



EFCA Statement of Faith: Article 5
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The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

6. We believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit, and thus become children of God.

I. Introduction

II. Change of Order in Articles 5 and 6, And a Few Other Changes

- A. This follows the biblical narrative, the unfolding plan of God's redemption.
- B. It follows theologically and logically in that the truth about the work of Christ builds upon the person of Christ. Thus, a closer connection is made between these two inseparable truths.
- C. The truth about the Holy Spirit's ministry of glorifying Christ, and His application of the work of Christ in regeneration and adoption follows theologically and logically in the next statement, article 6.
- D. Christ's perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins as our representative and substitute is stated here, under the work of Christ, and moved from article 3 ("A sacrifice for our sins").
- E. Justification is based on the completed work of Christ applied by the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who now believe. This truth has been stated under the article on the church, article 7 (and it is mentioned in article 8 as well).
- F. The language of "believe" and "receive" occurs in article 10, as the Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*), follows the unfolding plan of God's redemption. This means the ultimate response to this unfolding truth that finds its culmination in Jesus Christ is to believe the gospel and receive the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Article 5

The Work of Christ

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A. We believe Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross (Lev. 17:11; Mt. 26:28; Heb. 9:14, 22; 10:19; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 12:10-11).

B. We believe Jesus' voluntary death on the cross is the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice (1 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 9:23-24, 26, 28; 10:1; 13:11, 12) for our sins (Isa. 53:5-7, 12; Jn. 1:29; Rom. 3:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 1 Jn. 3:5) .

- Perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice
- God's wrath
- Our sins

C. We believe Jesus is our representative (Gen. 2:15-17; Matt. 4:1-11; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-13; Rom. 5:18-19; 1 Cor. 1:30; 15:45, 47; Phil. 3:9; Heb. 4:15) and substitute (Lev. 16; Mk. 10:45; Heb. 2:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18).

- Representative
- Substitute

D. We believe Jesus' atoning death (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10) and victorious resurrection (Col. 1:13; 2:13-15; Heb. 2:14-15) constitute the only ground for salvation (Rom. 4:25; 6:4, 11, 14; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:20; 2 Cor. 4:14; Eph. 1:19-20; 2:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:3).

- Atoning death

- Victorious resurrection
- Salvation

Summarizing connection to the gospel: *“God’s gospel is accomplished through the work of Christ.”*

IV. Specific Ways the Article on the doctrine of **The Work of Christ** has been strengthened, or new issues addressed

- Emphasize and focus on the work of Christ
- Representative and substitute
- Shed His blood
- Perfect all-sufficient sacrifice
- Atoning death
- Victorious resurrection

V. Importance of Reaffirming the Biblical/Doctrinal Truths of **The Work of Christ** Today (which also carries with it denials)

- Jesus is our Representative and Substitute – His substitutionary death is being denied by some in broader evangelicalism today.
- Jesus shed His blood – this is important to emphasize today because it is biblical, without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness, and He did this voluntarily. For some, this is considered “cosmic child abuse.”
- Perfect, All-sufficient sacrifice for our sins – nothing can be done or added to atone for sins, and this is being denied in many places. Any time anything is added to the work of Christ, it is being denied.
- Jesus’ death is an atoning sacrifice – this means God’s wrath is propitiated, and our sins can be forgiven.
- Jesus’ victorious resurrection – this is the first stage of His exaltation. This, too, is denied by some as they will make a distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.
- Salvation – salvation sin, ultimately God’s wrath. There are many ideas about salvation today, but the only true salvation that gets at the heart of our problem is what has been stated here about the work of Christ.

VI. Additional Resources

Questions for Further Study

1. What is the significance of Jesus being our “representative and substitute?” Why did we need a representative? Why did we need a substitute?
2. Why is the reference to Christ shedding “His blood on the cross” important? What are the roots of the necessity of a blood sacrifice under the old covenant?
3. Jesus’ death is “the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins.” What is the importance of this statement? Can anything be added to what Christ has done to address our sin problem, viz. being under God’s wrath?
4. This cross-work of Christ is referred to as “His atoning death and victorious resurrection.” What does this mean to God the Father? What does this mean for us? Is there any other ground of salvation?
5. Why is it important to emphasize this truth of the work of Christ today? In what ways is this biblical truth being undermined today?

