



EFCA Statement of Faith: Article 6
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The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

4. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service.

I. Introduction

II. Change of Order in Articles 4 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 person and work of Christ is now applied by the Holy Spirit. Thus, a closer connection is made between Christ's work that has been accomplished, and that work that is now applied.
- C. It combines the various statements regarding the Holy Spirit's work that were included in articles 4, 5 and 6 into one article.

III. Article 6

Introductory Biblical/Theological Statements

- The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity – God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit's ministry is primarily a floodlight ministry. Though He is fully God, His primary ministry is to bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Holy Spirit was the One promised who would usher in the new covenant, the "new age."

- This new age was begun in the person and work of Jesus Christ and confirmed and established in the new covenant, the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the One who continues the work of God the Son – it is Christocentric.
- The Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of a promise; He is also the promise of fulfillment.

Introductory EFCA Statements

- We are attempting to focus on the biblical teaching of the work of the Holy Spirit, the essentials of His ministry.
- This means that while being rooted biblically, we are also sensitive to various positions within acceptable biblical/theological parameters.
- Within those parameters, we live with the commitment to “silence,” Arminianism or Calvinism, perseverance of the saints or the possibility of apostasy, etc. Being outside those parameters is not acceptable within the Free Church, e.g. open theism, which denies God’s absolute foreknowledge or hyper-Calvinist, which denies that we can genuinely offer the gospel of salvation to all.
- Because this is an essentialist statement on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, there is not much about the fruit or gifts of the Spirit.
- As an example of our emphasis on the essentials of salvation, it would be instructive to observe what we have done in light of what has been done in our history.

Swedish Evangelical Free Church Ministerial Association SOF (1947) #6

VI. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men of sin, **regenerate the unbelieving sinner**, indwell, guide, instruct, empower the believer for godly living and service.

Evangelical Free Church of America SOF (1950) #4

4. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, **regenerate the believing sinner**, indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service.

Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*) – “**He regenerates sinners** . . .”

The Holy Spirit

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A. We believe the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 16:14).

B. We believe the Holy Spirit convicts the world of its guilt (Jn. 16:8; 1 Cor. 2:14).

C. We believe the Holy Spirit regenerates sinners (Ezek. 36:25-27; Jn. 3:3, 5; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13; 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13; Tit. 3:5; Jms. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3), and in Him they are baptized (Mk. 1:8; Acts 1:5; 1 Cor. 12:13) into union with Christ (Rom. 3:24; 5:15-21; 12:5; 1 Cor. 1:2; 5:19; 15:22b; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 1:22; 2:17; 3:28; Eph. 1:4; 2:12; 3:6; 4:32; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Thess. 4:16) and adopted as heirs (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5; Tit. 3:7) in the family of God (Matt. 12:49-50; 2 Cor. 6:18; Eph. 3:14; 1 Jn. 3:14-18).

- Regenerates sinners

- In Him they are baptized into union with Christ

- Adopted as heirs in the family of God

D. We believe the Holy Spirit also indwells (Jn. 14:17; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 3:16), illuminates (1 Cor. 2:2; 2 Cor. 4:4-15; Eph. 1:17-19; Phil. 1:9-11), guides (Jn. 16:13; Acts 15:28; Rom. 8:4, 14; Gal. 5:16, 18), equips (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-10; Eph. 4:7-11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11) and empowers (Acts 1:8; 10:38; Rom. 15:13; 1 Cor. 12:11; Eph. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:7) believers for Christ-like living and service (Acts 6:8; Rom. 8:4-6, 12-16; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 3:3, 5; 5:22-23, 25; Eph. 2:22; 4:3; Phil. 2:1-2).

- Indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers
- Christ-like living and service

Summarizing connection to the gospel: *“God’s gospel is applied by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

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

- convicts the world of its guilt
- regenerates sinners
- baptized into union with Christ
- adopted as heirs in the family of God
- illuminates

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

- Glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ – when He ministers, Jesus is always exalted
- Convicts the world of its guilt – the world does not believe it is guilty before an Almighty God.
- Regenerates sinners – salvation is a work of God the Holy Spirit, not a work of man.
- Baptized into union with Christ – conversion and Spirit-baptism are simultaneous
- Adopted as heirs in the family of God – He addresses the problem of alienation, cosmic orphans. It emphasizes familial and legal aspects of our union with Christ.
- Illuminates – the Holy Spirit who inspires the Word of God also illuminates that Word in interpretation so we can understand it.
- Empowers believers for Christ-like living and service – belief and behavior are connected, and this has individual and corporate implications

