



FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH



PHIL SMITH

Foundations of Faith

There have been a lot said and written on God's nature and Christ as being the agent of God, and also the purpose of God. There is an evangelical statement of faith developed by the National Association of Evangelicals that list several points within it that relate to this. The date in which it was written was 1942. It talks about God's word being inspired, infallible and authoritative. Inspiration has to do with being from God and/or God breathed. One of the major doctrines of evangelical Christian is the belief in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all existent in one God. Again, to be a Christian one has to accept Jesus Christ as God and that he had a sinless life. He performed miracles and was born of a virgin and the Bible talks about His blood being an atonement for our sins. Jesus rose from the dead and now sits on the right hand of the Father and that He will return in power and glory. Jesus came to take away the sins of the world. So, sinful people need to be saved and renewed by the Holy Spirit. The father sent the Holy Spirit to us which has a ministry enabling us to live a Godly life. The Bible also tells us that the lost and the saved will be resurrected to live an eternity in heaven or in hell. There is a spiritual unity that believers have in Jesus Christ. This is all contained this Statement of Faith which is generally levelled at Evangelical Conservatives.

The Statement of Faith as written by the National Association of Evangelicals says, 'We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative word of God.' Well, Ockenga describes the phrase 'Finger of God' which is another way of talking about the power of God. Jesus used this phrase when people accused Him of doing miracles through the power of Beelzebub. In answering them, he said, 'But if I with the Finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.' In speaking about inspiration, the inspiration of the Bible comes from God. God spoke through the prophets in various ways and now through Jesus. God spoke to people in ancient times, like Moses, who wrote down God's words which are inspired by God. This is how God's word is inspired. Thus God as revealed Himself through the spoken word. God has also revealed himself physically and in dreams. He speaks to us through the Holy Spirit and through the Minister and others. It is a communication of supernatural knowledge from God. Joseph dreamed about the coming famines in Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of the times of the Gentiles. But inspiration is not revelation; it's the communication of truth through God's appointed spokespeople. Luke was inspired as he wrote the Book of Luke. He may or my not have had revelation but what he wrote became inspired. God used writers and their different vocabularies, gifts, methods of

thought and logical processes. Thus, over the years the Bible was brought into being as a guide for human life and through it God can do an amazing work in people's lives. Other than being inspired, it is also accurate and infallible as Archaeology has provided further evidence of this through its historical accuracy.

The Christian must believe in the trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for this is what makes a person a Christian. The Apostles' Creed says, 'I believe in God the Father almighty ... And in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord ... And in the Holy Spirit.' The Nicea Creed says, 'I believe in one God, the Father Almighty ... And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God ... Light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made... And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.' I used this creed as a statement of my own theology in what I believe on my web-site. The Chalcedon Creed in 451 AD reaffirmed the Trinity and the dual nature of Jesus Christ as both God in His fullness and man in his fullness. There is a super rational nature to the Trinity as no one could have invented the idea. The Trinity is a cornerstone of the Christian and must be accepted by faith. We have security in Him and salvation from the atoning work of Christ and sanctification from the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Through Christ we live a dualistic nature, one is a world of matter while the other is the world of the spirit. Attributes of God is infinity, eternity and permanence. God is not limited in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. God is omnipresent because he is unlimited and infinite. God is present everywhere at every moment. This is seen in the Bible and it must be truth for it to be the God of the universe. God is also omniscience because God knows all. God is omnipotence in that He can do all things which show His infinite power. No one made God as He has always been, He is eternal. This of course is a mystery in itself, God is eternal. When God made us, He obviously put some of 'God-ness' in us by giving us the ability to chose in making decisions. We, being of God are in no way divine. Of course we aren't. We don't know how Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Father are one, but it is true nevertheless.

The deity of Jesus identified Jesus' nature in being the same as God. We have scripture passages like, 'I am in the father and the father in me.' And also, 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father and I and my Father are one.' This is historic and orthodox Christianity. Be aware that there are new evolutionary concepts being developed by people who promote evolution. One such heresy is that Jesus is in God because all is God and God is all. This carries a smack of animatism in it. Other phrases are being thrown about that are

confusing real believers on the deity of Christ. The deity of Christ was shown by the supernatural virgin birth. Through Jesus God assumed flesh, entered this world, experienced time, space and material things. God alone became man in the only incarnation event in history; this is both awesome and staggering. Any other example is simply satanic counterfeiting attempts that try to discredit Christ. In being born on earth, Jesus assumed two natures, one of humanity and one of deity. Because of being a human, He experienced suffering as we know it and being divine He was perfect and sinless. Jesus himself said, 'For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.' In His humanity, He was a perfect example for us to follow. Any other possible reference of any God-like power from any other religious book is false simply by the nature of the book itself. You must understand that Jesus' deity is shown by His miracles. The apostles' felt that these miracles were evidence of his deity. Peter reminded the people of Israel about all the miracles performed by Christ. Even Jesus said, 'Believe me for the very works sake.' Jesus came also to die on the cross for. This was essential in order to fulfil Old Testament prophecy. This is so very important to understand because it was His death that has atoned for our sins. It was His blood that He shed for us as a final sacrifice but rising from that death, He revealed His power over death thus providing us the same power over death and a future in Heaven. This had to be for in the very beginning, it was sin that introduced death into the world. Death was never meant to be! And there was a promise of His return as the angels proclaimed on the Mount of Olives, 'this same Jesus who is taken up from you ... shall come again in like manner as you have seen him go into heave.'

So the Holy Spirit is one of the God-head. The Holy Spirit was sent after Jesus left; the Son and Holy Spirit existed already and were at the Creation of time. Jesus was in the beginning as the Word of God. The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin and to show us what is right. In the beginning humanity chose to sin against God and that event created a need for some body to take our sins away and to be a final sacrifice for us. Jesus came as a Saviour to save us from our sins. The Holy Spirit continues a work of renewal in our lives thus helping us transform into that which God wants us to be. Just look at how the Holy Spirit changed Paul's life. We have this born again experience which is part of the renewal we encounter in Jesus when we become a Christian. This renewal requires our surrender, our obedience and trust in Christ. The Bible says that God wants all people to be saved. He's doesn't want any to perish and He wants all to come to repentance. People come to Jesus by accepting Him as their Saviour. Paul says, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be save, and your household. Also, 'God ... Is the Saviour of all people, namely of

those who believe.' Salvation is of God but the exercise of faith is an individual responsibility. In First Thessalonians, 'If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.. For the Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.' For those not in Christ, it will be the resurrection of damnation which involves eternity in hell. This is what is going to happen in the end times; Jesus will return.

In regard to the church; the schism of churches is hard to understand. So many churches say that are the one church and others aren't. According to Ockenga, there is no salvation outside the Church, for Christ died for the Church and there is no salvation except by justification of the individual who Christ died for. I am not totally sure what he is saying by this because the church doesn't save you. but I quote it because as I see it, the Church here is not denominational but the body of believers. When you are saved, you are saved into the body of believers. At all times, we must see this; the church is the body of believers in the world.

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