

Personal Credo  
Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology

Christian Theology II  
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## **I. Introduction: Prolegomena**

Through this credo this writer will be engaging in a biblically based theological reflection of his views concerning beliefs on the divinity person and work of the Holy Spirit, the church, its purpose and mission, and the conclusion of this present age. Three tools will be used in this reflection: the Biblical message, the theological heritage of the writer's church and the thought forms of current culture. Through utilizing these tools and valuing them in the order provided, this writer will reflect on his beliefs in these areas.

The Bible, as canonized by the Church, will be utilized as the primary norm for the theological discussion of this paper. "Some Christians strive to establish the authority of scripture through elaborate proofs" (Grenz: Created, 21). This writer has simply chosen to assume the Bible's authority as a spirit produced document through which the spirit has always spoken to God's people and revealed God to us in a particular manner. The Bible is the foundational document of the Christian Church; therefore, its message remains the central resource for Christian theology in every age. This writer believes that the Bible is true and fully authoritative. "Because the Bible is given through *verbal, plenary* inspiration it is infallible and inerrant" (Grenz: Created, 172).

The theological heritage of this writer, the (Southern) Baptist Church, will also be considered and utilized to acknowledge the previous work of the church. Personal bias undoubtedly will be evident in this work and reflects the personal experiences of the writer.

## **II. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)**

### **A. Deity of the Holy Spirit - Member of the Trinity**

The divinity of the Holy Spirit is not as easily established as that of the Father and the Son. While the deity of the Father is assumed in scripture (Erickson, 857) and the divinity of the Son is affirmed and even argued for by the apostles, the divinity of the Holy Spirit is inferred from various scriptures. There are several scriptures that clearly affirm the Holy Spirit is God in the same degree as the Father and Son. In Acts 5:2-4, Luke shows Peter telling Anannias and Sapphira that lying to the Holy Spirit is one in the same as lying to God as the terms are used in an interchangeable fashion. 1 Corinthians 3:16-20 states similarly that to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit is to be indwelt by God. Paul makes it clear to us that the Holy Spirit is God. Additionally, we are shown in scripture that the Holy Spirit possess the attributes and qualities of God. One attribute is omniscience. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:10-11

“but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”

The Power of the Holy Spirit is also spoken of in the New Testament. Luke 1:35 sets "the power of the most high" as a parallel construction with "the Holy Spirit." Paul acknowledged the accomplishments of his ministry were achieved "by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:19). Jesus also attributed the ability to change human hearts and personalities to the Holy Spirit who convicts (John 16:8-11) and regenerates (John 3:5-8). While these scriptures do not definitively state that the Holy Spirit is omnipotent, they do demonstrate that He has power which God only possesses.

Another divine attribute of the Holy Spirit is that of His eternity. Hebrews 9:14 speaks of the Holy Spirit as "the eternal spirit." Scriptures affirm that only God is eternal (Hebrews 1:10-12) so the Holy Spirit therefore must be God.

In addition to having divine attributes, the Holy Spirit also performs works which are commonly ascribed to God. The role of the Holy Spirit in creation and the provincial care and direction of creation can be found in scripture passages such as Genesis 1:2, Job 26:13 and Psalm 104:30.

The most abundant biblical testimony regarding the role of the Holy Spirit concerns the spiritual working within human hearts (Grenz, 469). Paul's statement in Titus 3:5 makes this plain:

"he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,"

In addition Romans 8:11 says:

"And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."

Therefore we know that the Holy Spirit raised Christ from the dead and will also raise us. The giving of the scriptures is a divine work of the Holy Spirit. Peter speaks of the Holy Spirit's role in giving us the scriptures and emphasizes the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the heart of the writer. In 2 Peter 1:21 he writes:

"For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Thus the Holy Spirit inspired the writers and through them, the scriptures.

Finally, in the giving of the Great Commission, Jesus Himself places the Holy Spirit in a role of equality with the Father and the Son. This is shown when He says,

“baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Thus all who enter into the church are called to recognize the deity of the Holy Spirit. The words of the third article of the Apostles creed capsulize the church's confession of the third person of the trinity, "I believe in the Holy Spirit."

