

Here We Stand! This We Believe!

*The Confessional Documents of Southeastern
Baptist Theological Seminary*

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Introduction

Dr. Danny Akin, President

The Confessional Identity of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Baptists have historically been a confessional people. They have always been ready to declare their theological convictions and state plainly what they believe. Confessions of Faith have never been viewed as substitutes for the Bible. Rather, they are seen as expressions of biblical truth and a reflection of essential doctrinal truths rooted in God's revelation of Himself.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and the College at Southeastern is unapologetically confessional. We want people to know who we are. Because of this desire, we have two "Confessions of Faith": *The Abstract of Principles and The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. We also have two "Statements of Affirmation" that give further testimony of our core theological convictions. Those documents are the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* and the *Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. I am not aware of a school that is more confessionally clear in terms of their biblical convictions and commitments! In addition (though it is not a formally recognized document of the school) the *Nashville Statement*, which addresses God's good creational design for gender and sexuality, would reflect the position of this institution. All five of these documents are contained in this booklet with a brief word of introduction by a member of our faculty.

Each of the "Confessions of Faith" and "Statements of Affirmation" are signed by all those who teach at SEBTS. In doing so, they declare that they hold to these biblical and theological convictions gladly and joyfully as their own personal beliefs and commitments. This faculty resonates with the words of James P. Boyce who said it so well in his inaugural address at Furman University in 1856: "You will have established here an instrumentality for the production of a sound ministry. It is no hardship to those who teach here, to be called upon to sign the declaration of their principles, for there are fields of usefulness open elsewhere to every man, and none need accept your call who cannot conscientiously sign your formulary."¹

Every time a man or woman is elected to the faculty of this

¹ James P. Boyce, "Three Changes in Theological Institutions," in *James Petigru Boyce: Selected Writings*, edited by Timothy George (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1989)

school they participate in a formal and solemn ceremony where they add their name to both the *Abstract of Principles* and *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. As they prepare to add their signatures to these documents, our Provost will say:

“Southeastern is doctrinally rooted in Baptist History. We stand where Baptists stood in the past [holding up the *Abstract*] and where they now stand [holding up the BF&M]. These words express our common faith. Such confessions are not a substitute for the Bible, which alone is infallible and inerrant as the Word of God written; nevertheless, we believe these confessions are faithful summaries of the key biblical doctrines as most Baptist theologians and Baptist church leaders have understood them. We sign these documents as a testimony to each other and to the world: [holding up one] Here We Stand! [holding up the other] This We Believe! [holding up both] This We Defend!”

This action and these words provide the title for this booklet, *Here We Stand! This We Believe!* Our confessions give evidence to our identity as a Great Commission Seminary. When we tell our students to GO and make disciples of the nations, it is our goal to give them expressions of biblical truth to take with them. This is our prayer. This is our hope. Here we stand! This we believe! This we defend! With this we GO!

The Abstract of Principles

Dr. John Hammett

The Abstract of Principles is the first confessional statement produced by Southern Baptists. Though it was written by Basil Manly, Jr. (one of the four original faculty members of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), it was part of the vision of James P. Boyce, the first president of that seminary. In 1856, three years before the formation of the seminary, Boyce gave an important address upon his inauguration as professor of theology at Furman University, in which he outlined his vision for theological education among Southern Baptists. One of his principles was that all faculty teaching at the seminary would be asked to sign a statement of Baptist faith. Though some Southern Baptists were skittish about what they called a creed, Boyce was convinced that without such a doctrinal anchor, the seminary, within a generation or two, would drift into heresy.

Thus, when Southern Seminary was formally chartered on April 30, 1858, that charter included the provision for all faculty to pledge to teach “in accordance with, and not contrary to, the Abstract of Principles.” Shortly thereafter, Manly drafted the Abstract and it has been signed by every elected faculty member at Southern and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary ever since.

