

The Ordination Statement

of

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Council Called by
Erin Mills Baptist Church

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I. Salvation Experience

On June 28, 1985 I was baptized by immersion by Rev. Cedric Raymond and joined in membership to the people of Timmins First Baptist Church. I was raised in a family where the principles of the Christian religion were upheld though neither of my parents made overt professions of faith until the 1988 Billy Graham Crusade at Copps Coliseum in Hamilton. With my brothers and sisters I attended the Timmins church weekly for Sunday School by the decree of my parents, who did not attend church at this time.

My Grandparents, Russ and Vera McNeil, were long standing members of the Timmins church and their godly influence upon me was very pronounced. This coupled with the personal interest of Pastor Raymond led to a definite (re-) commitment to follow Jesus in the fall of 1984. I had made a profession of faith much earlier in my life, but the impact of that profession was minimal.

Pastor Raymond's willingness to accept my shallow profession, and his determination to disciple me and to establish me in some kind of definite ministry led to his calling upon me to prepare a youth bible study in September of 1984. Through this experience I came to realize that my present life was inconsistent with my Christian beliefs resulting in an open and forthright confession of faith.

Through the nurture of the Timmins church under the pastoral direction of Pastor Raymond, I grew in my faith commitment to Jesus Christ my Lord, reaching a place where I realized that God wanted me to be engaged in some kind of vocational ministry. With this intent in mind, I enrolled in September of 1987 at Ontario Bible College and then later at Toronto Baptist Seminary.

Through each of these stages in my Christian experience, I have grown in my personal relationship to Jesus Christ. I have become increasingly more intimate with him and more knowledgeable about his person and work in the world. I am confident of his love for me and secure in the knowledge that by his righteousness I am accepted by God in an eternal and immutable covenant fellowship.

II. Call to the Ministry

There is a sense in which the call to the pastoral ministry has always been with me, even before my 1984 decision to follow Jesus without reservation. As a child of eleven and twelve years of age, I would often act as the pastor or preacher at the Sunday afternoon church services my older brother Stephen would hold in our garage, re-teaching the lessons we learned in Sunday School earlier that day. However, my clear discernment of this call came following an FBPYA meeting in 1985 and then more clearly in 1986. It came as a desire to do something with my life that had Kingdom concerns at its heart, and not simply normal career ambitions.

In 1986 I dropped out of my thirteenth year of high school and began to work with my Father at the family service station. In July and August I took a European Discipleship tour with Reign Ministries International under the team direction of Greg Speck, the 1986 FBPYA conference speaker. While there, Greg and several other team members continually referred to me as “Pastor McGinn.” This was generally because they thought I looked pastoral with my shirt and tie when we attended Sunday worship services. However, it seemed to have some greater significance in the overall leadership and teaching opportunities I was able to fulfill.

When I returned home to my church, there was great enthusiasm expressed by Pastor Raymond and the church at my decision to enroll at Ontario Bible College. I was appointed as the Youth Sponsor and continued to give direction to the Youth Ministries of the church, as I had began doing in the fall of 1985.

Since I did not have a strong inclination to study, I did not think that I would be suited to the pastoral ministry. I enrolled at Ontario Bible College with the intention of going into foreign missions as a maintenance worker. However, because of the influence of Greg Speck and a growing interest in academic study, I switched my major to Youth Ministry and completed my studies in that field.

While at Ontario Bible College, my appetite for truth was insatiable. By the end of my second year I had clearly discerned that God was calling me into the pastoral ministry. I began to give

consideration to where I would continue my studies in preparation for this role. At the recommendation of a professor at Ontario Bible College and through contacts with Jarvis Street Baptist Church, I enrolled at Toronto Baptist Seminary in the Master of Divinity degree program.

During my studies at both Ontario Bible College and Toronto Baptist Seminary I worked in various capacities in Toronto Churches and for a summer internship at my home church in Timmins. Since I married just prior to enrollment at Toronto Baptist Seminary, my wife Krista and I took out membership at Jarvis Street Baptist Church where we ministered in various capacities until I was called to be the Associate Pastor at Stouffville Baptist Church in 1993.

In every situation where I had the opportunity to minister, including both Churches of which I held membership during this time, there was a strong recognition that I had been called to the pastoral ministry.

When my ministry at Stouffville Baptist Church concluded in 1995, I was given further confirmation of this call by the appeal of two churches to be their minister. I then took up the ministry of Church planting and work in the founding of a diverse congregation in Bancroft in a part time ministry.