### **B. The Person of the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit as described to this point is, without question, a specific member of the trinity. His personality should be acknowledged as He is certainly not an impersonal force. The Bible makes clear in several ways that the Holy Spirit is a person and possesses the qualities of an individual.

The first evidence in scripture of the Holy Spirit's personality is the use of the masculine pronoun in representing Him. In John 16:13-14, Jesus describes the ministry of the Holy Spirit utilizing the masculine pronoun. Similarly in Ephesians 1:14, the Holy Spirit is referred to in the masculine form. The important feature here rather than establishing a gender role is the clear intention that the Holy Spirit is a person and not to be referenced as a thing.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit and His work are referenced with the work of Jesus. In John 14:16, Jesus says He will pray to the Father who will give His disciples another Counselor. In the linking of Jesus' statements with His going away with the Holy Spirit's coming (John 16:7), it is clear that the Holy Spirit is a replacement for Jesus and will carry on His same role. This similarity in function is an indication that the Holy Spirit, like Jesus, is a person. It is also obvious that the Holy Spirit is not some sort of abstract influence in the Christian life; He is, in this understanding, truly our "counselor and teacher."

The Holy Spirit was present at the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:16-17), as was the Father. As the Father spoke, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in visible form. In this instance we see that the Holy Spirit possesses intelligence, will and emotions which are a third indication of His personality. John 14:26 speaks of the knowledge of the Holy Spirit while the will of the Holy Spirit is attested to in 1 Corinthians 12:11. The emotion of the Holy Spirit is attested to in Ephesians 4:30, where Paul warns against grieving the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, the Holy Spirit as seen in scripture engages in teaching, regenerating, searching, speaking, interceding, commanding, testifying, guiding, illuminating and revealing. Certainly the Holy Spirit is a person, not a force, and that person is God; just as fully and in the same way as the Father and the Son (Erickson, 862).

### **C. The work of the Holy Spirit**

For the sake of brevity, the work of the Holy Spirit will be quickly acknowledged in three categories: The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament, The Holy Spirit and the Christ and the Holy Spirit in the church age. These categories will not be exhaustive, but rather to provide a brief overview of the activity of the Holy Spirit.

#### ***1) The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament***

The Spirit was active in the creation of the universe and in the sustaining of life on earth (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:29-30). The Spirit was also active in special ways in the lives of certain people. For example, the endowment of the Spirit allowed Samson to display extraordinary physical strength (Judges 14:6). The prophets were repeatedly recipients of God's power through the Spirit. The Kings, priests and prophets of Israel all

were at times bearers of the Spirit. These experiences fueled hopes that when the Messiah came not only would the fullness of the Spirit rest on Him (Isaiah 42:1), the Messiah would also pour out the Spirit on the people and all of God's people would know God and enjoy the fullness of the Spirit (Jeremiah 31:34).

### ***2) The Holy Spirit and the Christ***

The New Testament writers emphasize the important role the Holy Spirit played in the life of Jesus. The Holy Spirit was responsible for the Lord's conception (Luke 1:35). At Jesus' baptism, the Holy Spirit endowed our Lord to complete His divinely given task and through the power of the Holy Spirit God raised Jesus from the dead (Romans 8:11).

### ***3) The Holy Spirit in the church age***

The fulfillment of this promise occurred at Pentecost (Acts 2:1). After completing His earthly ministry, the Messiah poured out the Holy Spirit to His people on that day. This event marks a milestone in God's activity in the salvation of humankind. The arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost brought a new age of fulfillment to the church (1 Peter 1:10-12). On that day the Holy Spirit began His work in the new community, the fellowship of the followers of Christ (Grenz, 159). The presence of the Holy Spirit is now a reality to Christians and He brings us into fellowship with both the body of believers and into community with God Himself (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The Holy Spirit is also at work to actively bring history to its goal. The Holy Spirit will one day transform believers into the likeness of Christ; both spiritually and physically (Romans 8:11). Prior to this conclusion the indwelling of the Holy Spirit guarantees our future salvation (2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14) and He has

already begun His transforming work within us (Romans 8:10; 2 Corinthians 3:18). The Spirit, promised by Jesus, is now within Christians individually and fills the collective fellowship of believers that we know as the church. The implications of this will be highlighted through the next section of this paper which outlines this writer's theological reflections of the church.

