

360 CERTAIN CURRENT ISSUES

361 Evangelical Friends desire to state their beliefs with regard to certain issues, beliefs, and practices that are currently of concern to the church.

362 Stewardship of the Earth and its Resources

363 Evangelical Friends believe that God in the beginning gave people dominion over the earth and expected them to be wise stewards. Wasteful and destructive use of the earth's resources is contrary to God's purposes (Genesis 1:28-30).

364 Abortion

365 Evangelical Friends believe that all life is a gift of God (Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4; Psalm 139:13-16); therefore when the matter of an abortion is being considered, neither the life of the mother nor of the unborn child is to be treated lightly. We hold that abortion on demand or for reasons of personal convenience, social adjustment, or economic advantage is morally wrong (Exodus 20:13).

366 Euthanasia

367 We also believe that Scripture maintains that we are created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27); therefore, we do not belong to ourselves but to God. God is the giver and sustainer of life (Job 14:5; Ecclesiastes 3:2; James 4:13-15). Evangelical Friends believe euthanasia to be in direct violation of Exodus 20:13 and therefore reject it as a means of relieving suffering. We encourage any person contemplating euthanasia to seek divine guidance (Proverbs 3:5-6) and to consult any pro-life medical professional and/or pastor for further counsel.

368 Homosexuality

369 Evangelical Friends are firm in the conviction that the Scriptures make abundantly clear the sinfulness of all homosexual and deviant sexual acts (Leviticus 18; Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 6:9-20). We believe that homosexual tendencies may be overcome by the grace of God. We also believe that forgiveness for deviant acts may be obtained by sincere repentance and faith in Christ (Romans 3:22-24; Titus 3:4-7; I John 1:9).

370 Pornography

371 Since pornographic materials promote and propagate a lifestyle that includes activities which are condemned by God's Word and tempt viewers to commit the sin of lust (Matthew 5:27-28; Romans 13:12-14; II Peter 2:14, 18-19), Evangelical Friends therefore are urged to carefully avoid exposure to such materials (Philippians 4:8).

372 Because of our responsibility as Christian citizens (Matthew 5:13-16; Proverbs 14:34) and in view of the evil, exploitative, and destructive effects of pornography on individuals, families, and our society, Evangelical Friends are encouraged to prayerfully and boldly oppose the production and distribution of pornographic materials in their local communities, as well as at the state and national levels (Ephesians 5:11) [see #6002].

373 Heretical Groups

374 Evangelical Friends understand that Satan is evil in his character and purpose, and to that end seeks to dissuade people from an experience with Jesus Christ and His Church [see #112 & 152]. Satan succeeds when people choose to follow the false teachings of non-Biblical religions or cults (such as Hinduism and Islam).

375 We believe and affirm the truth claims which the living God has revealed about Himself. The primary source for this information is the written Scriptures, the Bible. Only because God has made Himself known, may we know anything about Him. Heretical groups are movements of a few—or many—who make claims to knowledge beyond or different from what God has given us (such as Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Unity, and Christian Science). Most importantly, they inevitably include claims that diminish the Person and Work of Jesus Christ through Whom God has revealed Himself supremely. “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete” (Colossians 2:9-10a). Again, the Father declares, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him” (Matthew 17:5; cf. Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35).

376 We further believe that all access to God is through Jesus Christ (Romans 8:34; I Timothy 2:5) and the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27), and that therefore the use of mediums, clairvoyants, fortune tellers, astrologers, and any other alleged means of extraordinary knowledge or help is contrary to the will of God (Acts 4:12).

377 According to the Beacon Dictionary of Theology (Richard S. Taylor, ed., 1983), there are five major characteristics of cults:

1. A devaluation of Jesus (see pages 100-123)
2. An extra scriptural source of authority (see pages 130-133)
3. The denial of justification by grace alone (see pages 170-176)
4. The group is the exclusive community of the saved (see pages 180-183)
5. The group demands an absolutistic commitment of its members (see page 194).

378 Church history reveals this dilemma is not new. Early church councils dealt with various heresies. The first church council was held in Jerusalem and record of its outcome is found in Acts 15. Other church councils met in subsequent years to settle the universal doctrines of the Christian Church, including the Council of Trent in the middle sixteenth century that settled the canon of inspired texts that comprise the Bible. A short list of other church councils is listed as a reference in #4000.

379 We believe that our most effective response to the inroads of heretical groups is to soundly preach and teach the Scriptures, rather than to merely attack or teach against the other group. That is especially true as our country's pluralism expands. Our effective response lies in giving to people —the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). Those held in the grip of a heretical group may be released and set free by the bondage-breaking power of the Holy Spirit.

380 Doctrinal Differences with Other Christians

381 Evangelical Friends have warm fellowship with groups of Christians with whom we must nevertheless differ in the following matters:

382 Security of the Believer: Evangelical Friends believe that the security of the believer, even for eternity, is indicated in God's Word and witnessed to by the Holy Spirit to the individual, but we do not hold this security to be unconditional. As repentance and faith are the human conditions of acceptance of God's free offer of salvation, so faith manifested by obedience is necessary to continuance in that salvation (Hebrews 5:9; I John 2:4).

383 Healing: Evangelical Friends believe that healing is the gracious work of God given in Christ Jesus. We also believe that, as in the past, He still hears and answers prayers of faith for healing in several ways such as: (a) He may intervene miraculously, over and beyond medical achievement; (b) He may heal through skills given to medical practitioners, who do well to recognize that our Creator God alone is the ultimate healer; or (c) He will heal eternally those who suffered in this life while still trusting in prayer and resting in the merits of Christ, assured by the same words Paul received, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:8). God's substitutionary atonement in His Son assures us of immediate forgiveness of sins (I John 1:9); it does not necessarily promise us immediate or miraculous physical healing. Healing viewed this way, spares us from an extreme which demands that God must heal everyone for whom we pray, just as it keeps us from heaping unnecessary guilt upon those who are not healed. Still, we may continue with confident faith, praying over the sick according to the guidance given in James 5:14-16, believing our Lord remains as able as when He walked on earth to heal spiritually, morally, and mentally, as well as physically (Psalm 103:1-6; Matthew 4:23-24; 8:16-17; 14:13-14, 32-36; Mark 1:14-15, 32-33; Luke 5:17-26; 9:1-6; 10:1-20; Acts 4:29-31).

384 Glossalalia (Speaking in tongues): While there are differences of interpretation among our members of the Scriptures which speak of glossalalia, as there are among other Christians, both as to whether the term refers to actual languages or to ecstatic utterances, and as to whether this is a valid gift for our time, we are nevertheless agreed as to the following points:

- a. The will of God as revealed in the Scriptures is our conformity to His holy character as manifested in a holy life. All spiritual experiences, gifts and fruit of the Spirit are means to that end (Galatians 5:22-23).

b. "Speaking in tongues" should not be regarded as a necessary sign of the fullness or baptism with the Spirit (I Corinthians 12:7-11).

c. "Speaking in tongues" should not be made an occasion of division or strife among us (I Corinthians 13; 14:6-9; Hebrews 12:14).

d. In order to maintain unity in spite of our differences, we must practice mutual submission. We must be willing to voluntarily give up certain freedoms in order to avoid becoming a stumbling block to those for whom Christ died, as the Apostle Paul demonstrated in I Corinthians 8. We therefore agree for the present for all our churches that on the one hand we should not forbid the use of tongues in private devotion, but that on the other hand we should voluntarily forego the use of tongues in our public services.

We are waiting in submission to the leading of the Spirit Himself and in love toward one another for that time when under His leading we can speak unitedly on this matter.