

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I. GOD

There is one living and true God, the creator of the universe (Exod. 15:11; Isa. 45:11; Jer. 27:5). He is revealed in the unity of the Godhead as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, who are equal in every divine perfection (Exod. 15:11; Matt. 28:19; II Cor. 13:14).

A. God the Father is the supreme ruler of the universe. He providentially directs the affairs of history according to the purposes of His grace (Gen. 1; Ps. 19:1; Ps. 104; Heb. 1:1-3).

B. God the Son is the Savior of the world. Born of the virgin Mary (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:26-35), He declared His deity among men (John 1:14, 18; Matt. 9:6), died on the cross as the only sacrifice for sin (Phil. 2:6-11), arose bodily from the grave (Luke 24:6, 7, 24-26; I Cor. 15:3-6), and ascended back to the Father (Acts 1:9-11; Mark 16:19). He is at the right hand of the Father, interceding for believers (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25) until He returns to rapture them from the world (Acts 1:11; I Thess. 4:16-18).

C. God the Holy Spirit is the manifest presence of deity. He convicts of sin (John 16:8-11), teaches spiritual truths according to the written Word (John 16:12-15), permanently indwells believers (Acts 5:32; John 14:16, 17, 20, 23), and confers on every believer at conversion the ability to render effective spiritual service (I Peter 4:10, 11).

II. THE SCRIPTURES

A. The Scriptures are God's inerrant revelation, complete in the Old and New Testaments, written by divinely inspired men as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:21). Those men wrote not in words of human wisdom but in words taught by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:13).

B. The Scriptures provide the standard for the believer's faith and practice (II Tim. 3:16, 17), reveal the principles by which God will judge all (Heb. 4:12; John 12:48), and express the true basis of Christian fellowship (Gal. 1:8, 9; II John 9-11).

III. CREATION

A. The World—God created all things for His own pleasure and glory, as revealed in the biblical account of creation (Gen. 1; Rev. 4:11; John 1:2, 3; Col. 1:16).

B. The Angels—God created an innumerable host of spirit beings called angels. Holy angels worship God and execute His will; while fallen angels serve Satan, seeking to hinder God's purposes (Col. 1:16; Luke 20:35, 36; Matt. 22:29, 30; Ps. 103:20; Jude 6).

C. Man—As the crowning work of His creation, God created humankind (male and female) in His own image (Psa. 8; Gen. 1:27; 2:7). Consequently, every person from conception is of inherent dignity and worth and merits the respect of all other persons (Psa. 51:5; Psa. 139:13-16; Gen. 9:6; Matt. 10:28-31; James 3:9).

D. Marriage—God created marriage (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:23-24). Jesus Christ declared the creator's intention for marriage to be the inseparable and exclusive union between a man and a woman (natural man and natural woman) (Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9). Marriage testifies of the union between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31-32; Rom. 1:25-27).

IV. SATAN

Satan is a person rather than a personification of evil (John 8:44), and he with his demons opposes all that is true and godly by blinding the world to the gospel (II Cor. 4:3, 4), tempting saints to do evil (Eph. 6:11; I Peter 5:8), and warring against the Son of God (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 20:1-10).

V. DEPRAVITY

Although man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; 2:17), he fell through sin and that image was marred (Rom. 5:12; James 3:9). In his unregenerate state, he is void of spiritual life, is under the influence of the devil, and lacks any power to save himself (Eph. 2:1-3; John 1:13). The sin nature has been transmitted to every member of the human race, the man Jesus Christ alone being excepted (Rom. 3:23; I Peter 2:22). Because of the sin nature, man possesses no divine life and is essentially and unchangeably depraved apart from divine grace (Rom. 3:10-19; Jer. 17:9).

VI. SALVATION

A. The Meaning of Salvation—Salvation is the gracious work of God whereby He delivers undeserving sinners from sin and its results (Matt. 1:21; Eph. 2:8, 9). In justification He declares righteous all who put faith in Christ as Savior (Rom. 3:20-22), giving them freedom from condemnation, peace with God, and full assurance of future glorification (Rom. 3:24-26).

B. The Way of Salvation—Salvation is based wholly on the grace of God apart from works (Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:9). Anyone who will exercise repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved (Acts 16:30-32; Luke 24:47; Rom. 10:17).

C. The Provision of Salvation—Christ died for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29; 3:16; I John 2:1, 2). Through His blood, atonement is made without respect of persons (I Tim. 2:4-6). All sinners can be saved by this gracious provision (Heb. 2:9; John 3:18).

VII. DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN FREEDOM

God's sovereignty and man's freedom are two inseparable factors in the salvation experience (Eph. 2:4-6). The two Bible truths are in no way contradictory, but they are amazingly complementary in the great salvation so freely provided. God, in His sovereignty purposed, planned and executed salvation in eternity while man's freedom enables him to make a personal choice in time, either to receive this salvation and be saved, or to reject it and be damned (Eph. 1:9-12; 1:13, 14; John 1:12, 13).

VIII. SANCTIFICATION

All believers are set apart unto God (Heb. 10:12-14) at the time of their regeneration (I Cor. 6:11). They should grow in grace (II Peter 1:5-8) by allowing the Holy Spirit to apply God's Word to their lives (I Peter 2:2), conforming them to the principles of divine righteousness (Rom. 12:1, 2; I Thess. 4:3-7) and making them partakers of the holiness of God (II Cor. 7:1; I Peter 1:15, 16).

IX. SECURITY

All believers are eternally secure in Jesus Christ (John 10:24-30; Rom. 8:35-39). They are born again (John 3:3-5; I John 5:1; I Peter 1:23), made new creatures in Christ (II Cor. 5:17; II Peter 1:4), and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; I John 4:4), enabling their perseverance in good works (Eph. 2:10). A special providence watches over them (Rom. 8:28; I Cor. 10:13), and they are kept by the power of God (Phil. 1:6; 2:12, 13; I Peter 1:3-5; Heb. 13:5).

