

Ordination Paper
Submitted to
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Personal Experience

At the age of nine, while attending church camp, a relationship with Christ began slowly, steadily, and changing. Throughout the years, God has been faithful; he has corrected and led the path to Him. Faith in God and His word has always been the backbone of everyday life; living a life honoring Christ took time.

Christ was put on the back burner during the years of raising a family and the daily grind of life. While attending church was important, living a life that honored God was not happening; thus, those children currently live the same lifestyle.

Growing up was hard; my father was a non-functioning alcoholic who drank six months out of the year; the other six months, he was sober and the best dad ever. Mom was a woman who didn't know how to be a mom; she wanted to be friends, and I needed a parent. When I was nine, I had the privilege of being able to go to a church camp during the summer. At camp that summer, I made the walk and accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. My brother is seven years older than I and alternated between our home and our mom's parents' home. By the time he was fifteen, he lived permanently with our grandparents. Our parents separated when I was twelve and divorced when I was fifteen. Even though Dad was a non-functioning alcoholic, he was what kept me grounded. After the divorce, I went wild. I had my first daughter at fifteen and my second daughter at seventeen, and even though they had the same father, life was not good. At eighteen, I joined the United States Army and was sent off to boot camp two weeks before my nineteenth birthday. My daughters and the military helped to bring my life back on track, as I wanted a better home life for my children than I had, and I wanted them to live out the American dream as healthy functioning adults. While in the military, I met and married a man and had two more girls. Come to find out, he was already married when we were married, leaving me to raise

all four girls alone. My mother's influence on the two older girls has had a negative impact on their lives, and I feel the weight of that guilt. My two younger daughters are two of the most influential women in the lives of those they come into contact with. The oldest owns a loose-leaf tea store and contributes to her local community like crazy, on top of being a wife and wonderful mother to her two daughters. My youngest daughter graduated with dual master's degrees, one in criminal justice and the other in Nursing, thus making her a forensic nurse. She works as an emergency room nurse at the Memphis Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC). She has given me three wonderful grandchildren, one boy and two girls. My grandson has been developmentally disabled since birth and will always require twenty-four-hour care. He is now eighteen years old, and my daughter has been, from the very beginning of his birth until this day, an exceptional mom to him and his two younger sisters. While raising my daughters, I told myself that if I ever pursued a college degree, I would go to seminary because I wanted to give back to others the way God had and does give to me.

Even with all the mistakes I made by not putting God first, I always knew God was with me. My faith has been my strength throughout the years of struggles, trials, and tribulations. As you can see from my transcripts, I made a slight detour with obtaining my Medical Assistant degree first. However, God had His hand in that; it meant putting me where he wanted me. My children were all grown and moving away from the area, so I had a conversation with God that I wanted to move, and I was going to put applications all over the place as a Registered Medical Assistant and wherever He wanted me to go to ensure that was the only place I received a job offer from. God moved me to Leavenworth, Kansas. I applied with the Leavenworth VAMC but never heard a word from them. One night, I received a call asking if I was still interested in the job, as it had been months since I applied. I informed them I was, and I received an offer through

email. Why is this important? By moving to Kansas, I reconnected with the youngest of my two oldest daughters. She became pregnant in a bad relationship and moved in with me when the baby was one month old. At four months old, she abandoned her little boy in my care. Elijah was born in May of 2017; I had already started the process of pursuing my Master of Divinity in Pastoral Counseling. My first semester was in August 2017, and I worked swing shifts at the Leavenworth VAMC. God took me from that position so I could give Elijah a better home life, into a Monday through Friday position. When Elijah turned eighteen months old, he legally became my son. God placing me within the walls of a VAMC showed me what my calling truly is: Chaplaincy for women. Some women, whether Veterans or civilians, have had a lot of hurt and pain, and some of that from men. I find it hard to open up to male Pastors, Ministers, and Chaplains, and I know that other women do, too. Women Chaplains provide an opportunity not available to men to reach women who have otherwise closed themselves off to God because of men. Men talk to men in their language just as women talk to women in their language. Thus, I will stand in that gap that might not otherwise be filled.