VI. Additional Resources

Questions for Further Study

1. What is the chief ministry of the Holy Spirit?

2. The Holy Spirit's work is seen in three key areas: conviction of unbelievers, regenerating sinners and indwelling believers. How does the Holy Spirit's ministry of conviction occur in the lives of unbelievers?
3. What does it mean that the Holy Spirit "regenerates sinners"? Why is it important to equate Spirit-baptism with regeneration, and what is the significance?
4. In the Holy Spirit believers are "baptized into union with Christ." What does "union with Christ" mean? How does this relate to the fact that Jesus is "our representative and substitute" (article 5) and that He lives a "sinless life" (article 4)?
5. One of the results of our union with Christ is that we are "adopted as heirs in the family of God." Adoption has two important meanings: heirship (legal) and familial (relationship). Why are both of these truths important?
6. In the life of the believer, the Holy Spirit is at the heart of Christian growth, sanctification. He "indwells . . . guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service." So much of Christian growth today is considered in individual terms. Why is it important to combine "Christ-like living and service"? The Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures also "illuminates" them. What important truth does this state when considering reading, interpreting and understanding the Bible?
7. What are the ways the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is being undermined today? What truths are important to emphasize?

Preaching/Teaching Texts

Ezekiel 36:22-28

John 16:5-15

Memory Verses

Ezekiel 36:26-27

Titus 3:4-7

Hymns

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Spirit of the Living God

Choruses

Shine, Jesus, Shine

There is a Redeemer

Appendix 1

EFCA Statement of Faith Commentary¹

The Holy Spirit

6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

[4. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service.]

The re-wording in this statement reflects an effort to clarify a rather densely packed theological statement that was not grammatically clear.

We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.—

This opening sentence is meant to be the summary statement, making the work of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ the central work of the Spirit, with the two remaining sentences explaining how the Spirit glorifies Christ in the convicting, converting and sanctifying work of the Spirit.

convicts the world of its guilt—

"men" has been changed to "the world" and "of its guilt" to reflect the language of John 16:8 (cf. the NIV). This explains the convicting work of the Spirit in the lives of unbelievers prior to conversion.

He regenerates sinners—

This phrase replaces "regenerate the believing sinner." This phrase in the 1950 SOF appears to favor an Arminian position, as it implies that faith precedes regeneration. However, in his exposition of the 1950 SOF, A. T. Olson explicitly declared the framers' intention to create a statement that was consistent with both Arminian and Calvinist soteriology, but which required neither. We believe that this phrase needed to be revised to make that intention clear. This revised statement is also intended to include both Arminian and Calvinist soteriology, and it should not be understood to endorse either view. Again, at this point we are only discussing the Spirit's work. In Statement #10 we refer to the attendant human response.

in Him they are baptized into union with Christ —

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

The regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in conversion is the same work that unites us to Christ. This act is often referred to as "the baptism of the Holy Spirit."² This can be a controversial concept, and here we affirm that this Spirit-baptism refers to that work of God in conversion by which we are joined to Christ and so partake of all His benefits (on this notion, cf. esp. 1 Cor. 12:13). We believed this theological truth of union with Christ, so central to New Testament teaching, needed to be affirmed. The inclusion of the term "baptizes" here in the context of conversion is important in that it denies the Classic Pentecostal teaching which insists upon a post-conversion baptism in the Spirit which is accompanied and evidenced by speaking in tongues.

adopted as heirs in the family of God.—

This statement brings the notion of adoption into our statement of faith. It has been moved from the 1950 statement concerning the work of Christ (#6) to this statement about the work of the Holy Spirit. It is placed here to emphasize that it is a consequence of our being in union with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. In union with Jesus Christ the Son of God, we become sons—sons and daughters of God, and as adopted children we assume the rights of heirs. This reflects both the familial or relational (God is our Father and we are sons and daughters) and the legal aspects (we are heirs) of our adoption as expressed in Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 3:23-29; 4:4-7 and Titus 3:4-7.

illuminates—

We have replaced the 1950 SOF word "instruct" with "illuminates." This change reflects the conviction that the teaching of the Holy Spirit is chiefly through the illumination of our minds to understand the Scriptures. The Spirit who inspires the authors is also the Spirit who illumines the readers. The change in order is primarily stylistic.

equips—

This equipping includes the bestowal of spiritual gifts to every believer for the edification of the body of Christ.