X. CHURCH

A. The Nature of the Church—A New Testament church is a local congregation (Acts 16:5; I Cor. 4:17) of baptized believers in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:41) who are united by covenant in belief of what God has revealed and in obedience to what He has commanded (Acts 2:41, 42).

B. The Autonomy of the Church—She acknowledges Jesus as her only Head (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18) and the Holy Bible as her only rule of faith and practice (Isa. 8:20; II Tim. 3:16, 17), governing herself by democratic principles (Acts 6:1-6; I Cor. 5:1-5) under the oversight of her pastors (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24).

C. The Perpetuity of the Church—Instituted by Jesus during His personal ministry on earth (Matt. 16:18; Mark 3:13-19; John 1:35-51), true churches have continued to the present and will continue until Jesus returns (Matt. 16:18; 28:20).

D. The Ordinances of the Church—Her two ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer as a confession of his faith in Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:4) and is prerequisite to church membership and participation in the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41, 42). The Lord's Supper is the sacred sharing of the bread of communion and the cup of blessing by the assembled church (Acts 20:7) as a memorial to the crucified body and shed blood of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:19, 20; I Cor. 11:23-26). Both ordinances must be administered by the authority of a New Testament church (Matt. 28:18-20; I Cor. 11:23-26).

E. The Officers of the Church—Pastors and deacons are the permanent officers divinely ordained in a New Testament church (Phil. 1:1). Each church may select men of her choice to fill those offices under the leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:1-6; 20:17, 18) according to the divinely given qualifications (I Tim. 3:1-13).

Pastors (elders, bishops) are authorized to oversee and teach the churches under the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; I Peter 5:1-4). Each church is responsible to follow them as they follow Christ (I Cor. 11:1; I Thess. 1:6; Heb. 13:17) and to provide a livelihood for them that they might fulfill their ministries (I Tim. 5:17, 18; Phil. 4:15-18). Pastors are equal in the service of God (Matt. 23:8-12).

Deacons (ministers, servants) are servants of the churches and assistants to the pastors, particularly in benevolent ministries. Each church may select her own deacons according to her needs, and no church is bound by the act of another church in that selection (Acts 6:1-6).

F. The Ministry of the Church—Her mission is evangelizing sinners by preaching the gospel (Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:45-47), baptizing those who believe (Acts 2:41; 8:12, 35-38), and maturing them by instruction (Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:42) and discipline (Matt. 18:17, 18; I Cor. 5:1-5).

G. The Fellowship of the Church—She is free to associate with true churches in furthering the faith (II Cor. 11:8; Phil. 4:10, 15, 16) but is responsible to keep herself from those who hold doctrines or practices contrary to Holy Scripture (Gal. 1:8, 9; I John 2:19). In association with other churches, each church is equal and is the sole judge of the measure and method of her cooperation (Matt. 20:25-28). In all matters of polity and practice, the will of each church is final (Matt. 18:18).

XI. CIVIL AUTHORITY

Human government was instituted by God to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. It is separate from the church, though both church and state exercise complementary ministries for the benefit of society (Matt. 22:21).

Christians should submit to the authority of the government under which they live, obeying all laws which do not contradict the laws of God, respecting officers of government, paying taxes, rendering military service, and praying for the welfare of the nation and its leaders (Rom. 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13, 17; I Tim. 2:1, 2). They should vote, hold office, and exercise influence to direct the nation after the principles of Holy Scripture.

Civil authority is not to interfere in matters of conscience or disturb the institutions of religion (Acts 4:18-20), but it should preserve for every citizen the free exercise of his religious convictions.

Churches should receive no subsidy from the government, but they should be exempt from taxation on property and money used for the common good through worship, education, or benevolence.

XII. LAST THINGS

A. Return—Our risen Lord will return personally in bodily form to receive His redeemed unto Himself. His return is imminent (I Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 22:20).

B. Resurrections—After Jesus returns, all of the dead will be raised bodily, each in his own order: the righteous dead in “the resurrection of life” and the wicked dead in “the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:24-29; I Cor. 15:20-28).

C. Judgments—Prior to the eternal state, God will judge everyone to confer rewards or to consign to punishment (Matt. 25:31-46; II Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15).

D. Eternal States—Heaven is the eternal home of the redeemed (John 14:1-3) who, in their glorified bodies (I Cor. 15:51-58), will live in the presence of God forever (I Thess. 4:17) in ultimate blessing (Rev. 21, 22).

Hell is the place of eternal punishment and suffering (Luke 16:19-31) for the devil, his angels (Matt. 25:41), and the unredeemed (Rev. 20:10-15).

ADDENDUM

NOTE: The following statements are not to be binding upon the churches already affiliated with this association, or to require adoption by churches petitioning this body for privilege of cooperation, or to be a test of fellowship between brethren or churches. However, they do express the preponderance of opinion among the churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of America.

1. We believe in the premillennial return of Christ to earth, after which He shall reign in peace upon the earth for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6).

2. We believe the Scriptures to teach two resurrections: the first of the righteous at Christ’s coming; the second of the wicked at the close of the thousand-year reign (I Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 20:6, 12-15).

We endorse the New Hampshire Confession of Faith as a representative compendium of what Baptists have historically believed through the centuries. This confession was consulted and provided a pattern and guide for the formulation of these doctrinal statements. As there are several versions and editions, we refer particularly to the edition in J. E. Cobb’s Church Manual third edition, published by the Baptist Publications Committee of Texarkana, TX.