Following this, in the summer of 1996, Krista and I joined as members at Lakeshore Village Baptist Church. I ministered among that congregation in various positions of leadership and refused their overtures to be their pastor. Upon the calling of their minister, Krista and I came to Erin Mills Baptist Church early in 1999.

While I have prepared for the ministry in every way that I knew how, and engaged in any ministry that I felt I could fulfill, I have not pursued the ministry. In each and every situation I have come into the ministry through the recommendation of others. I have never hesitated to do what I believe God has called me to do, but I have never sought to make it happen independent of his moving. I am happy to say that this is true of my relationship with the people of Erin Mills Baptist Church. Our coming to them was simply a desire to find a place where we could serve and worship. Their acknowledgment of God's call and my being fit to minister

has led to their opening up their hearts to call me as their pastor.
May God bless my ministry among them to his own glory. Amen.

III. Doctrinal Statement

1. The Doctrine of God (Theology Proper)

There is one living and true God. He is a personal being, spiritual and intelligent. He is holy, eternal, immutable and infinite. He is the creator, redeemer, preserver and ruler of the universe.

Hear, O Israel! YHWH is our God, YHWH is one! (Deut. 6:4); God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24); The eternal God is a dwelling place, And underneath are the everlasting arms (Deut. 33:27); Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. (Heb. 13:8)

He is incomprehensible and yet he can be known through general revelation, by special revelation (scripture) and ultimately by the person of Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2).

Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? They are high as the heavens, what can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know? Its measure is longer than the earth, And broader than the sea. (Job 11:7-9); That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Rom 1:19-20); When the YHWH saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush. (Exodus 3:4); God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son. (Heb. 1:1-2).

God has revealed himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each distinct in person, but without division of nature, essence or being. The doctrine of the triunity of God is a mystery beyond human comprehension.¹

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Matt.

¹ Louis Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology* makes the following remark: "The only subordination of which we can speak, is a subordination in respect to order and relationship. It is especially when we reflect on the relation of the three persons to the divine that the Trinity is a mystery far beyond our comprehension. It is the incomprehensible glory of the Godhead." (p. 88).

28:19); And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Gal. 4:6)

a. God the Father

The Father is the unbegotten begetter. The lead role in creation, providence and the purposing of salvation is attributed to Him. He represents the Trinity as the holy and righteous Being whose right was violated (Ps. 2:7-9; Jn. 6:37,38; 17:4-7). He is Father in truth to all those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

For to which of the angels did He ever say, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee"? And again, "I will be a Father to Him And He shall be a Son to Me"? (Heb. 1:5); Thus says YHWH God, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk in it ... (Is. 42:5); Put the trumpet to your lips! Like an eagle the enemy comes against the house of YHWH, Because they have transgressed My covenant, And rebelled against My law. (Hosea 8:1).

b. God the Son (Christology)

Jesus Christ is the eternal begotten Son of God. He was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. By the incarnation, he took upon himself uncorrupted human nature and lived a sinless human life. He is fully God, and so reveals the fullness of God. He is the Word of and the one true mediator between fallen humanity and God. He made redemption by his sinless life, atoning death, powerful resurrection and his glorious ascension. He continues his work in heaven, interceding on behalf of the saints. He will return in power and with great glory to judge the and to consummate his Kingdom, over which he shall rule for eternity under God the Father. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord (Matt. 28:20).

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16); Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus. (Matt. 1:20-21); Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His

name Immanuel. (Is. 7:14); For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (Heb. 4:15); For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh. (Rom. 8:3); And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. (Heb. 1:3); For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time. (1 Tim. 2:5-6); He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb. 7:25); Because God has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:31); For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15:27-28).

c. God the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology)

The Holy Spirit has proceeded from the Father and from the Son and is the ground of all life. The Spirit prepared the Son for his redeeming work by conceiving, protecting, anointing, and raising the Son from the dead. The Spirit illuminated the human writers of the scriptures (2 Peter 1:21) and illuminates, regenerates, sanctifies and indwells the hearts of believers. The Spirit distributes spiritual gifts to the Church for her work of service. The Spirit can be lied to, sinned against and grieved.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26); When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me. (John 15:26); The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. (Luke 4:18); But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you. (Rom. 8:11); But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Peter 1:20-21); God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

(Heb. 2:4); But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" (Acts 5:3); Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. (Matt. 12:31); And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:30).

2. Angelology

The existence of angels is clearly attested to by the scriptures. They like God are spiritual and incorporeal, but unlike God they are finite and contingent. They are rational, moral and immortal beings. Angels are both good and evil, the good are ministering spirits called elect angels and the evil are called demons.

