Man:
of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting;
Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead:
and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood.
Who although he be God and Man: yet he is not two, but one Christ;
One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh:
but by taking of the Manhood into God;
One altogether, not by confusion of Substance: but by city of Person.
For as the reasonable soul and flesh in one man:
so God and Man is one Christ:
Who suffered for our salvation:
descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.
He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God
Almighty: from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies:
and shall give account for their own works.
And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting:
and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.
This is the Catholic Faith:
which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost;
as is was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end.
Amen.

* Catholic means “universal.”

**Likely date is late Fourth Century and early Fifth Century (*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* 101).

CHRISTIAN CONFESSION OF FAITH

We believe in one God, uncreated, eternal, Almighty Father,
Maker of heaven and earth, Sustainer of what is and will be,
In Holy Scripture inspired divinely for doctrine, faith and life.

We believe in Jesus Christ His only Son, Lord and Savior,
Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
Sinless in His days of flesh, though tempted to evil,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate by betrayal and bloody trials,
Crucified for our sins, buried in a borrowed tomb,
Descended into and made proclamation to the dead,
Raised bodily from the grave alive the third day,
Ascended into heaven, fulfilling Holy Scripture,
Seated at the right hand of our Heavenly Father,
Saving all who repent and believe in His Gospel,
Interceding for His saints, according to the will of God,
Coming again one day to judge the living and the dead,
Establishing a righteous kingdom which has no end.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, our abiding Comforter,
Deity as is Father and Son, accomplishing all holy works;
The victorious Church, His earthly Body and eternal Bride,
The fellowship and worldwide ministry of His saints,
The forgiveness of our sins by His grace and mercy,
The resurrection of the dead unto newness and glory,
And reigning with Him unto everlasting life in heaven.

Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;
Who was in the beginning, is now, and forever shall be. Amen.

(Adapted from multiple historic Confessions of Faith by FBCV in 2017)

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