Years later, Boyce explained the three principles that had been followed in the formulation of the Abstract. First, Boyce said that the statement sought to provide a clear expression of what he called the “fundamental doctrines of grace,” or what we would see as the essentials of the gospel (justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone). Second, it would affirm the beliefs that were “universally prevalent” among Baptists. This would include beliefs such as the absolute trustworthiness of Scripture and Baptist distinctives such as regenerate church membership, congregational polity and believer’s baptism. An important third guiding principle was that “upon no point, upon which the denomination is divided, should the Convention, and through it the Seminary, take a position.”¹ This included matters such as the extent of the atonement, the rapture and the millennium.

¹James P. Boyce, “The Two Objections to the Seminary,” part 5, *Western Recorder*, June 20, 1874, 2. See the description in Bill J. Leonard, *God’s Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1990), 37-38.

In its early years, the Abstract did serve to anchor the Seminary. In 1879, the first addition to the original four faculty, a brilliant young man named Crawford Toy, was found to have strayed from teaching in accordance with the Abstract and was forced to resign. But in later years, adherence to the Abstract was not enforced, leading to the need for the Conservative Resurgence. Yet while protecting seminaries from heresy, the Abstract has not prevented healthy diversity on less central and less “universally prevalent” doctrines. It is a spacious tent in which Calvinists and those less Calvinistic can fit, along with those of various eschatological views. It is a testimony to the skill with which it was written, and to the stability of doctrine among Baptists, that more than 150 years after its adoption, seminary faculty can still wholeheartedly affirm it and find fulfillment in teaching in accordance with, and not contrary to it.

Article IX of the bylaws of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Inc., adopted Dec. 7, 1950, provides that “all members of the faculty shall be required to subscribe to the Articles of Faith, or Beliefs, as adopted by the Board, and publicly sign these Articles at the opening of the session at which they enter upon their duties.” These articles were originally prepared for and adopted by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, founded in 1859.

I. THE SCRIPTURES.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience.

II. GOD.

There is but one God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of Himself all perfections and being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience.

III. THE TRINITY.

God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being.

IV. PROVIDENCE.

God from eternity decrees or permits all things that come to pass and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any wise to be author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures.

V. ELECTION.

Election is God’s eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life, not because of foreseen merit in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ; in consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified.

VI. THE FALL OF MAN.

God originally created man in His own image and free from sin; but through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law, are under condemnation and, as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors.

VII. THE MEDIATOR.

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the divinely appointed Mediator between God and man. Having taken upon Himself human nature, yet without sin, He perfectly fulfilled the law, suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried and rose again

the third day and ascended to His Father, at whose right hand He ever liveth to make intercession for His people. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church and Sovereign of the universe.

VIII. REGENERATION.

Regeneration is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, who quickeneth the dead in trespasses and sins, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone.

IX. REPENTANCE.

Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being, by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbleth himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it and self-abhorrence, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things.

X. FAITH.

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatsoever is revealed in His Word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit and is accompanied by all other saving graces and leads to a life of holiness.

XI. JUSTIFICATION.

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made; not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith.

XII. SANCTIFICATION.

Those who have been regenerated are also sanctified by God's Word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification is progressive through the supply of divine strength, which all saints seek to obtain, pressing after a heavenly life in cordial obedience to all Christ's commands.

XIII. PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

Those whom God hath accepted in the Beloved and sanctified by His Spirit will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall, through neglect and temptation, into sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the Church and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

XIV. THE CHURCH.

The Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church, which is composed of all His true disciples, and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. According to his commandment, Christians are to associate themselves into particular societies or churches, and to each of these churches He hath given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which he hath appointed. The regular officers of a Church are bishops or elders and deacons.

XV. BAPTISM.

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins and of his giving himself up to God to live and walk in newness of life. It is a prerequisite to church fellowship and to participation in the Lord's Supper.

XVI. THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and wine and to be observed by his churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice but is designed to commemorate His death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with Him and of their church fellowship.

XVII. THE LORD'S DAY.

The Lord's Day is a Christian institution for regular observance and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, resting from worldly employments and amusements, works of necessity and mercy only excepted.