For to which of the angels did He ever say, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee"? And again, "I will be a Father to Him And He shall be a Son to Me"? And when He again brings the first-born into the world, He says, "And let all the angels of God worship Him." And of the angels He says, "Who makes His angels winds, And His ministers a flame of fire..." But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies A footstool for Thy feet"? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation? (Heb. 1:5-7, 13-14); I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. (1 Tim. 5:21).

The chief of the evil angels is Satan, who once enjoyed great position, but fell from favour with God through pride. Satan is the adversary of God and his holy ones and seeks to destroy the handiwork of God. He is the accuser of the people of God. Satan possesses great power, which he used to destroy Adam and plunge the good creation of God into sin. He is called "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). He is destined to be cast into the bottomless pit.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8); And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. (Rev. 12:9); For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment ... (2 Peter 2:4); And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal

bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day. (Jude 6); And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Rev. 7:10).

3. Creation

God by his voice called out of nothing the whole created order, including the spiritual world called heaven and the physical universe or cosmos. This creative act took place over a very short time (six days) and with the creation of man was judged to be very good. The heavens and the earth were created for the glory of God.

Praise YHWH! Praise YHWH from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! Praise Him, highest heavens, And the waters that are above the heavens! Let them praise the name of YHWH, For He commanded and they were created. He has also established them forever and ever; He has made a decree which will not pass away. (Psalm 148:1-6); It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days YHWH made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed. (Ex. 31:17); The heavens are telling of the glory of God (Psalm 19:1).

4. Providence

God, after creating all things good, by his power and wisdom upholds and sustains all things and moves, directs and governs all creatures from the greatest to the least according to the counsel of his own pleasure and for his own glory.

Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it. (Is. 46:9-11); Come and see the works of God, Who is awesome in His deeds toward the sons of men. He turned the sea into dry land; They passed through the river on foot; There let us rejoice in Him! He rules by His might forever; His eyes keep watch on the nations; Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. (Psalm 66:5-7); Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will. (Eph. 1:11).

5. The Doctrine of Man (Anthropology)

God by a special act of creation made man (both male and female) in his own image. Adam and Eve were the crown of creation and were mandated by God to rule as vice-regents over all the earth. In their original state they were holy and innocent, living in perfect peace and harmony with God and the created order. They possessed freedom to choose obedience or disobedience to God's revealed will. From this first human couple the entire human population has descended.

Then YHWH God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Gen. 2:7); And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Gen. 1:27); 8 And YHWH God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground YHWH God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Gen. 2:8-9); From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die. (Gen. 2:17).

4. The Fall (Harmartiology)

By deception and trickery Satan appealed to the free will of our first parents in a bid to turn them against God. By this destructive act of Satan and through a willful act of both Adam and Eve, they and all of their descendants have become alienated from God and the creation has been placed under a curse. By this sin, our first parents accrued to themselves guilt and became distorted in every aspect of their being and have become spiritually dead. The whole of the human race, having descended from them, has inherited this spiritually dead condition. The image of God that was in our first parents is also passed on but in a defaced condition.

And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil ... And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." And the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than

every beast of the field. (Gen. 3:4-5,12-14); For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Rom. 8:20-21); Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned — for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (Rom. 5:12-14); And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (Eph. 2:1-2); Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man. (Gen. 9:6).

7. The Revelation of God

a. General Revelation

The knowledge of God is revealed to all humanity through God's works of creation and providence. This revelation of God, as a consequence of the fall, is insufficient in and of itself to bring mankind to a definite knowledge of God — the creation's testimony is imperfect and human understanding is distorted. God has also written upon the human heart his law, which reveals him and testifies against each person who sins against him by disobedience to it.

Then you will discern the fear of the LORD, And discover the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Prov. 2:5); How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10:14-15); For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Rom. 2:11-16).

b. Special Revelation

God has infallibly revealed himself, his purpose for creation, his legal expectations and his plan of redemption by a special act of revelation. This he did by inspiring certain men by his Holy Spirit so that they would speak and write without error a volume of writings which have been providentially preserved as the 66 books of the Christian scriptures. These writings do not simply contain or become the Word of God but are the inscripturated Word of God. They speak directly and with absolute authority upon all matters pertaining to God's covenant relationship with humanity. By this Word is imparted the knowledge of God and of salvation to those to whom it has been given to see, hear and understand the things of God. Apart from this Word of God, there is no certain knowledge of God.²

If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; (Eph. 3:2-5); But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2 Peter 1:20-21); Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Saviour. (Titus 1:1-3).