Christ-like living and service—

We have replaced "godly" with "Christ-like" only because we believed the latter would be perceived as a broader and more inclusive term for the life to which we are called and empowered, including ministry in the church and the world as well as personal piety. As those in union with Christ, He is the image into whom we are being progressively conformed (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18), which means our behavior ought to be correspondingly Christ-like.

²We concede that the translation of a key text, 1 Cor. 12:13, is uncertain—is it "by" one Spirit (agent) or "in" one Spirit (location or substance) that we are baptized? But regardless of the exegesis of that one verse, this, in fact, is what the Spirit does in theological terms—he unites us to Christ in a "Spirit-baptism" that occurs at our conversion.

Appendix 2

Frequently Asked Questions – Article 6

Is this a shift to more Reformed theology?

Not at all. To your specific concern about the change from “regenerate the believing sinner” to “He [the Holy Spirit] regenerates sinners . . .”, this is neither an attempt to accommodate Calvinism nor is it an attempt to move away from Arminianism. We know who the Free Church is, viz. a home to both Arminians and Calvinists. In fact, we believe this is one of our strengths, and serves as an identity marker of the EFCA. This is one of the ways we manifest in practice that we do find our unity in the essentials of the gospel. In all that we have done, our attempt is to craft a SOF that was compatible with both views, but which at no point required one or the other. Our present SOF is more of an explicitly Arminian statement. One believes and then one is regenerated. Calvinism believes that one is regenerated and then one believes. The regeneration enables one to believe. How does a person come into that state of being a believer? An Arminian would say by believing; a Calvinist would say by regeneration. That is the question that we have attempted to grant liberty (the significance of silence) in the Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*) as we have attempted to acknowledge the soteriological essentials of being sinners, of faith/belief, and regeneration without stating an order. This enables us to focus on essentials, essentials for both Calvinists and Arminians, without addressing the time of how and in what manner those truths are experienced in our lives. This makes it more conducive to both Arminians and Calvinists.

To our history, there have been times when Arminianism was more prevalent than Calvinism; but then again, there have been times when Calvinism was more prominent than Arminianism. Both are our heritage. If you read in A. T. Olson’s *The Significance of Silence*, you will find that then (1950) and before in our history both positions have been represented in the Free Church. Certainly there has been, and continues to be, a stronger emphasis one way than the other, but that has shifted through our history as well. In the Part Four, “Eternal Security,” here is what Dr. Olson wrote (p. 135):

The Evangelical Free Church went through three phases: (1) A period when Arminianism was the order of the day, (2) the decade when the proponents of Calvinist sought to make the Church Calvinist, (3) the time when cooler heads and warmer hearts prevailed and a moderation in this controversial doctrine joined the moderation on the time and mode of baptism to become some of the identifying policies of the Church.

The last stage, the time when cooler heads and warmer hearts prevailed, he considered to be the time prior to the merger conference. He concluded this section with these words (p. 162):

One is privileged to hold either view and still be a member in good standing of a local congregation. It is only in a strict adherence to this principle of freedom, respect for the views of others, and restraint in teaching one view as though it is the official view of the denomination when it is actually silent on the subject, that this unity can be maintained. We must recognize that while some may be Arminians, others Calvinists, others deploring the use of such names, none are heretics!

Our sense is that this was the ethos of the merger work and the merger SOF, our present SOF. If that is true, which we believe it is, then the article on how this biblical and theological truth is stated could be stated better to focus on the key truths without making in an explicit statement in the Arminian or the Calvinist direction. That, at least, has been our attempt. The reason you may sense this statement is more Calvinist could be because it is less explicitly Arminian. But be assured, neither is it explicitly Calvinist.

What is the Free Church history and heritage regarding Arminianism and Calvinism, particularly in the article on the Holy Spirit?

This question is related to the one above. In order to answer this question, we have to consider an earlier Free Church Statement of Faith, the 1947 Swedish Statement, and then compare/contrast it with our present EFCA Statement of Faith.

In the 1947 Swedish Evangelical Free Church Ministerial Association Statement of Faith, article 4 was written as follows:

IV. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men of sin, regenerate the unbelieving sinner, indwell, guide, instruct and empower the believer for godly living and service.”