XVIII. LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Civil magistrates being ordained of God, subjection to all lawful things commanded by them ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

XIX. THE RESURRECTION.

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God, the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked, to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised.

XX. THE JUDGMENT.

God hath appointed a day wherein He will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when everyone shall receive according to his deeds: the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life.

The Baptist Faith & Message 2000

Dr. Walter Strickland

The Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M) is a series of doctrinal statements adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in 1925, 1963, and 2000. These confessions are not a substitute for Scripture, but Southern Baptists affirm that they faithfully summarize the Bible's content. Consistent with Southern Baptist polity, the BF&M is non-binding for cooperating, autonomous churches, but denominational personnel, most notably seminary faculty and mission board personnel, must affirm the most recent statement in both doctrine and practice. These confessions offer clarity on essential doctrines while allowing liberty on non-essentials like Calvinism, eschatological positions, and ministry methodologies.

Throughout church history, confessional statements were drafted in the midst of doctrinal conflict and confusion—Southern Baptists are no different. In 1925, the BF&M was originally adopted in the midst of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy that challenged the integrity of Scripture in the midst of debates between creationists and evolutionists. In 1963, the BF&M was revised amid doctrinal controversy regarding the authority and truthfulness of Scripture. In a letter from the BF&M 2000 committee chairman to Southern Baptists, Adrian Rogers affirmed a restatement of the faith and its scriptural authority in the face of an increasingly postmodern culture characterized by relativism, secularism, and moral decay.

The most significant differences between BF&M 1963 and 2000 are the article on Scripture and the addition of a statement on the family. The 1963 statement on Scripture left loopholes for neo-orthodoxy and theological liberalism in the face of contemporary challenges in biblical interpretation. The language describing Scripture as “the record of God’s revelation” was removed and “...all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy” was added to assert the authoritative nature of Scripture in its totality. The second change to Article I is the exclusion of “The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ” for the less ambiguous statement, “All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is himself the focus of divine revelation.” This amendment affirms the full council of God’s word and disallows interpretative license on issues

where Christ himself does not speak. The second substantive change to the BF&M 2000 was initiated in 1998 with a unanimously affirmed amendment to the BF&M 1963. This addendum added an article biblically defining the family and was reaffirmed in its entirety in 2000.

Despite necessary amendments, a number of articles remained the same or were intensified for clarity amid new cultural challenges. Southern Baptists reaffirmed Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Article VII), the Kingdom (Article IX), and the Last Things (Article X) with word for word consistency. In addition, the stewardship and cooperation (Articles XIII and XIV) that spawn the SBC's collective efforts in missions, evangelism (Article XIII), and religious liberty (Article XVII) were reaffirmed as well. Southern Baptists clarified biblical warrant to offer a dynamic testimony of redemption by looking to "make the will of Christ supreme" in every sphere of society, among all peoples, and at every state of life. Each of these convictions are rooted in this foundational affirmation: the Bible is the word of God.

I. THE SCRIPTURES

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

II. GOD

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

A. GOD THE FATHER

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

B. GOD THE SON

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

C. GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

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

III. MAN

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

IV. SALVATION

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

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

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

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

V. GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE

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

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

VI. THE CHURCH

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its two scriptural offices are that of pastor/elder/overseer and deacon. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

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

VII. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

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

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

VIII. THE LORD'S DAY

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

IX. THE KINGDOM

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

X. LAST THINGS

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

XI. EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly

commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

XII. EDUCATION

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

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

XIII. STEWARDSHIP

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

XIV. COOPERATION

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

Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

XV. THE CHRISTIAN AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

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

XVI. PEACE AND WAR

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

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

XVII. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for

religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

XVIII. THE FAMILY

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

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

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

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

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

Dr. Ken Keathley

In 1978, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy was formed and held its first meeting in Chicago. Representing a wide spectrum of evangelical denominations and schools, over 300 theologians, biblical scholars, and church leaders participated in the conference. The three-day meeting culminated with the council issuing a document that has come to be known as *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*. *The Chicago Statement* quickly came to be widely recognized as the best modern expression of the Church's belief in the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Bible

The Chicago Statement consists of three parts: a summary statement, articles of affirmation and denial, and a brief exposition. The summary statement contains five declarations that taken together encapsulate the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. The 19 articles of affirmation and denial further elaborate on what the doctrine does and does not mean. Finally, the section on exposition explains the doctrine of inerrancy further by setting it within the broader context of other biblical doctrines and by demonstrating why the doctrine of inerrancy matters.