8. The Doctrine of Salvation

Salvation is the gracious provision of the Lord Jesus Christ, who by his incarnation and sinless life, voluntarily suffered as the

² In keeping with the historic Christian creeds: I believe in an authoritative Bible given through inspired human writers. I do not believe we can speak strictly of an inerrant original since the extant autographs and translations are human copies, which no reasonable scholar would consider infallible or without corruption. Nonetheless, I believe that God has so superintended the process of preserving His Word, that the extant Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts and the major translations can be confidently called the Word of God and can be used and appealed to as the inspired, infallible and authoritative Word of God. This has scientific process to support it, but is ultimately a point of faith.

vicarious (substitutionary) atoning sacrifice for sin. By his death he has redeemed a lost humanity for God, reconciled that humanity to God and satisfied the demands of God's holy wrath. The Lord Jesus Christ has also by this atoning work removed the guilt (legal condemnation) of sin. His resurrection is the vindication of God over sin and the promise of eternal life for all who believe.

But now for a brief moment grace has been shown from YHWH our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. For we are slaves; yet in our bondage, our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. (Ezra 9:8-9); But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are. (Acts 15:11); When we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. (Eph. 2:5-9); And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John 2: 1-2); Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. (Rom. 6:9-10); And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory (1 Tim. 3:16).

The sinner who by faith trusts the Lord Jesus Christ, his atoning death and life giving resurrection are born again by the Spirit of God (regenerated) and made righteous in the heavenly court before God the Father. They are given the Holy Spirit who dwells in their hearts convicting them of sin and guiding them in righteousness. The reception of this Spirit guarantees by way of deposit that the saving promises of God purchased by Jesus will be completely and unfailingly paid out in eternity.

But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"— that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if

you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." (Rom. 10:8-11); In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:13-14); More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Phil. 3:8-11); But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Cor. 1:30-31).

9. The Doctrine of the Church (Ecclessiology)

a. The Universal Church

The Church is the body of Christ Jesus who is her head. She exists for the purpose of making his glory known and is the specific object of his atoning death. She is composed of every person who has been saved by Christ Jesus, including those who have lived, those who presently live and those who will live. She is being prepared and preserved by the Holy Spirit to be the bride of Christ. This universal nature of the Church is what gives legitimacy to any ecumenical activity that might be undertaken, as it speaks to the unity of the Church in Christ Jesus.

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. (Eph. 1:22-23); Praise YHWH! I will give thanks to YHWH with all my heart, In the company of the upright and in the assembly. (Psalm 111:1); But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8); There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph. 4:4-6); For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all

of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Gal. 3:26-29).

b. The Local Church

The Church visible is a local congregation of regenerate souls baptized upon confession of faith and joined together in the fellowship of the gospel. Each congregation is an autonomous covenant community self governing under Christ existing for the mutual building up of the individual members, the performance of public worship and the exercising of Christian discipline. Her administration is conducted through the ministries of her Pastors, Elders and Deacons.

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:41); For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you, (Titus 1:5); To the angel of the church in Ephesus write (Rev. 2:1), And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write (Rev. 2:8); speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. (Eph. 4:15-16).

c. The Ordinances

i. Baptism

Baptism in water is commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ and is to be administered to every believer upon the confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. It is presented in the New Testament as the confession of faith and is the true symbol of the Christian's union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. It is to be administered publicly and by complete immersion.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:19-20); Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with

Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. (Rom. 6:3-7); And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38).

ii. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper or Communion was commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ on the night that he was betrayed to be crucified, and is established as an on going memorial feast. The feast is to be a solemn occasion of reflection upon the finished work of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross, an affectionate fellowship of the saints and a joyful anticipation of the coming of Christ and the glorious eschatological banquet: The wedding feast of the lamb.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. (1 Cor. 11:23-26); Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Cor. 10:16-17); And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart. (Acts 2:46); Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God." (Rev. 19:7-9).

c. Evangelism & Missions

Missions is the primary work of the Church and is properly understood as the planting of new churches. It is mainly

accomplished through the work of evangelism. Every believer has a responsibility to be engaged in this enterprise of evangelism and missions and to support it through prayer and practical helps. Some will be appointed by the church to minister solely in the ministries of evangelism and missions and are to be supported in this ministry by the church.