### **III. The Church (Ecclesiology)**

#### **A. Defining the Church**

The book of Acts clearly displays that the conversion of an individual leads one into the fellowship of a group of believers. That collective dimension of the Christian life is what we call the church. There are two aspects to this collective dimension.

One being the local church as mentioned in scriptures such as Galatians 1:2 when Paul addresses his letter "to the churches of Galatia" or 1 Thessalonians 1:1 "to the church of the Thessalonians." Other Biblical authors, such as John in Revelation 1-3, also follow this pattern as this letter was specifically addressed to seven churches. This local sense of the church is evidently intended to acknowledge the Christians that live and meet in a particular city or region. As a Southern Baptist, this writer can attest that "The Baptist Faith and Message" clearly acknowledges this aspect of 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."

It is important to note one of the historical strengths of the Baptist tradition is autonomy of the local church. It is the responsibility of the local congregation to rely

upon scripture as a tool for correction and God's Holy Spirit to guide them at all times rather than relying on a regional bishop or governing body to attempt to resolve issues within the local church. This has been and will continue to be part of the Baptist tradition and distinctive nature.

The second aspect is the concept that the church is also utilized to represent a universal concept. In Ephesians, Paul gives particular emphasis to the universal nature of the church (1:22-23) by referring to the church as one body; this body makes known the manifold wisdom of God (3:10). Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (v.25). These verses point to the universal nature of the church. Obviously the church encompasses all persons in the world that have been saved through the grace of Christ along with all who have lived and been a part of His body and those yet to become a part of His body. Hebrews 12:23 paints a striking portrait of the identity of the church.

The Baptist faith and message simply acknowledges this aspect of the church through the following sentence:

"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."

In Baptist tradition there is less of an emphasis placed here. However, a better understanding of this aspect will reflect a greater definition of the church as those that have received new life through Christ. While the church is universal in nature, it finds expression in local groups who display the same qualities as does the body of Christ as a whole.

## **B. Biblical Images of the church**

A traditional view of this topic has utilized what is known as the "marks of the church." These are unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. Due to the brief nature of this work, this writer would rather follow a pattern set by Arthur Wainwright in his work entitled "The trinity in the new testament." In his book, Wainwright emphasizes an implicit Trinitarianism in which Paul views and writes about the church. While this writer does not fully embrace all the implications of these concepts Wainwright's categories for describing the church will be utilized here to describe three important aspects of the church. These include the people of God, the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is this writer's assertion that this approach paints a valuable picture of the missions and processions of the Son and the Spirit as they relate to the church that should heighten the value of the church and deepen our respect for her.

### ***1). The People of God***

2 Corinthians 6:16 makes plain God's intention to make believers of His people. "God said, I will live in them and move among them, and I will be there God and they shall be my people." Therefore we see that the church is constituted of God's people that they belong to Him and He belongs to them. This concept of the church, as the people of God, emphasizes God's initiative in choosing them. It is important to see that in the Old Testament God did not adopt as His own an existing nation, but rather He created a people for Himself through the offspring of Abraham. In the New Testament, this concept of God's choosing is expanded to include both Jews and Gentiles within the church. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 and 1 Thessalonians 1:4 emphasize this aspect of God's selection.

The concept of comparing Israel and the church as the people of God contains several implications. First, God takes pride in what is His. Next, He provides care and protection for His people; they are "as the apple of His eye" (Deuteronomy 32:10). Finally, God expects His people to serve Him alone without dividing their loyalties.

Paul makes another comparison in Romans 2:29 and Philippians 3:3; the circumcision of the flesh as administered in the Old Testament and the circumcision of the heart. This distinction displays the importance of circumcision as an act of inclusion for those that God has called and not an act of exclusion as in the case with the national identity of Israel. For the church, it is the new covenant (2 Corinthians 3:3-18) rather than the covenant of Abraham bringing unity and holiness to the church. This is the work of Christ. Thus a particular quality of holiness is expected of the people of God, as Christ's bride the church must also be holy (Ephesians 5:25-27).