Basic Statement of Theology

God, Jesus, and The Holy Spirit

Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. The Bible itself does not give a defined doctrine of the Trinity; the doctrine of the Trinity came from the church. However, the Bible is clear that the Father loves the Son. He sends the Son and glorifies the Son. He sends the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name after Jesus asks Him to. God is worshipped in the Son and the Spirit. God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit dwell in one another. Jesus and the Holy Spirit were with God in the beginning. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit all work together in harmony; one does nothing without the other. Everything comes from the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit, and this

order cannot be reversed. When we understand the following: God is one in regard to essence, God is three with respect to Persons; each possesses the fulness of God, and the three persons have distinct relationships (relationships that are expressed in terms of “subsistence”)¹, and the three Persons are equal in authority (Father has all authority and is supreme, Son is equal to the Father, and the Spirit is equal to both Father and Son), then we will truly understand and know the Trinity.

The Incarnation (The Person and Work of Jesus as Christ)

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the foundation of all Christian doctrine and a necessary premise that God took human form and, thus, all subsequent events of Christ’s coming. The Doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ was ratified in the fourth century in Nicaea and is known as the Nicene Creed. The Incarnation of Christ is God’s way of redeeming humanity through His love, making a way for humanity to be reconciled with God and restoring the relationship God originally created between Himself and humanity.

Christian Growth

In Hebrews 3:5-15, we are instructed to create bonds with like believers when we surround ourselves with others who are as spiritually mature as we are, thus enabling all believers to lean on and learn from (English Standard Version). This nurtures and feeds our spiritual growth. These Christian bands create an “authentic Christian community where the heart of God is home, where the humble and wise learn to shepherd those on the path behind them, where trusting strugglers lock arms with others as together on the journey.”² What better way to encourage and

¹ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 206.

² Stephen Seamands, *Ministry in the Image of God the Trinitarian Shape of Christian Service* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1949), 32.

sustain others down their path? The path can be lonely at times, and when we walk arm in arm with others, the journey becomes less of a struggle and easier to bear during times of trial.

The believer who allows the Holy Spirit to control their life gains spiritual maturity. Thus, learning, growing closer in their walk with God, and finding obedience to the lifestyle changes are easier to accomplish. A Christian may have believed for years; however, if they have not allowed the Holy Spirit to control and work in their lives, they are still “small babes in Christ” (1 Cor. 3:2), who can only take in milk, not solid food of the Word of God because they are not ready to receive it since they are still carnal believing like men” (vs. 2-3). “There are stages of spiritual maturity; spirituality is a mature yet maturing relationship with God.”³

When a believer walks in the Holy Spirit in faith, dependent on the Holy Spirit to control them, they will overcome the desires of the carnal self (Gal. 5:16). Walking in the Holy Spirit allows the believer to overcome the “roaring lion” of this world who seeks to destroy those who belong to God (1 Peter 5:8). When believers walk dependent on the Holy Spirit, believers pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17) give thanks in everything (vs.18) meeting the required standards of dependence on the Holy Spirit.⁴

Revelation (How God Speaks)

Revelation comes from the Greek word “apokalupsis,” Which means disclosure or unveiling. In other words, God unveils Himself to His creations.⁵ Without God unveiling the truth about Himself, unveiling His plan for redemption, and unveiling His expectations, man would have no way to fellowship with God. “That which we have seen and heard we declare to

³ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999), 434.

⁴ Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1997), 164.

⁵ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 159.

you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn. 1:3). Only through this special revelation of God revealing His plan and purpose through the prophets and apostles are we able to take the steps necessary to reconcile ourselves to God. “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:18).

Ultimately, when it comes to the revelation and inspiration of the Word of God, the defining truth is that one must have faith in God Himself. Faith enables a person to know that God communicated His truth to man, which was written down until the end of time. Faith in the fact that the Holy Spirit controlled the thoughts that man wrote down as the Word of God, the Scriptures. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

Holy Scripture

The scriptures have always been central in shaping our faith and providing moral guidance. They enable us to know who God is, what he desires from us, and how he plans on redeeming mankind. Through them, we learn about His attributes, promises made throughout history, as well as interactions with people at various times, which should lead to knowing him better, thereby promoting spiritual growth. Most importantly, it deepens our experience of love and truth, thus acting like signposts along life’s journey where light intersects darkness, guiding us toward our destination.

The primary purpose of Scripture is to reveal God’s character, will, and redemptive plan for humanity, guiding believers in their faith, conduct, and relationship with Him. It serves to provide foundational teachings about salvation, moral living, and the nature of God while also offering encouragement, correction, and wisdom. Ultimately, Scripture aims to lead individuals

to a deeper understanding of God, fostering faith in Jesus Christ and promoting spiritual growth within a community of believers. Through its narratives, poetry, and teachings, the Bible invites readers to engage with the divine and live in accordance with His purposes.