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:7-8); Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. (Acts 15:3-4); But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Tim. 4:5). Let the elders who rule well be i28 orthe thyork doub ruhonorngsspeenil Hoth

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b. Parousia

At the end of the world, a time known only to the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again to the earth to consummate his kingdom and restore all things. He shall appear personally with a physical body unexpectedly and with great glory to judge the world in righteousness.

If therefore they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go forth, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matt. 24:26-27); Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven. (Acts 1:11); Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen. (Rev. 1:7); For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. (1 Thes. 5:2-3); He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:31).

c. Resurrection

Immediately upon the coming of Christ, both the righteous who have died in the Lord and the unrighteous who have died in their sin will be resurrected. The righteous are raised to eternal life and the unrighteous to eternal condemnation.

Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt. (Dan. 12:1-2); And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were

in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:11-15); Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment. (John 5:28-29); All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:39-57).

d. Judgment

Concomitant to the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ will be the final judgment. He will come as the Judge who will preside over the eschatological court and will judge the hearts and intents of all people. The righteous in Christ will be vindicated and the unrighteous will be condemned. The righteous will then pass into the eternal glory of the new heavens and the new earth where

they will forever be with the Lord. The unrighteous will go away into everlasting torment.

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matt. 25:31-34,41). And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:12-15).

e. Heaven

In the restoration of all things the present heavens and earth will be renewed and be the eternal abode of the righteous who will live there in sinless perfection forever. It will be a new economy in which all of the evil associated with the curse is abolished and the creation is established incorruptible.

Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. (Acts 3:19-21); But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:10-13); And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and

there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed; and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever. (Rev. 21:1-2, 22-27, 22:1-5).

f. Hell

The unrighteous are confined to hell, which is a place of utter and complete contempt prepared for the Devil and his angels. Hell is a place of definite location in which the unrighteous continue to exist in everlasting misery. The imagery most dominant in the scriptures is that it is a place of fire.

And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than having your two feet, to be cast into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark 9:43-48); Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41); And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Rev. 20:10).

IV. Contemporary Issues

1. Matrimonial Issues

a. Marriage

The matrimonial relationship between a man and woman is a sacred covenant bond arising out of the very nature of humanity created in the image of God as male and female. It is a union that reflects the peculiar relationship that God established between himself and Israel and ultimately by the picture of Christ's relationship with the Church.

It is to be a relationship of exclusivity. No foreigner is to be permitted into the relationship — fidelity in marriage is a picture of fidelity to God. It is the proper soil in which the seed of future generations are to be planted. It is the context in which children are to be nurtured.

A Christian marriage is one where love, equality, patience, respect and sacrifice are united into a caring bond. It is a relationship where compassion and fulfillment are nurtured. It is a relationship, and therefore intercourse is to be pursued spiritually, intellectually, emotionally and physically.

b. Divorce

The dissolution of the sacred bond of marriage is not to be lightly considered. The pronouncing of a marriage as dissolved is never a necessary conclusion and should only be made following a persistent and serious effort of resolution. Divorce is never an ideal (Mal. 2:16)

The permissibility of divorce is explicitly expressed, sometimes with *proviso*, in both the Old and New Testaments (Deut. 24:1-2; Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9). The relationship of God to Israel is perhaps the best typological relationship that can be summoned in seeking to understand what constitutes reasonable and just grounds for divorce.

In God's relationship with Israel we can see the following: God pursues the relationship despite the unfaithfulness of Israel. God

surrenders Israel in consequence of her continued and steadfast determination to remain in a state of unfaithfulness.

The marriage is best understood as fidelity. Divorce is best understood as a legal recognition and a finalization of a state of infidelity. No one act of unfaithfulness (idolatry) on the part of Israel constituted the definitive shattering of the covenant bond between her and YHWH.

In marriage there can be no one act of infidelity that gives legitimacy to the pursuit of a divorce. Divorce is really and truly recognition and finalization that the marriage bond has been in principal and in fact fractured and no longer exists. This may be the case in such situations as abuse, sexual infidelity, and a continued state of indifference or extreme independence.

For I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously." (Malachi 2:16).

And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh '? Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Matt. 19:3-9)

Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there. And I thought, 'After she has done all these things, she will return to Me'; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also." (Jeremiah 3:6-8).

But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, let her remain

unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not send his wife away. But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? (1 Cor. 7:10-16).

c. Remarriage

Biblically a marriage only exists when it has not been dissolved legally. The legal dissolution of marriage is either the death of spouse or divorce. A divorce being granted, or the death of a spouse having taken place, an individual is released from all matrimonial obligations and is freed to marry another.

