

Preface

After graduating from USF with an Engineering degree in Computer Science in 1989, I worked for NCNB (now known as Bank of America) in their computer department. Everyday as I drove to work, I would pass by a Christian book store, *Tampa Christian Supply*, on Hillsborough Avenue. As I entered the store, I was amazed at all the good-quality Christian books, especially the books on Theology. Although I had studied the Bible and memorized Scripture and learned and taught from our church workbooks, a whole new world of Christian scholarship opened up to me. I was looking for a good book that would "piece together" the many Scriptures and teachings that I had learned and to challenge my thinking with various perspectives on the Scriptures. I noticed a Theology book that was newly released called, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* by Paul Enns. It was amazing! This one book covered Biblical Theology, Systematic Theology, Historical Theology, Dogmatic Theology, and Contemporary Theology. I was hungry for the Word and to read and study it on another level. Over the next month, I had devoured the book and underlined and highlighted every word and sentence that intrigued me in some way. I grew so much from the Biblical truths that this book presented. Excitedly, I bought several copies for some pastors that I knew. Since then, I have bought and read many other theology books from various persuasions. Having worked at NCNB for the next two years (prior to joining GTE), I would visit the bookstore every night after work and often buy one or more scholarly books on each visit. The manager looked forward to seeing me (\$\$) and would advise me on some books. My library grew from approximately a dozen Christian books to several hundred Christian books during those two years. *(As of today, my library is packed with a couple thousand good quality books, most of which are Christian while the rest deal with Computers and Math and other interests.)*

A year later in 1992, (three years after graduation), I found out about an excellent opportunity to **gain a college Bible degree without having to go to classes on a campus**. This was very advantageous now that I was working full time as a computer programmer for GTE, now Verizon. I was excited about the opportunity to systematically learn the Bible and gain college credit at the same time (and be rewarded with good grades on my transcript for the hard work). Not that I was preparing for a full-time ministry position, but I was desiring to be further equipped with Biblical knowledge and experiences that would enable me to be a more effective minister in my teaching, preaching, and witnessing.

Taking wonderful college-level Bible classes was a new experience for me! It was great! I met several of the college professors when I visited Southeastern College, in Lakeland, Florida [now called Southeastern University]. They became my role models in the sense that they were very well educated (especially in Biblical matters) and had a love and devotion for the Lord. Each class had tests and many required an essay. For each essay, I went beyond the "call of duty." I read and quoted from more sources than what was required and I definitely spent more time on the papers than what was expected. Since the college was affiliated with the Assemblies of God denomination, I studied their doctrinal statements and position papers. I noticed that they upheld the integrity of God's Word and placed a great emphasis upon studying it and living it. I soon realized that my beliefs most closely resembled their beliefs--more than any other church group. This was one of the main reasons that I felt led of the Lord to transition into the AG church.

I enjoyed taking courses at my own pace through the Distance Education program at **Southeastern University** from 1992 - 1996. Unfortunately, Southeastern University had to dissolve its Distance Education program and thus transfer its students elsewhere. Desiring to stay with the Assemblies of God and an accredited university, I was transferred to the Carlson Institute for Church Leadership at **North Central University** in Minneapolis, Minnesota. On May 4, 2007, I participated in the graduation ceremonies at North Central University in Minneapolis. It was an honor to graduate with a B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies (with concentration in Biblical/Theological studies), *Summa Cum Laude*. Likewise, while taking courses through NCU, there were tests that needed to be proctored and 5+ page essays that needed to be completed for each class. The capstone of all the essays was my senior project entitled, "Theology of Work and Its Practical Implications." The professor said it was "one of the most thorough pieces of work [he] had ever corrected" and that it "should be put into a book or journal." Throughout the years, all the essays have helped me grow spiritually and grapple with important theological and practical topics. I hope you enjoy reading them almost as much as I enjoyed writing them!

In the MLA version of the Seminary Essays, each essay is formatted using the Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines. This is readily seen when referencing quotes or paraphrased material. A few of the earlier college essays did not need to be in MLA format, thus there are aspects of these essays that do not conform to MLA standards (e.g. single-spacing instead of double-spacing). Every essay is numbered with the last name of the author followed by the page number within the book and text is only printed on one side of each sheet, both in accordance with MLA standards. In the sixth edition of the MLA Handbook for writers of Research Papers, released in 2003, one of the guidelines states "Do not justify the lines of your paper at the right margin" (132). For the purposes of presenting these essays in a clean book format, I have taken an author's prerogative to overlook this guideline. Wherever practical, I maintained the format of the essay as it was submitted in its respective course.

You may also view any of these essays by visiting my Theology Corner on my web site:

www.DougandMarsha.com

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