The timing of *The Chicago Statement* was surely providential. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Southern Baptist Convention as a whole and its six seminaries were in full drift away from a high view of Scripture and away from submission to biblical authority. A movement to reclaim the historic position on the Bible—which came to be known as the Conservative Resurgence—began in earnest at the same time as *The Chicago Statement* was published. *The Chicago Statement* served as an informal confessional document for the Conservative Resurgence and provided a response to any who wished to caricature the doctrine of inerrancy.

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 declares that Scripture “has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.” *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* provides a clear and succinct explanation of what is meant by the BF&M's claim that the Bible is “truth, without any mixture of error.” In addition, *The Chicago Statement* provides a robust defense of the

doctrine of biblical inerrancy. While firmly expressing confidence in the Bible's infallibility and total truthfulness, the statement also exhibits a humble and winsome spirit. The trustees, administration, and faculty of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary affirm *The Chicago Statement* as expressing our belief in Scripture as the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God. As such, the Bible is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

Preface

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trust-worthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority. The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, articles of Affirmation and Denial, and an accompanying Exposition*. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to affirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life, and mission. We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word. We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

*The Exposition is not included here.

A Short Statement

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church. Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God. We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article II

We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture. We deny that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article III

We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God. We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article IV

We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation. We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

Article V

We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive. We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI

We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration. We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII

We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us. We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VIII

We affirm that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared. We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article IX

We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the biblical authors were moved to speak and write. We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original. We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses. We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit. We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture. We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV

We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture. We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration. We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history. We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by Scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII

We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word. We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX

We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ. We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church.

The Danvers Statement

Dr. David W. Jones

The Danvers Statement is a theological summary of biblical gender roles. This statement was penned in 1987 at a gathering of evangelical leaders—both men and women—who met in Danvers, MA, to discuss biblical manhood and womanhood. This group was concerned about the impact of secular feminism, along with the correlative decline of biblical gender roles in the church and the home. While many have rightly observed that the Danvers Statement articulates an evangelical viewpoint, those familiar with church history recognize that there is little that is new in this theological summary, as the Danvers Statement merely expresses the historical view of the church on biblical gender roles. While the Danvers Statement does not cite any specific biblical passages within its text, it is informed by a traditional interpretation of passages such as Genesis 1–3; 1 Cor. 11:2–16; Eph. 5:21–33; 1 Tim. 2:12–15; and 1 Pet. 3:1–7.

The year following the publication of The Danvers Statement, at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Wheaton, IL, the same group of leaders who penned the Danvers Statement introduced a new term to the church: complementarianism. This teaching is the idea that men and women are created by God with equal value, dignity, and worth; yet, men and women have distinct, complementary roles to fulfill within the church and the home. In short, complementarianism teaches that as image-bearers of God, men and women are ontologically equal, yet functionally distinct. An important part of this teaching is that God did not arbitrarily assign differing roles to men and women; rather, God created men and women to specifically fulfill the distinct roles that he revealed to them. This is an important nuance, for it means that, in practice, gender roles ought not to be a matter of grudging obedience but of joyful fulfillment.

The Danvers Statement itself contains two main sections that articulate ten rationales and ten affirmations about biblical gender roles. Upon a reading of the Danvers Statement, it becomes clear that the authors were concerned with far more than just the biblical functioning of the church and the home. Indeed, this group of evangelical leaders was bothered by many issues that accompany the erosion of biblical gender roles, including sexual abuse, gender confusion, the decay of culture, and the loss of public witness, among other matters. Indeed, the last sentence in the Danvers Statement seems intentionally positioned to resonate in the minds of its readers: “We are convinced that a denial or neglect of

these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.”