Attempts to limit permissibility of remarriage only to those who are the innocent parties of divorce are not practical. My Father used to tell us when we would be complaining about what a sibling has done to us that "it takes two to tango." This is true in all relationships. Very seldom is there an innocent party, and the fact that only one partner in a marriage relationship has pursued or fallen into a sexual adulterous relationship does not exonerate the other from establishing or helping to establish circumstances in the relationship that have given rise to the act of infidelity. To assume guilt only of the party caught offending in the flesh denies the spiritual dimension of sin and the multifarious nature of matrimonial relationships.

And I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'Thou art my God!' (Hosea 2:23).

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife. (Deut. 24:1-2).

2. Sexual Issues

a. Christian View of Sex

Humanity, which finds its simplest complete expression in the persons of Adam and Eve, is a two-gendered entity that has perfect union in heterosexual relationship. This relationship is one that acknowledges a compatibility of person between the male and the female genders across every aspect of their being.

God's act of creating Eve as a helper suitable (compatible) for Adam is significant. She was the only being who could help him fulfill the mandate given to them both at creation: multiply, fill and rule the earth.

This job is one that encompasses our whole being. It is an intellectual task that demands that we expend our energy in making calculations, plans and goal setting that will be pursued and accomplished together. It is an emotional goal which longs for fulfillment, suffers pain in setbacks and jubilation in accomplishment. It is a task of discipline and endeavour that challenges us to diligence and focus.

The various differences between male and female are what make this task realizable. It is not just a matter of procreation and thus the need of male and female genitalia in copulative union, but a union of hearts and minds, purposes and ambitions, bodies and souls to accomplish it.

In keeping with a Christian recognition that marriage is the sacred and exclusive covenant bond between a man and woman, physical sex is understood as proper only within its boundaries. It is viewed as a sacred union of utmost intimacy and pleasure.

Physical sex need not be identified solely with reproduction, but certainly cannot be divorced from it. Pleasure in the act is indicative of the pleasure of the marriage union and represents an aspect of it.

The excessive preoccupation with genital sex in our postmodern society has caused a great deal of confusion on its importance. Discussions are seldom reserved or in good taste. It is important for Christians to develop wholesome relationships that will include

both sexes but will not emphasize genital sex. Etiquette and reserve while acknowledging the sexual dynamic of all relationships will make healthier Christians.

Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control. But this I say by way of concession, not of command. (1 Cor. 7:1-6).

b. Extra-Marital Sex

The marriage bed is the only acceptable venue for genital sex. Relationships that emphasize this aspect without first covenanting in marriage are perverse and spiritually unhealthy.

The sex act is called by Paul the “becoming one body with” (1 Cor. 6:16) and is based upon the Genesis 2:24 statement that it is in marriage that the male and female become one flesh. A union of bodies which symbolizes this unity but which in every other aspect seeks to live in separation is a contradiction. It is a violation of God’s design and law. True and ultimate happiness cannot be achieved in such a situation regardless of appearances to the contrary.

In such activity there are several risks that are run, such as pregnancy, disease, emotional confusion and the frustration of an imbalanced relationship. In many instances community ostracism may result, such as excommunication from church or tribal or social out casting.

More significant for our purposes, however, is that sexual promiscuity within the unbounded state of non-marriage is the symbol of idolatry and unfaithfulness. As such a symbol it points to a sin at a deeper level than simply the social or bodily, but in our relationship with God himself. Christians who engage in pre-marital or extra-marital physical sexual relationships are effectively joining the Holy Spirit in unholy relationships and as such are the cause of uncleanness and impurity among the

sanctified vessels of God's covenant community. Such is not a sin to be taken lightly.

Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. (Rom. 13:13-14).

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. (1Thes. 4:3-6).

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, "The two will become one flesh." But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Cor. 6:15-20).

c. Homosexuality

The composition of humanity as male and female for the fulfilling of the Divine mandate eliminates homosexuality as a legitimate sexual expression. It is considered detestable to God and is classified among sins that Paul states the doers of shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

This being said, the Christian attitude in dealing with the issue must be one that is permeated with grace. Factors contributing to the practice of homosexuality will never justify it, yet they do however constitute a struggle for those of us who are not homosexuals to understand.

Homosexuality as a term is reserved in the scriptures for those who practice homosexuality. Today the term is also used of those who have an inclination to practice it as well as for those who are practicing it. This broadening of the term helps us to understand

the complexity of the situation and teaches us to be gentle in our dealings with homosexuals.

