

Doctrinal Statement of James T. Bartsch

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Article I: The Scriptures

I believe that all "Scripture is given by inspiration of God," by which I understand the whole Bible is inspired in the sense that holy men of God "were moved by the Holy Spirit" to write the very words of Scripture. I believe that this divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the writings-historical, poetical, doctrinal, and prophetic – as appeared in the original manuscripts. I believe that the whole Bible in the originals is therefore without error (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).

Article II: The Godhead

I believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – and that these three are one God, equal in divinity and essence, and that each person of the Godhead, singly and corporately possesses such essential attributes as Life, Infinity, Immutability, Eternity, Omniscience, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, and Sovereignty, and such personal and moral attributes as Holiness, Justice, Love, Truth, and Mercy (Gen. 1:1; Ex. 3:14-15; 34:6; Deut. 32:4; 1 Kings 8:27; Psa. 42:2; 90:1-2; 102:25-27; 139:1-16; Isa. 6:1-3; 40:12-28; 45:5-7; Jer. 10:10; Matt. 28:18-19; John 1:14; 3:16; 14:6; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 1:9-11; 2:4-5; Tit. 3:4-5; 1 John 4:7-10).

Article III: Angels, Fallen and Unfallen

I believe in the existence of angels, spirit beings created by God for His worship and to serve as messengers for humans who are the heirs of salvation. "Lucifer, son of the morning," rebelled against God, and as Satan, led a great company of angels in revolt. Many of these fallen angels afflict humans and God's program as demons. Their doom is the lake of fire (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:11-19; Matt. 25:41; Mark 5:1-15; Heb. 1:14; Rev. 12:3-4, 9; 20:10).

I believe that elect angels remain holy in their character and their devotion to God in ranks such as cherubim and seraphim, seeking to advance the kingdom of God. Angels serve as the army of God (Gen. 3:24; Isa. 6:2-7; Hag. 2:6-9; 2 Thess. 1:6-9; 1 Tim. 5:21).

Article IV: Man, Created and Fallen

I believe that man was originally created in the image and after the likeness of God to establish the kingdom of God upon the earth as noble king of the earth and the animal population. Tempted by Satan, man fell through sin, and, as a consequence of his sin, lost his spiritual life, becoming dead in trespasses and sins, and thereby subject to the power of the devil, to whom also by default he yielded up noble sovereignty over the earth. I also believe that this spiritual death, or total depravity of human nature which descended upon Adam, has been transmitted to the entire human race of man, the Man Christ Jesus alone being excepted. All men are born dead

spiritually, dying physically, and in danger of dying the second death unless delivered first by spiritual birth (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:17; 3:19; Jer. 17:9; John 3:6; Rom. 3:10–19; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:1–3; Rev. 20:6, 14-15).

Article V: The Dispensations

I believe in the Scriptural principle of dispensationalism – that God works with different peoples in different ways at different times. I believe that the dispensations are stewardships by which God administers His purpose on the earth through man under varying responsibilities. I believe that three of these dispensations or rules of life are the subject of extended revelation in the Scriptures, namely, the dispensation of the Mosaic law, the present dispensation of grace, or the church age, and the future dispensation of the millennial kingdom. I believe that these are distinct and are not to be intermingled or confused, as they are chronologically successive. It is God's plan to establish His kingdom and will upon earth just as presently it is established in heaven. This will be largely achieved in Christ's millennial kingdom, but completely achieved only in the New Jerusalem and the New Earth (Isa. 2:1-4, 11:1-16; Jer. 31:31-34; Eph 1:10, 3:2; Rev. 21-22).