Resurrection

The Christian faith is founded on the resurrection of Jesus; without the resurrection, Christianity is a fallacy. Jesus taught that only through His death and resurrection could we be reconciled to God (John 6:35-40). Jesus is the only way for our resurrection (John 11:23-27). Acts 2:32 informs the believer that God raised Jesus from the dead, and Romans 8:11 states, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” Therefore, without the resurrection, the Holy Spirit is unable to live in the believer.

Because of the resurrection—believers will be with Christ (Lk. 23:43), there will be a new earth (Isa. 51:3; Eze. 36:35), there will be a new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22), there will be eternal punishment for unbelievers (Matt. 25:46), Christ will return to earth (Acts 1:11), Christ will reign for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4), and the church will be “caught up” before the period of tribulation (1 Thes. 4:13-18).

Eschatology

Eschatology is a doctrine of the second coming of Christ or the end times. Scripture is not one hundred percent clear on any doctrine that the denominations have adopted as their end-time prophecy stance. As the American Baptists believe in autonomy with regard to the individual believer and the church, each believer and each church is allowed to determine an independent view of either amillennialism, premillennialism, or postmillennialism.

The Understanding of Humankind

Creation

John 1:1 is tantamount to understanding creation: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him, nothing was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

Sin

The doctrine of man is the biblical belief that God created man in His image, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). God created man “from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Gen. 2:7) Man’s disobedience to God brought sin to earth. The originator of sin, Satan, tempted Eve to eat from a tree that God had forbidden her and Adam to eat. When Eve saw that the fruit was good for food, she ate and offered some to Adam, who also ate from the fruit (Gen. 3:1-6). Adam and Eve were sinless until they disobeyed God by eating from the Tree of Knowledge; their disobedience caused every person to be born into sin (Ps. 51:5).

Repentance

Repentance is the act of going before God and asking for forgiveness of our sins. Jesus stated, “No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:3). Thus, repentance is changing one’s way of thinking and behaving. “Putting off the old self, which belongs to corruptible ways, and putting on the new self, which is created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24).

Forgiveness

Daniel 9:9 provides the best explanation of forgiveness: “The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him” (New International Version). Isaiah 43:25 tells us why, “I am He who blots out your transgressions, for My own sake, and will not remember your sins” (English Standard Version).

Prayer and Other Spiritual Disciplines

The spiritual disciplines include meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. Drawing nearer to God should be the Christian’s top priority. We are to work out our salvation daily, moment by moment. We must constantly seek Him, His desire, His truth, and His plan for our lives. We accomplish this by reading His word, meditating on what has been read, and finding ways to make the passage applicable to daily life. In this way, a Christian grows from the inside out, becoming a new creature in Christ. Finding wisdom and direction in the Word of God and seeking His desire for the paths one faces in life ensures He will work things for His good. “And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

Eternal life

Through the substitutionary death of Christ, “for the sake of others He (God) made Him (Christ) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him (Christ) we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor. 5:21). Through the death of Christ, by His blood, believers have been redeemed (1 Cor. 6:20 7:23). Believers are reconciled to God (Rom.5:10). Through the death of Christ, sinners are now justified (removed from all sin) seen as being righteous (Acts 13:39). Justification is a gift through the grace of God, which happens at the moment of belief (Rom 3:24).

The Church and the Kingdom

The Priesthood of Believers

The Priesthood of Believers is a conviction that all believers who profess Christ as the Messiah are capable of approaching God without the need of another. Individual believers and churches are granted freedom by faith in Christ to come boldly and confidently into God's presence (Eph. 3:12) with petitions and prayers for ourselves and others. The Priesthood of Believers is modeled in 1 Peter 2:9: "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of the darkness into the wonderful light."

The Church and the Ordinances

The church began at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), the universal church of all believers in Christ. The church is the body of Christ as Christ is the head of the church, having all authority and directing the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18); the church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:2, 25). The church is separate from Israel (1 Cor. 10:32), and God's people (Israel) are distinctly recognized as separate from Gentiles (Acts 3:12; 4:8, 10; 5:21, 31, 35; 21:19).

The American Baptist Churches USA and Central Region observe the ordinances of believers, such as baptism and The Lord's Supper. Baptism is an act of full immersion in water following Christ's example, showing loyalty to God the Father, by the spiritually mature who understand this sincere statement of faith. The Lord's Supper is the bread and cup that symbolize the broken body and the shed blood of Christ offered on the Cross.

The Church and Ministry

The Church's mission is to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28: 19). Thus, the church ensures all believers are discipled and understand the need for spreading the Good News within their community and on the mission field.