## ***2). The Body of Christ***

The image of the church as the body of Christ emphasizes the church is the center of Christ's activity now, just as His physical body was during the time of His earthly ministry. This image is used both for the universal church and that of the local congregations. Ephesians 1:22-23 illustrates the former, while 1 Corinthians 12:27 affirms the latter.

The image of the church to the body of Christ also emphasizes Christ as the head of this body (Colossians 1:18) with believers as individual members. Christ is the Lord of the church and it is to be guided and controlled by His direction and activity (Colossians 2:9-10).

This image also speaks of the interconnectedness between all persons that make up the church; individual relationship to the Lord is not the intention of Christian life. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul develops the concept of interconnectedness of the body. The dependence of each believer on others is stressed here; no one person possesses all gifts. Each member needs the others and the others need each member.

Thus unity and genuine fellowship are encouraged in this illustration. The early church in Acts shared material possessions with one another. Paul utilized this concept in (Eph. 4:4-6) to display the level of unity required of the church.

Finally, this illustration emphasizes the church as the extension of Christ's ministry. The great commission in Matthew 28:18 and instruction given in John 14:12 make it plain that the work of Christ then is to be done at this time and will be done by His body, the church.

### ***3) The Temple of the Holy Spirit***

The church is a temple for the Holy Spirit and it is the Holy Spirit that brought the church into being. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost where He baptized the disciples and converted three thousand giving birth to the church. The church is now indwelt by the spirit on both an individual and collective basis (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Paul also instructs that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). The Holy Spirit brings unity within the body, not uniformity as He indwells us individually but oneness in aim and action as we work together collectively (Acts 4:32).

The Holy Spirit brings both life and power to the working of the church. Through dwelling within the church, the Holy Spirit imparts life to the church. This is seen in the presence of the fruits of the spirit that are indicative of the activity of the Holy Spirit and

a sign of the genuineness of the church (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit also conveys power to the church as indicated in Acts 1:8 and John 14:12. The Holy Spirit's power is also used to convict the world of sin (John 16:8).

The Holy Spirit brings sensitivity to the Lord's leading and remembrance of the Lord's teachings. As Jesus led and directed the disciples, He sent the Holy Spirit to lead and direct us (John 16:7). As the Holy Spirit indwelt the disciples, He brought remembrance and a greater understanding of the Lord's teachings (John 14:26; 16:13). The Holy Spirit allows believers who are set in their ways to be responsive and obedient to the teaching and leading of the Lord.

Finally, the Holy Spirit makes the church pure and holy. The old covenant made it possible for God to dwell in the temple; making it a sacred and holy place. Believers are now made pure and holy by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit under the new covenant. The Holy Spirit indwells the church both collectively and individually (Ephesians 2).

### **C. The Work of the Church**

#### ***1) Evangelism***

Jesus stressed this aspect of the church in both accounts of His last words to His disciples. In Matthew 28:19, He instructs them to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." In Acts 1:8 Jesus says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The call to evangelize is clearly a command in John 15:4. It states, "you are my friends if you do what I command you." Therefore the disciples did not regard this instruction from Jesus as an optional matter; nor should the church today. The scope of this evangelistic effort as noted in Acts 1:8 "to the ends of the earth" is to be

acknowledged in an exhaustive sense realizing that evangelism is to happen both far and near with a goal of complete saturation.

## ***2) Edification***

The second major function of the church is the edification of believers. Paul speaks of the edification of the body in Ephesians 4:12, "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." Believers are to grow and build each other up. There are several means by which members of the church can be built up. One is fellowship, which literally means having or sharing all things in common. Paul also speaks of sharing our experiences (1 Corinthians 12:26) and bearing one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). The church also edifies its members through instruction or teaching. God gives the church pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11) to prepare and equip the people of God for service. Education is imperative as the church does have the responsibility to teach the truth of God as revealed in the scriptures. 2 Timothy 2:2 states, "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." Finally, it is important to note that the Holy Spirit, in His wisdom, has provided the church with the gifts and abilities that are needed so that the edification of the church can be made a reality (1 Corinthians 12:11).

## ***3) Worship***

While edification focuses on believers and benefits to them, true worship concentrates on the Lord. Although worship emphasizes God, it is also intended to benefit the worshipper. Praise and worship can be seen clearly in the Old Testament as well as the pictures of heaven given us in the Book of Revelation. Honoring God's place

in the universe and worshipping Him assists the church in living a life which serves God alone.