Article VI: The First Advent of Christ

I believe that, as purposed by God and as preannounced in the prophecies of the Scriptures, the eternal Son of God, the divine Word of God, came into this world that He might manifest God to men, fulfill prophecy, and offer Himself as King of Israel. To this end He was born of the virgin, and received a human body and a sinless human nature, becoming as fully man as He already was fully God. At His baptism he was anointed by His Father with the Spirit of God and became Messiah or Christ for Israel and the world. As the Anointed One, He began His prophetic ministry immediately and offered Himself to Israel as her King. When rejected by His people, He subsequently assumed His priestly role, offering Himself, according to the Father's will and as an expression of the Father's love, as Redeemer of a lost world. His death was substitutionary – He became the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. Being God, He could not sin; yet being sinless man, He could die for the sins of all men. Being the God-Man, His death had infinite value (Luke 1:30–35; John 1:1-3, 11-12, 14, 18, 29; 3:16; Acts 2:22-24; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 3:18).

I believe that, according to the Scriptures, He arose from the dead in the same body, now glorified, in which He had lived and died, and that having ascended to heaven, He was accepted of His Father, assuring us that His redeeming work was perfectly accomplished. There He sits at the right hand of the Father, serving as Head over all things to the church which is His body, and in this ministry He ceases not as high priest to intercede and advocate for the saved, waiting until His enemies are made a footstool for His feet so He can take up His kingly office, ruling Israel and the nations of the world (Psalm 110:1-2, 4, 5-7; John 20:20; Eph. 1:22–23; Phil. 3:20–21; Heb. 1:3, 7:25, 10:12-13; 1 John 2:1).

Article VII: Salvation Only Through Christ

I believe that, owing to universal death through sin, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless born again through faith and dependence upon Jesus and His blood shed for sins; and that no degree of reformation or work or church ordinance can in any way add to the infinite value of Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection for the sinner's benefit. The sinner's salvation through faith in Christ is wholly a work of grace upon the part of God without any human merit whatsoever. On God's part salvation is an elective, gracious act without regard for the merit of any, for none have any. On man's part, salvation always requires a tangible and abiding faith in the Savior. Those who are thus saved by grace through faith in Jesus become the sons of God immediately, receiving as a gift the impartation of God's life within them, which is eternal and irrevocable, and in which condition they remain eternally secure, assured of their salvation (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 64:6; John 3:1–18; 5:24; 10:27-29; 20:30-31; Acts 13:17; 13:48; Rom. 5:6–9; 8:26-39; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 6:15; Eph. 1:3-4, 7; 2:8-10; Phil. 3:4–9; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:18–19, 23; 1 John 5:10-13; Jude 24).

I believe that the new birth of the believer comes only through faith in Christ and that repentance is a vital part of believing, and is in no way, in itself, a separate and independent condition of salvation; nor are any other acts, such as confession, baptism, prayer, or faithful service, to be added to believing as a condition of salvation (John 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:29, 44; Acts 4:12; 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 1:16–17; 3:21-28; 4:5; 10:4; Gal. 3:22).

Article VIII: Sanctification

I believe that, for the born-again believer, sanctification is three-fold: **POSITIONAL** sanctification, that which is legal, judicial and past in the life of the believer – salvation from the **penalty** of sin, an accomplished fact; **PROGRESSIVE** sanctification, that which is experiential, incomplete, gradual and present for the believer – salvation from the **practice** of sin, a struggling goal, accomplished only through the power of the Spirit using the Word of God, retarded by the combined drag of the world, the flesh (including one's own sin nature), and the devil; and **PERMANENT** sanctification – that which is actual, total and future for the believer – salvation from the **presence** of sin, a guaranteed reality existing in a glorified body, in which we shall see Jesus and be made "like Him" (John 3:3, 7; 17:17; Rom. 6:11–13; 8:2-4, 12-13; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Gal. 5:16-23; Eph. 4:24; 5:18, 25–27; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 10:10, 14; 12:10; 1 John 1:4 - 2:6; 3:2-3).

Article IX: The Holy Spirit

I believe that the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, though omnipresent from all eternity, took up His abode in the world in a special sense on the day of Pentecost according to the divine promise, dwells in every believer in Jesus, and by His baptism unites all to Christ in one body, and that He, as the Indwelling One, is the source of all power and all acceptable worship and service. I believe that His abode in the world in this special sense will cease when Christ comes to receive His own at the completion of the church (Psalm 139:7-12; John 14:16–17; 16:7–15; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:22; 2 Thess. 2:7).