The Danvers Statement did not originate from a particular denomination. Rather the group of leaders who penned this document came from many different evangelical Christian backgrounds. Among Southern Baptist seminaries, the Danvers Statement has been promoted and affirmed by Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. In summary, since it first appeared in 1987, conservative evangelicals have affirmed the Danvers Statement to voice their commitment to what the Scriptures teach regarding the equal value, dignity, and worth of all men and women, as well as the distinct roles God has given men and women as they bear his image in both the church and the home.

Rationale

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

Affirmations

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).
 - In the home the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
 - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
 - In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).
 - In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).

8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.

9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).

10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

The Nashville Statement

Dr. Mark Liederbach

While the Nashville Statement is not an official, adopted confessional statement of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and The College at Southeastern, its contents and intention faithfully represent the stance of the institution concerning questions related to the nature of human sexuality and gender. In many ways it gives contemporary development and application with regard to a biblical view of sex and gender alluded to seminally in the Abstract of Principles, identified in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, specified in the Danvers Statement in relation to the roles of men and women, and which rests upon the authority of Scripture as articulated in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy.

The purpose of the statement, as noted in the document's preamble, is to declare once again the "true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female" and to recognize that "our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God." As such, the statement is both a reaffirmation of traditional Christian teaching on sexual ethics and gender as well as a fresh application of the doctrine of humanity to challenging contemporary issues such as homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and transgenderism.

The Nashville Statement was drafted during the 2017 annual conference of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. The conference took place in Nashville, Tennessee—from which the statement got its name. It consists of a preamble and 14 articles addressing specific points of doctrine. Each article includes both a statement of affirmation and a denial. It was officially published on August 29, 2017 with over 150 initial signatories representing a wide swath of evangelical Christian leaders from various denominations and ministries.

Undergirding the statement is the biblical and theological conviction that while God's design for and creation of the world is inherently good, sin has had devastating effects on all areas of life including human sexuality. Thus, while it is by God's design that humans bear his image as male and female, and while it is by God's design that humans would flourish in the proper expression of their sexual nature, sin has left all of us sexually broken to one degree or another. The ways this brokenness manifests itself in each of our lives varies from individual to individual and can also vary from culture to

culture as different ideas and trends manifest themselves in different ways and times.

Thankfully, the great news of the Gospel is that it provides a means for relational restoration with God through faith in Christ and a hope for the restoration of all things to their proper order in and through Christ. By presenting God's design and moral order for sex and gender, the Nashville Statement's primary intent is to invite its readers to this restoration and the abundant life that accompanies it. It clearly proclaims that no form of sexual sin is beyond the restorative power of the Gospel.

Accompanying this invitation to the abundant life in Christ, however, the statement also has a secondary function to serve as a rebuke to the opposing ideas that have been raised up against the beauty of God's design and his instructions. Perhaps most importantly, this rebuke is aimed at those who claim to be Christ followers but who have drifted along with the currents of cultural trends and the non-Christian worldviews that stir them. In its clarity of affirmations and denials, the Nashville Statement seeks to call Christians back to the simple truth that we have been made in the image of God as male and female.

Continuing in the spirit and trajectory of the Danvers Statement, the Nashville Statement moves beyond the discussion of proper expression of manhood and womanhood in marriage and church leadership to address new questions, trends, and opposing worldview ideas about sexuality and gender that are dominant in the present era.

Preamble

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God's design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God's beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual's autonomous preferences. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God's good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God. This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus, and unashamedly proclaim his way as the way of life? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin? We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To him alone, every person owes gladhearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance. This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be. We believe that God's design for his creation and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God's good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ's church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

Article 5

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and self-conception as male or female.

Article 6

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

Article 7

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture. WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.

Article 8

WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus

Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God's original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

Article 9

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

Article 10

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God's design of his imagebearers as male and female.

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender selfconceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God's revealed will.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure.

WE DENY that the Lord's arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.

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