Although some studies seem to warrant the conclusion that there are genetic factors in some instances of homosexual orientation, others give indication of psychological and environmental influences. In both instances the depravity of the human soul and the subjection of creation to the curse are dominant. Redemption is possible through Christ Jesus. The path may not, however, be very easily trod.

Currently there is a great deal of pressure from pro gay activist groups for the legitimization of homosexual relationships in law and in the Christian Church. Various means are being used to force this. The Church must resist this pressure and maintain adherence to the bible's teaching while expressing love and concern for those who advocate this "new morality." Such activists with their militant stance against Christian morality are enemies of the Church, but not in the absolute sense and thus are not to be made into inflated images of the anti-Christ. The Christian response should not be one of hatred and intolerance.

Attached to the gay issue is the matter of HIV or AIDS. The Christian must be careful not to prejudge any individual case of AIDS as a judgment of God, though this may be the case. Many who are afflicted with this disease are not and never have been homosexuals. Compassion and a prayerful desire that this evil might be removed is the appropriate Christian attitude.

If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their blood-guiltiness is upon them. (Lev. 20:13).

Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

In the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. (Rom. 1:27).

3. Abortion

Human life is sacred in a way that other animal life is not. It is only the human animal that is created in the image of God. This sanctity of life, the biblical evidence underscoring God's concern and involvement for the unborn and the scientific confusion regarding the moment when life begins demand that the current practice of abortion be interpreted as the killing of helpless and innocent people.

I feel constrained by the complexity of the issue and the strong realization that life begins at conception to adopt a position that would refuse every instance of abortion. To adopt a perspective that would chose between the Mother's life and that of the child's is to enter upon a debate that is at best a calculated choice. Modern medical science has reduced the likelihood of a mother's death in childbirth substantially and the conditions that would give rise to it are not always known in advance.

If the unborn child is to be accorded the recognition as a living, divine image bearing person from conception, then only God should be given the prerogative to determine whether he/she is to have their life natally terminated.

Though strong feelings about this issue do exist both in and outside of the Church of Christ, as in other areas of Christian morality, the watchwords are love, compassion and forgiveness. No person who has made the erroneous choice to abort a child, regardless of reason, should be subjected to the guilt induced by others apart from the work of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word of God and the ministry of Christ's love and reconciliation. Our approach should not be to force admission and acceptance of the wrongness of such a choice, but to seek each to find Christ and his forgiveness and healing in the consequences of such a choice.

Emotionally charged argument and violent reactions by some in the name of Christ have not served to further biblical morality on this issue but in a solidifying and strengthening opposition to it. The Christian way is love, not hate, and in very view few situations aside from that of abortion is this so vividly made clear.

Upon Thee I was cast from birth; Thou hast been my God from my mother's womb. (Psalm 22:10).

By Thee I have been sustained from my birth; Thou art He who took me from my mother's womb; My praise is continually of Thee. (Psalm 76:1).

Behold, children are a gift of the LORD; The fruit of the womb is a reward. (Psalm 127:3).

For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them. How precious also are Thy thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! (Psalm 139:13-17).

Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you, 'Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; And you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. (Isaiah 44:2).

For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb. (Luke 1:15).

Thy hands fashioned and made me altogether, And wouldst Thou destroy me? Remember now, that Thou hast made me as clay; And wouldst Thou turn me into dust again? Didst Thou not pour me out like milk, And curdle me like cheese; Clothe me with skin and flesh, And knit me together with bones and sinews? Thou hast granted me life and lovingkindness; And Thy care has preserved my spirit. Yet these things Thou hast concealed in Thy heart; I know that this is within Thee (Job 10:8-13).

4. Euthanasia

The term euthanasia is from a Christian perspective, an oxymoron — there is no such thing as a good death. Death is the result of the curse, and even the death of Jesus, which has infinite value or goodness as a consequence of its application to the redemption of the believer, was necessitated and accomplished by sin.

Death is an evil over which the Christian looks to Christ for a decisive victory. The resurrection of Christ and the hope of our

own personal resurrection is the full application of the redemptive work of Christ applied to his elect. Death is not final.

Euthanasia has as its purpose a bringing of dignity to the dying and in some instances a timely closure for the grieving family of those who are terminally ill or advanced in age. That it often does bring a much-needed relief to the family cannot be denied, but that it brings dignity to the dying is hardly self-evident.

The dignity of life is tied up particularly with the sanctity of life and the quality of life that God providentially gives to each of us at any given moment. It is not an arbitrary decision to be made by someone in anticipation of a changed circumstance, in the midst of a continuing undesired situation or about the on going geriatric needs of the aged. Dignity in life is the presence of life itself when it is nurtured and developed. There is no dignity in dying when life is neglected or deliberately extinguished.