I believe that, in this age, certain well-defined ministries are committed to the Holy Spirit. These ministries include the restraining of evil in the world through the true Church to the measure of the divine will; the convicting of the world respecting sin, righteousness, and judgment; the regenerating of all believers; the indwelling and anointing of all who are saved, thereby sealing them unto the day of redemption; the baptizing into the one body of Christ of all who are saved; and the continued filling for power, teaching, and service of those among the saved who are yielded to Him and who are subject to His will (John 3:6; 16:7–11; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:30; 5:18; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 John 2:20–27).

I believe that some gifts of the Holy Spirit such as prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, and miraculous healings were temporary. They had their place in the Apostolic transition from a largely Jewish to a largely Gentile church. God understands that, historically, Jewish people seek after signs and Greeks seek after wisdom. God accommodates Himself to that principle depending on whether He is working largely with Jewish or Gentile peoples. I believe that speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism nor of the filling of the Spirit. I believe that, though God does at times heal today in response to prayer, the ultimate deliverance of the body from sickness or death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection. I believe that in the Tribulation period, miraculous gifts such as prophecy and miracle-working will once again be seen as God's prophetic clock for Israel begins ticking again in earnest. I believe further, that the unprecedented age of the Spirit as predicted by the prophets awaits God's outpouring of His Spirit on all flesh during Christ's millennial kingdom (Jer. 31:31-34; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 4:8, 31; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 1:22; 13:8; 14:20-22; James 5:14-16; Rev. 11:3-6).

Article X: The Church, A Unity of Believers

I believe that all who are united to the risen and ascended Son of God are members of the church which is the body and bride of Christ, which began at Pentecost, will be completed at the Rapture (the return of Christ for His bride), and is completely distinct from national Israel. Its members are constituted as such regardless of membership or nonmembership in the organized churches of earth. I believe that by the same Spirit all believers in this age are baptized into, and thus become, one body that is Christ's, whether Jews or Gentiles, and having become members one of another, are under solemn duty to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian differences, and loving one another with a pure heart fervently (Matt. 16:16–18; Acts 2:42–47; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12–27; Eph. 1:20–23; 4:3–10; Col. 3:14–15).

I believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only sacraments and ordinances of the church and that they are a scriptural means of testimony for the church in this age. These rites are memorial and pictorial in nature and are to be observed obediently by those who are already believers in Jesus (Matt. 26:26-29; 28:19; Luke 22:19–20; Acts 10:47–48; 16:32–33; 18:7–8; 1 Cor. 11:26).

Article XI: The Christian's Service

I believe that divine, enabling gifts for service are bestowed by the Spirit upon all who are saved. While there is a diversity of gifts, each believer is energized by the same Spirit, and each is called to his own divinely appointed service as the Spirit may will. In the apostolic church there were certain gifted men – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers – who were appointed by God for the perfecting of the saints unto their work of the ministry. I believe also that today some men are especially called of God to be evangelists, pastors and teachers, and that it is to the fulfilling of His will and to His eternal glory that these shall be sustained and encouraged in their service for God. Meanwhile, each person in the Body of Christ is gifted by the Holy Spirit for service, and is to serve His Lord by specializing in his own area of giftedness (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 9:14; 12:4–31; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

I believe that, wholly apart from salvation benefits which are bestowed equally upon all who believe, rewards are promised according to the faithfulness of each believer in his service for his Lord, and that these rewards will be bestowed at the judgment seat of Christ after He comes to receive His own to Himself. I believe further that faithfulness in even small areas of service in this life will grant us even wider opportunities for service to the glory of God in the life to come (Matt. 25:13-30; Luke 19:12-27; 1 Cor. 3:9–15; 9:18–27; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Article XII: The Great Commission

I believe that it is the explicit message of our Lord Jesus Christ to those whom He has saved that they are sent forth by Him into the world even as He was sent forth of His Father into the world. I believe that, after they are saved, they are divinely reckoned to be related to this world as strangers and pilgrims, ambassadors and witnesses, and that their primary purpose in life should be to make Christ known to the whole world. Some are more gifted than others in evangelism, but all bear responsibility, for the Good News of reconciliation through Jesus is the heartbeat of God (Matt. 28:18–19; John 3:16; 17:18; Acts 1:8; 8:1-4; Rom. 5:8-10; 2 Cor. 5:18–20; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:11-12; 3:15-16; 1 John 4:9-10).