#### ***4) Social Concern***

The responsibility of Christians to live as a people of love and compassion is reflected in the life of Jesus as He took note and confronted the problems of the needy and suffering. If the church is to carry on the ministry of Christ, it needs to be engaged in ministering to the needs of the needy and suffering. Jesus' expectation of the church and social concern for those in need is evident in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Matthew 25:31-46 shows Jesus teaching that one of the signs that shows true believers from those that make empty professions are acts of love which are done in His name and emulate His example. James specifically speaks to social concerns in passages such as James 1:27. James also speaks against social injustice such as favoritism to the rich (James 2:1-11). In 1 John 3:17-18 states:

“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

Jesus taught to "love your brother as yourself." The church follows this command by showing social concerns to the world.

### **D. Sacraments of the Church**

#### ***1) Baptism***

In Matthew 28:19 Jesus says, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” This great commission represents an act of initiation into the covenantal community of believers (Van Gelder, 149). The Southern Baptist Faith and practice states:

“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.”

## ***2) The Lord's Supper***

While baptism represents entrance to the community, the Lord's Supper celebrates life in the community (Van Gelder, 149). The Southern Baptist Faith and practice regard this sacrament in these terms.

“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.”

Baptists historically view communion as an opportunity to remember what Christ has done. In this remembrance the Christian community also looks forward to His return. Here we turn to a brief overview of eschatology.

## **IV. Last Things (Eschatology)**

### **A. Overview**

Eschatology refers to the consummation of history, the completion of God's work in the world, and to some an aspect of theology that undue emphasis is placed on. This writer views the theology of eschatology as not pertaining only to future events but a current desire to highlight the work of Jesus as He clearly introduced a new age and secured victory over the power of evil once and for all. In spite of this complete victory, the struggle is still to be enacted in history. As the church, we have a responsibility in bringing about eschatological events which are to transpire here on earth and within

history. Some theologians view these responsibilities in terms of evangelism, while others see it in terms of social action. We must, however, be mindful that God's kingdom will be brought into being by His supernatural power and not the efforts of men. The Southern Baptist faith and message views eschatology in these terms:

"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."

As important as it is to have convictions regarding eschatological matters, Christians should keep in mind that only the matter that Christ shall "come again to judge the living and the dead" is taught by scripture and affirmed in the creeds. Division arising from issues such as the millennium and the tribulation never result in bearing fruit and often only cause a rift in the unity of the church. This writer's belief is the doctrine of eschatology should be utilized to encourage due diligence in the daily life of the Christian community. The practical application of eschatological themes should provide a constant incentive to purity in life, diligence in service and hope for the future. This doctrine should be used as a resource for ministry and not simply a topic for debate.

### **B. Realized Eschatology and Future Eschatology**

This writer asserts both a present and future approach to the kingdom of God. In the Old Testament, the day of the Lord was viewed as a future matter while the New Testament depicts the day of the Lord as a present occurrence. C.H. Dodd is known for this orientation of eschatology. His "realized eschatology" seeks to see how prophecy has already been fulfilled rather than search for future fulfillments of prophecy. Certainly

New Testament writers saw the end times as already come (Acts 2:16-17; 1 John 2:18-19). The impact of living each moment of each day as though the return of Christ is immediate and relevant made an impact on the lives and hearts of the early Christian community and fueled the lives and work of the apostles. Certainly living with this tension has strong merit. Although a realized eschatology certainly has its place, there are future concerns and the scriptures tell of signs that will precede the return of Christ.

These signs have been interpreted in a variety of different ways through the centuries and there have been a number of premature alarms (Brown, 448). Jesus spoke frequently of His future return and the apostles presented this as a blessed hope, one of the chief cornerstones for believers in trouble and undergoing persecution. One must also note that Paul warned against messianic hysteria and instructed believers that the return of Christ would happen only after a "great apostasy" presided over by the "man of sin" (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Through the centuries, believers have sought to identify this "man of sin" in order to predict the second coming. Further political events have been urged as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy prior to the return of Christ. The establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948 has been viewed in this light (Luke 21:24). Many books have been written by authors such as Hal Lindsay which have sold millions of copies claiming to predict the fulfillment of prophecies yet to come. Christians have been warned by Jesus Himself to be cautious about trying to discover the time of His return, yet He also advised us to "watch" (Matt. 24:45-25:46). It is in light of this admonition that we need to be mindful that the return of Christ is certain and a part of future eschatology.