That there is no dignity in dying does not mean there cannot be comfort in death. Those who are terminally ill need not be in unnecessary pain and discomfort. Much can and should be done to ease their pain and to stimulate them intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

In the extreme but regular cases of a comatose patient there are greater challenges to their developmental stimulation, but it does not mean that such things are not possible. Creativity in the ministry and care of patients in these circumstances is necessary.

Euthanasia is generally categorized under two headings: active and passive. Active euthanasia takes place when the person is killed either by a direct act of their own or by that of someone else. Passive euthanasia takes place when the person dies as a result of not receiving life-supporting care.

I believe that all forms of active euthanasia are contrary to the teachings of Christ and are a form of murder. As such I find no justification for its practice.

Passive euthanasia, I believe, can be an acceptable practice. However, I would not term appropriate passive euthanasia by this terminology — I would view it simply as a natural death. Passive euthanasia that deliberately “neglects” to administer life-

supporting care when there is a medical indication that it will be beneficial is also unacceptable for the same reasons that is active euthanasia.

The withholding of life supporting care in circumstances which would give every medical indication that it is extra-ordinary and unbeneficial is acceptable and often even demanded. It is perhaps just as inappropriate to try to prolong life unnecessarily as it is to terminate it prematurely.

The whole issue of when to withhold care and when to give it covers very difficult terrain, and as someone who is not particularly well versed in medicine nor qualified to give a proper medical diagnosis I am unwilling to make pronouncement beyond the general principle announced above. Compassion to the dying, their care givers and to their family is important, and as ministers of the Word of God our focus should be on providing operating guidelines so that those who are truly in a position to make these decisions are given as much help as possible. Each will finally have to make the decision with the wisdom and knowledge that God provides in each situation. When the issue is not so clear-cut, caring pastoral support in the decision rendered may be the best advice one can give.

The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life. (Job 33:4).

Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man. (Gen. 9:6).

You shall not murder. (Exodus 20:13).

And Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people. (Gen. 25:8).

The glory of young men is their strength, And the honor of old men is their gray hair. Stripes that wound scour away evil, And strokes reach the innermost parts. (Prov. 20:29-30).

Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.' (Zech. 8:4-5).

5. Non-Christian Religions

One of the primary responsibilities of the pastor in Canada today is to preach the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of a plurality of religions. In raising this issue in this forum, I am simply giving expression to my attitude regarding how a Christian minister ought to approach his call.

Tolerance is a very significant word. I believe it is the essence of the word patience in I Corinthians 13:4. This does not mean that I accept nor even allow non-Christian religions to have validity in the face of the Christian faith, but that I do not allow my faith conviction to justify insensitivity to each individual's right to possess, promote and practice a religion other than the Christian one.

The expression of faith in Christ that is distinct to one particular segment of our cultural heritage may not be appropriate in the ministry to those who come from other lands. The need for a global outlook and a ministry that appeals to the common aspects of our humanity is more needed today than any time in the past in Canada. A universal cross-cultural ministry is essential.

This will necessitate the study of other religions so that an ability to converse in an informed way even if at a basic level is possible. People from other faiths must be embraced and encouraged in every activity that is not in conflict with the gospel. Christ should be proclaimed with emphasis on his role as redeemer-reconciler.

Sensitivity in respecting the sacred elements of these other religions should be exercised, while care is given to ensure that we do not give tacit support of them. Christ is still to be proclaimed as God and the only mediator between God and man. Care must be taken to avoid using clichéd language and one-liner statements, which give the impression of point scoring.

Love for people as people and not simply as trophies for our church mantle is essential. Having concern for their well being and seeking their good in every area of life is a Christian duty and not simply a means to preaching the gospel. Force-feeding someone is a form of religious abuse, and should be avoided. If they are not interested in listening, they should not be forced to hear.

Care should be taken in preaching, teaching, evangelism and in general conversation that no derogatory remarks are made of another religion. Discussions of an apologetic nature should not be focused on destroying another's faith, but in building people up in the true faith.

In summary, the approach of positively preaching the Lord Jesus Christ and loving people genuinely is the most beneficial way to win the nations. A ministry that is centered on this is likely to be the most fruitful.

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding the city full of idols. So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. And some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"-- because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; we want to know therefore what these things mean." (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.) And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He

In that day Israel will be the third party with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance." (Isaiah 19:24-25).