Article XIII: The Blessed Hope

I believe that, according to the Word of God, the next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy will be the coming of the Lord in the air to receive to Himself into heaven both His own who are alive and remain unto His coming, and also all who have fallen asleep in Jesus, and that this event is the blessed hope set before us in the Scripture, and for this we should be constantly looking (John 14:1–3; 1 Cor. 15:51–52; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Titus 2:11–14).

Article XIV: The Tribulation

I believe that the translation of the church will be followed by the fulfillment of Israel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 6:1–19:21) during which the church, the body of Christ, will

be in heaven. The whole period of Israel's seventieth week will be a time of judgment on the whole earth, at the end of which the times of the Gentiles will be brought to a close. The latter half of this period will be the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7), which our Lord called the great tribulation (Matt. 24:15–21). I believe that universal righteousness will not be realized previous to the second coming of Christ, but that the world is day by day ripening for judgment and that the age will end with a fearful apostasy, precipitated by the removal of the Holy Spirit in the Church (2 Thess. 2:1-10; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-5).

Article XV: The Second Coming of Christ

I believe that the period of great tribulation in the earth will be climaxed by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth as He went, in person on the clouds of heaven, and with power and great glory to introduce the millennial age, to rule as King of kings and Lord of lords, to bind Satan and place him in the abyss, to mitigate the curse which now rests upon the whole creation, to restore Israel to her own land and to give her the realization of God's covenant promises, and to bring the whole world to the knowledge of God. This millennial kingdom of Christ will fulfill, to a large degree, God's mandate to rule the earth beneficently (Deut. 30:1–10; Psa. 2:7-9; Isa. 2:2-4; 11:1-10; Ezek. 37:21–28; Zech. 14:3-4, 8-9; Matt. 24:15–25:46; Acts 15:16–18; Rom. 8:19–23; 11:25–27; 1 Tim. 4:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:1–5; Rev. 19:15-16; 20:1–3).

Article XVI: The Eternal State

I believe that at death the spirits and souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the glorified body when Christ comes for His own, whereupon soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in glory; but the spirits and souls of the unbelieving remain after death conscious of condemnation and in misery until the final judgment of the great white throne at the close of the millennium, when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated, but to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power (Luke 16:19–26; 23:42; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 2 Thess. 1:7–9; Jude 6–7; Rev. 20:11–15).

Article XVII: The Eternal Kingdom

I believe that, following the millennial kingdom and Satan's final, unsuccessful revolt, and in conjunction with His reluctant consignment of all unbelievers of all ages in the Lake of Fire along with Satan and his angels, God will radically and totally purge the entire physical universe of sin, evil, death, and decay by searing, explosive fire. Since God's mandate for man to rule a pristine earth beneficently will never yet have been fulfilled, God will create a New Heaven and a New Earth in which dwells only righteousness. Man's eternal destiny is the New Earth, with a great bulk of the redeemed population, including Israel and the Church, inhabiting the New Jerusalem, the gargantuan and splendid Capital of the New Earth, to which all the redeemed will have access. Now finally the Eternal Kingdom of Heaven will extend to and encompass a

spotless Earth as God had envisioned “in the beginning.” God and the Lamb will dwell in the New Jerusalem with mankind forever, Jesus’ prayer will have been answered for all eternity, “Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” God’s longing for human fellowship will be fulfilled forever: Rev 21:3-4 (NNAS) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, {4} and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (Gen. 1:1, 26-28; Matt. 6:10; 2 Pet. 3:7-13; Rev. 20:7-15; 21-22).

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