

## Part One: Theological Views

### 1. Inspiration and Canonicity of Scripture.

Scripture is God-breathed, living and active, inerrant, infallible, and our only rule of faith and practice. A less academic way of saying this is that Scripture is God's word, authoritative, trustworthy and final. It shapes me, governing my life and my doctrine. I am not to read my own preferences into it. In fact, if at any time, I find that either my life or doctrine is out of accord with Scripture, then I have changes to make - probably in both areas - bringing them into conformity with God's Word. I believe that the canon of Scripture is closed.

### 2. Doctrine of the Trinity.

God in his being is a holy mystery, defying all my simplistic explanations. Nevertheless, because of the revelation of his Word, we know and celebrate that he is one God in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: each fully God, equal in power and glory, in perfect, harmonious, delighted relationship.

### 3. Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Scripture teaches that Jesus is returning, bodily, from heaven at the end of time. He will gather his church, heal our wounds, bring justice, establish peace, and renew heaven and earth. We do not know the time, and it may happen after my death; but with his second coming, the dead will rise from their graves for final glory or judgement. (And many days - if you want my view - it feels like it can't happen soon enough.)

### 4. Continuation of the Sign Gifts.

My views are consistent with the Pastoral Letter Concerning the Experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church Today. In my own words, though, I would describe myself as a "charitable cessationist", by which I mean: I believe the apostolic sign gifts have ceased, and I am not seeking to practice them. I would also teach that such gifts have ceased, but I wouldn't be willing to get into a big argument with other, dear brothers and sisters in different denominations who do seek and practice these gifts.

### 5. Five Points of Calvinism.

The five points summarize several key features of biblical doctrine (and of Calvin's thought, though by no means do they represent a complete encapsulation of *Calvinism*) drafted as a point-by-point response to a statement of Arminian theology.

They are useful for teaching some of the basics and distinctives of Reformed theology:

Total Depravity - every aspect of man's faculties, body, mind, and soul are affected by sin. While man is not necessarily as evil as he could possibly be in every instance of life, he is nonetheless touched by evil in every possible area, so that our righteousness is as filthy rags. There is nothing we can do whatsoever to move toward a holy God in an acceptable way or to contribute anything toward our salvation.

Unconditional Election - God elects those whom he chooses to save according to his own good pleasure and without respect to anything they might do. He unilaterally saves sinners out of love and grace, not looking through time and simply selecting those who choose him.

Limited Atonement - Christ died to save the elect and only the elect. Since not everyone is saved, his atoning work must necessarily be limited either in scope or in efficacy. In other words, the only possible logical alternatives are 1) that atonement is only for those who are, in fact, saved; or 2) that atonement isn't perfectly effective. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is sufficiently powerful to save everyone (it is of infinite worth), but it is efficient only for the elect.

Irresistible Grace - Those whom God elects, he effectually calls, and there is nothing they can do to get away or disqualify themselves from his saving work.

Perseverance of the Saints - Those called and saved by God cannot ever lose their salvation. They will be glorified with Christ, kept by the mighty power of God until Christ's return.

## 6. Doctrine of the Church.

The Church is the body of Christ - that whole number of elect, past, present, and future, who belong to Christ and are joined to Him as Head. Until Christ returns, the Church consists of all who profess Christ and their children, recognizing the distinction between church visible and invisible. The Church does the work of building the kingdom of God by preaching the word, administering sacraments, and in the exercise of spiritual authority.

## 7. Role of Women in the Church.

With the exception of those roles specifically reserved by Scripture for men, women should be encouraged to seek out opportunities to exercise their full range of gifts, including those of service, teaching and leadership. It is my understanding that Scripture reserves the ordained offices of elder and deacon to men, but that women as well as men may serve in capacities that assist either office. If women aren't serving and exercising their gifts, the church isn't whole and healthy.

## 8. Doctrine of Creation.

God made everything that exists - light and dark; heaven and earth; sun, moon and stars; plants and animals; man and woman - everything. He created out of nothing, merely by the power of speaking things into existence. He did it in the span of six days, setting the seventh aside for rest. It is my view that when Genesis 1 refers to the days of creation, it means literal 24 hour days. I think this is the simplest understanding and most internally consistent with the rest of Scripture.

### **Part Two: Exceptions to the Standards**

1. WCF 21:8: "...observe an holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations..."; WCF 117: "...even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful..."

Where I understand the proper focus of the Sabbath to be on worship and rest, I believe this can allow for recreation. I do not see play as antithetical to rest.

2. WLC 109: "...making any representation of God, of all or of any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness..."

I believe it is acceptable to have a mental image of Jesus "inwardly in our mind," particularly when reading Gospel accounts of his activities. Additionally, I believe it is acceptable to have outward likenesses of him, particularly for educational purposes for children.