Practice of Worship

Worship comes in all forms: quiet time alone with God, prayer, meditation, and listening to and singing songs centered on God when one is alone. Yet, these practices can also be incorporated into the public arena. We can pray anywhere, we can take a few minutes of quiet solitude to meditate, and we can sing and listen to God-centered songs in public just as easily. These various forms of worship provide a platform to share the Gospel message with others whether believers or non-believers.

Wheeler and Whaley state, “Our worship and the mandate for a biblical answer to evangelism are driven by our relationship to God and others.”⁶ When we evangelize, we show our love of God by ensuring we have done our part to bring others to Him. When we evangelize to others, we show our love to them by providing an opportunity for them to spend eternity with God.

The book of Psalms, individually or collectively, pricks something deep in the inner core of the person reading these verses. The authors of the book of Psalms create a heartfelt bridge of love, longing, joy, and despair. The Psalms were written and are intended to be sung with joy, love, and a yearning that comes from the depths of one's soul. Alternatively, as Alden puts it, “Here, more than any place in the Bible, the heartthrob of the saint is heard. Here are the most

⁶ David Wheeler and Vernon Whaley, *The Great Commission to Worship Biblical Principles for Worship-Based Evangelism*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group), 2011, 50.

exalted expressions of God's greatness; here are the bitterest groans of the sinful and the afflicted. Here is something for everyone in every mood."⁷

The Autonomy of the Church

The autonomy of each community, free from interference by other churches or governments, became a hallmark belief among Baptists who insisted on believers' baptism alone as necessary for membership. This eventually led them to advocate for separation between church and state as well. Their refusal to baptize infants whom they saw lacked personal commitment towards Jesus Christ's Savior and Lordship united with most other Protestants.

Christians' viewpoints concerning this issue differed significantly in terms of the historically significant varieties that emerged throughout and after the Reformation.

A believer's baptism follows after an individual has personally decided to accept Jesus into his/her life, thus signifying their belief and commitment towards Him through the full water immersion method. Believers of this form of baptism, including evangelicals like Baptists, require people to confess with their mouth, believe in their heart, repent, and then be baptized. Which can be supported by Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

This doctrine of the American Baptist Churches became the foundation of autonomy, giving individual churches the freedom to include or exclude traditions and practices that other American Baptist Churches follow. The uniqueness of the American Baptist Churches allows an individual church to call upon other congregations in their region and/or call upon national

⁷ Robert L. Alden, "Introduction," in *Psalms-Everyday Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2019), p. ix.

and/or international congregations to join in facilitating concerns that are optimal for the body of that individual church.

The American Baptist Churches USA and, thus, the American Baptist Churches Central Region are committed and covenanted with individual churches to expand the Kingdom of God to all nations (Matt. 28:19) through preaching, teaching, outreach ministries, mission support, community support, and other various means as deemed necessary by the individual church.

American Baptist Churches USA

American Baptists do not adhere to a formal creed or confession in the same way that some other Christian denominations do; they align themselves with fundamental Baptist principles such as believer's baptism, the autonomy of the local church, and the authority of Scripture. However, American Baptists may reference certain documents for guidance on core beliefs, such as the "American Baptist Churches USA Mission Statement," which emphasizes the values of spiritual growth, social justice, and community service. Additionally, various congregations may have their own statements of faith that reflect their understanding of Scripture, but these are not binding and can vary widely from one church to another.

Code of Ethics Statement

I have read and signed the American Baptist Churches, USA Code of Ethics

Other Theological Statements Central to Theological Formation

One body, one Spirit, we are called to the one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, which is over all and through all and in all. We draw near in faith to the one true God, who from the beginning has not spoken in secret, for it is He who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. God, through His love, grace, and mercy,

gave His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as an atonement for the world's sins. Jesus, born of a virgin, proclaimed throughout His life the way to God the Father and promised the Holy Spirit to indwell in us when He Jesus would be executed, lie in a grave for three days, descend to hell, and ascend to heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father. By this, God has established and anointed us through Christ and sealed us with the Holy Spirit. The whole fulness of the deity dwells within God, and we are filled in Him, who is the head and ruler of authority. Therefore, we seek righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. In order to serve Christ, we must become acceptable to God. Continually building ourselves up in holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keeping ourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who leads, and the Holy Spirit who guides us to eternal life to God our Father.

Scriptural references:

Ephesians 4:4-6, Isaiah 48:16, 1 Timothy 2:4, John 3:16, Matthew 1:18, John 14:15-16, Mark, 16:19, 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, Colossians 2:9-10, Romans 14:17-18, Jude 1:20-21.

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