Placing in balance the realized eschatology that the battle against sin has been defeated and the kingdom of God has truly begun with the future eschatology that

creation awaits the return of Christ and final judgment. We are called by the Holy Spirit to live in the tension; to live today and every minute properly for the Lord. Yet we look forward with great expectation to the fullness of the Lord's return. The Baptist faith and message views the kingdom in a similar manner:

"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."

### **C. The Second Coming**

The one eschatological doctrine on which all orthodox theologians agree on is the second coming of Christ. Many scriptures clearly indicate Christ is to return; Jesus Himself promises in Matthew 24-25 that He will come again. The certainty of the coming of Christ is one of the most widely taught doctrines in the New Testament. There are several specific criteria which scriptures describe this event.

First is the definiteness of the event in John 14:3. Jesus says lovingly, "I will come again and take you to myself." Second is the indefiniteness of the time in Matthew 24:44. Jesus states, "the son of man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him." Third is the overall character of the coming will be significant in four ways. It will be personal; as Jesus will come to take His people to Himself. It will be physical; Acts 1:11 states that He will return in the same way He departed, which certainly was in a physical form. It will be visible; Matthew 24:30 clearly describes an event that will be for the whole world to see. It will be unexpected; Matthew 25:8-10 describes the event happening so quickly that there will not be time to prepare. Finally the return of Christ

will be triumphant and glorious. 1 Thessalonians 4:16 tells us He will sit upon His glorious throne and judge all nations.

#### **D. Resurrection**

The Bible clearly promises resurrection of the believer. One of the clearest is found in John 5 where Jesus teaches on this matter. Paul also describes the bodily resurrection in depth in 1 Corinthians 15. There is no doubt that many additional scriptures guarantee a bodily resurrection.

#### **E. Judgment**

The second coming will also bring the great and final judgment. Jesus will be the judge as described in Matthew 25:31-33 and while we are not told the details, Christ will apparently permit the saints to share in this work (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). The subjects of this judgment will be all of humanity (Matthew 25:32). In addition, the evil angels will be judged at this time (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The basis of the judgment will be as stated in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Although good deeds will not ensure a positive verdict, as Matthew 7:21-23 states, Jesus will ask some who appear to have done good deeds to depart. The finality of His judgment will be eternal. In Matthew 25:46, we see clearly our two alternatives of the final judgment; eternal punishment or eternal life.

#### **V. Conclusion**

The Baptist Church Manual has this to say regarding creeds:

“What a man believes the bible to teach is his creed, either written or unwritten. And though it has sometimes been said that creeds have produced differences of religious opinion, it would be nearer to the truth, logically and historically, to say that differences of religious opinion have produced creeds.”

"As to declarations of faith, it must ever be understood that they are not substitutes for the Scriptures. They are only exponents of what are

conceived to be the fundamental doctrines of the word of God. Among Baptists, as their churches are independent, it is optional with each church to have a declaration or not, as it may think best. Each church too may adopt a declaration of its own. Its independence gives it this right, nor can it be alienated.” (Pendleton, 42)

The contents of this work contain what this writer believes the Bible teaches regarding the Holy Spirit, the church and the conclusion of this present age. The largest treatment here was afforded to the church, as this writer sought to utilize this opportunity to study the body of believers in greater detail. Surprisingly enough, through the conclusion of this work, this writer was touched profoundly through his study of the Holy Spirit. The teaching of scripture on the personhood of the Holy Spirit and His significant role today as the replacement for Jesus who carries on His work here until Christ’s return was specifically moving (John 16:7).

This work also constituted an excellent opportunity for this writer to review the theological doctrines of his denomination. The Holy Spirit, the church and last times are key dimensions to Christian life today. It is crucial to this writer to remain consistent with the teaching of God’s word as he ministers to the people of God in his denomination. In this endeavor, affirmation was given through the examination of scripture that Baptist values remain consistent with this writer’s view of theology.

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