Preaching/Teaching Texts

Isaiah 53:1-12

Romans 3:21-26

Memory Verses

Isaiah 53:5-6

2 Corinthians 5:21

Hymns

Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed

In Christ Alone

How Deep the Father’s Love for Us

Jesus Christ is Risen Today

Choruses

Behold the Lamb

Worthy is the Lamb that Was Slain

Appendix 1

EFCA Statement of Faith Commentary¹

The Work of Christ

5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.

[6. We believe that the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit, and thus become children of God.]

This statement on the work of Christ has been placed after the statement on the Person of Christ to make a closer connection between these two inseparable theological themes. The statement on the Holy Spirit's work in glorifying Christ and in applying His work in regeneration and adoption logically follows in the new statement #6. Further, the language of "receiving Jesus Christ" occurs in the new statement #10.

as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins—

This language has been added to give more substance to the doctrine of the atonement in our Statement of Faith and to expound what "the shed blood of Jesus Christ" means. Making Jesus the active subject emphasizes the voluntary nature of his sacrifice on our behalf, His passive obedience, while retaining the importance of sacrificial "blood" (cf. Heb. 9:22). Rooted in the Old Testament law, this was the means through which the new covenant would be established (cf. Ex. 24:8; Lev. 16-17; Jer. 31:31-34; Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25).

This restatement affirms a substitutionary understanding of the atonement in a forensic sense (Rom. 3:21-26; Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21), but can also include complementary views of the atonement which stress Jesus' victory over the forces of evil (Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:8; Col. 2:15), His role as a ransom, redeeming us from the power of sin (Mk. 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:6; Tit. 2:14), and the moral power of His sacrificial love (1 Pet. 3:21-23). Jesus' death on the cross "as our representative and substitute" is the only means by which God's wrath against sinners (cf. article 3) is turned away, an effect otherwise known as propitiation (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10).

Further, we affirm that Christ's sacrifice is fully sufficient to save all those who trust in him. Nothing must be and nothing can be added to complete that work.

¹This commentary will only highlight changes from the 1950 Statement of Faith and not expound the theological truth common to both statements.

victorious resurrection--

"victorious" is included to emphasize the triumph of Christ over the powers of evil—a power that is now available to believers. This *Christus Victor* theme is significant in the biblical presentation of the work of Christ (cf. e.g., Col. 2:15). It is an important truth that is anchored in the substitutionary and representational death and resurrection of Christ, which is the heart of the atonement.

constitute—

This word is chosen for stylistic purposes, lessening the problem of having a compound subject with a singular object ("ground"). The two aspects of Christ's saving work together form a single (and exclusive) "ground" of salvation.

Appendix 2

Frequently Asked Questions – Article 5

In the statement regarding Christ’s saving work we have the terms “representative,” “substitute,” “blood,” “perfect, all sufficient,” atoning death,” and “victorious resurrection,” but we have left out “justification” from this article (which was included in the article in the 1950 SOF). Is not justification a work of Christ’s death and resurrection, and thus to be included in this article?

Since we are following a redemptive historical flow (biblical theology), we have shifted the truths contained in article 6 of our present SOF to articles 5, 6, 7 and 10. The reason for this is the biblical and theological flow of God’s redemptive work. We have attempted to make the SOF flow by focusing on a specific truth in each article, rather than containing a number of different truths under each article, which is what the 1950 SOF did. This is seen in a number of the articles in the 1950 SOF (3, 5, 6), which I will show you from article 6 below, from which the question is raised. I will follow the order of statements from article 6 of the 1950 SOF, and then give the parallel statement from the Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*), followed by comments.

Jesus’ Shed Blood

1950 - “the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground”

Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*), article 5, “The Work of Christ” - “Jesus Christ . . . shed His blood on the cross . . . His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.”

Jesus Christ becomes the subject of this truth, not the prepositional phrase. No one takes His life, but He gives it up voluntarily. Moreover, it adds that Christ’s death was an “atoning death,” i.e. it was the ground of being made right with God, to propitiate His wrath (article 3). It expands that His resurrection was “victorious.” Both state that this is the “only ground” for . . . Thus, even here, there is a distinction between what Christ did, and what He did being the basis of, only ground for something else. The reference to “salvation” includes justification but it is also broader than just justification.

Justification

1950 – “the only ground for justification and salvation.”

Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*), Article 7, “The Church” – “the true church comprises all who have been justified by God’s grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head.”

Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*), Article 8, “Christian Living” – “God’s justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose.”

What we have done is to place the doctrine of justification under the category of the application of the work of Christ by the Holy Spirit in the life of the true church, viz. “all who have been justified by God’s grace through faith alone in Christ alone.” Technically this is not the work of Christ, it is the application of the work of Christ by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who believe the gospel. Even the 1950 SOF technically recognizes this is not a work of Christ but acknowledge that this work of Christ

is the only ground for justification and salvation. So, are these terms being used synonymously, or do they carry different meanings? Is salvation a broader term? We believe it includes justification but it also includes much more as salvation is a broader term in the New Testament that consists of election, regeneration (both understood in the Arminian or Calvinist way), faith, repentance, conversion, justification, union with Christ, sanctification, glorification.

In fact, if you look at the systematic theology textbooks, they list it as we have in the Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*). For example, in Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, he lists justification under the section “The Doctrine of the Application of the Work of Redemption,” which is distinct from the previous section “The Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ.” In Millard Erickson’s *Christian Theology*, he lists it under the section “Salvation,” which is distinct from both “The Person of Christ,” “The Work of Christ,” and “The Holy Spirit.” In Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demerest’s *Integrative Theology*, they list it in their third volume under “Personal Transformation,” which is distinct from and builds upon, like the others, “Christ’s Atoning Provisions,” in volume two. Wayne Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology*, following on “The Doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit,” includes justification under the category of “The Doctrine of the Work of Redemption,” much like all the others. And finally, John Murray spells this out very well in his classic *Redemption – Accomplished and Applied*.

As you would surmise, he lists justification under “Redemption Applied.” All this to say that, on the one hand, to include it under Christ would not necessarily be wrong because Christ’s death and resurrection is the ground of justification. But, on the other hand, to place it in the category of the work of Christ dilutes it because then His work would be insufficient or incomplete until justification occurred. This is why it is vital to recognize that though they are inextricably connected, Jesus’ person and work are the basis of everything that pertains to salvation, whereas justification is application of this basis in one’s life. In the Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*), we have been intentional about these nuances. The other way this is strengthened is that it spells out what justification is or how one is justified, i.e. by “God’s grace through faith alone in Christ alone.”

We have also recognized the difference between justification and sanctification, being careful not to equate them because otherwise the unadulterated, unmerited grace of God for salvation, narrowly understood, turns into a work (cf. article 7). And yet we also acknowledge their connectedness such that though different, one will not be present without the other (article 8). That is the broader understanding of salvation.

Believe and Receive Jesus Christ

1950 – “all who believe and only such as receive Jesus Christ”

Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*), Article 10, “Response and Eternal Destiny” – “God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ.”

This we have placed in article 10 because the Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*) follows God’s redemptive historical plan as revealed in the Bible, the climax of that truth is believing it. This is why this statement has been moved to the place of a crescendo at the end, and one’s eternal destiny follows from one’s response to this gospel of Jesus Christ.

Born of the Holy Spirit

1950 – “are born of the Holy Spirit and thus become children of God”

Statement of Faith (adopted June 2008), Article 6, “The Holy Spirit” – “He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God.”

The work of “The Holy Spirit” follows the person of “Jesus Christ” and “The Work of Christ,” which is why this statement has been included in the article of “The Holy Spirit.” You will find that this one statement in the Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*) occurs in two articles in the 1950 SOF, the one under discussion (article 6), and article 4.