In the 1950 EFCA Statement of Faith, article 4 is written in this way:

IV. We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service.

You will note that for the merger SOF the statement is almost exactly the same as the earlier 1947 Swedish statement. As you look at both of these Statements as a whole, you can tell that the earlier one was written with the merger Statement in mind because a number of the earlier articles find their way into the merger Statement with no change.

In article 4, you will note three changes – one a specific reference to the specifics of the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, the second to a punctuation, and the final one a theological change. To the first, the 1950 SOF on conviction drops the reference to “of sin.” To the second, a comma was added after instruct. To the third, the word “unbelieving” was changed to “believing.” As you would surmise, this is no small change. You can see this in A. T. Olson’s *This We Believe* (p. 135) and Cal Hanson’s *What It Means to Be Free* (p. 123).

What this means is that the Swedish Ministerial’s SOF is more explicitly Calvinist, “regenerate the unbelieving sinner;” the EFCA’s 1950 SOF is more explicitly Arminian, “regenerate the believing sinner.” Bearing in mind the intent of those who worked on the 1950 SOF of desiring to craft a statement that would affirm similar truths of both without mandating or requiring either, we asked the question if that goal was accomplished. If it was not, then we asked whether or not it could be stated in a better way to match the goal. We concluded it could be

stated in a better way. We still desired to be sensitive and welcoming to both Calvinists and Arminians in the Free Church without mandating or excluding one or the other.

This means that being sensitive to our history and heritage, that keeping in mind the principle behind the statement on soteriology, we concluded that from the one side of “regenerate the unbelieving sinner” (article 4, Swedish, 1947) to the other side of “regenerate the believing sinner” (article 4, EFCA, 1950) we believe we have captured it best by the statement “He regenerates sinners” (article 6, EFCA, Statement of Faith *adopted June 2008*). One may differ with our assessment or conclusion, but this ought to shed further light on our history and heritage and our rationale for the statement in the Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*).

Why is the active call to believe mentioned seldom, and why does it occur at the end?

It is important to note that this is not just about how many times a word is used, or stating the reality about who we are, viz. believers, in only one way. We have attempted to be intentional about being biblically anchored and sensitive to our evangelical history. Moreover, the place where it does occur is in article #10, which speaks about eternal destiny. This is the key expression of response based on all that is stated in the SOF. You will notice that this is the only article in which we affirm twice that “We believe . . .” In the first, we affirm and emphasize the necessity of a personal response to the gospel. All are exhorted, commanded to believe the good news, to repent and receive the Lord Jesus Christ. In the second, we affirm the truth that all will face eternal consequences based on the response to the gospel. This is stated clearly and strongly. There is no aversion to calling people to believe, to repent, to receive, to speak the words of John 1:12 or Acts 16:31 (cf. article #10). But what we do say, and the SOF reflects this, is that there are more ways to explain salvation and who we are in Christ than John 1:12 or Acts 16:31.

Why the use of the word guilt?

There are two reasons for the use of the word “guilt”: biblical and theological. First, the biblical basis for the use of this word is found in John 16:8-11, where John spells out the role of the Holy Spirit. In verse 8 John writes, “When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.” In a footnote to this expression it states as another option, “he will expose the guilt of the world.” If you look at other versions, e.g. ESV, NASB, it does not include the word “guilt,” but that does not mean the notion is not inherent in the translation. It must be known that the translation of this verse, beginning with the verb in question, is disputed. As D. A. Carson writes in his commentary, “The Greek of these four verses is so compressed that it is difficult to decide exactly what is meant.” But difficult does not mean impossible, and it does not mean because there is dispute it has no meaning. Here, then, is Carson’s conclusion: “*elencho* means ‘to convict [the world]’ in the personal sense, i.e. not arguing the case for the world’s objective guilt before God at the final Great Assize, but shaming the world and convincing it of its own guilt, thus calling it to repentance. The preposition *peri* [“in regard to”] then introduces what the world is guilty of: its sin, its righteousness and its judgment. The *hoti* clauses in vv. 9-11 are causal [“because”], each clause providing a reason why the Paraclete is engaged in this convicting work.”

Second, the theological basis for the use of this word is found in our being born “in Adam.” In the SOF article 3 we make a clear connection with Adam: “in union with Adam.” Because of our union with Adam we “are sinners by nature and by choice.” Because we are sinners we are “alienated from God, and under His wrath.” This truth is anchored to texts like Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. Theologically, this means that not only have we inherited a corrupt nature, otherwise known as original sin, but also inherited guilt, i.e. we are guilty before God due to our “union with Adam.” This is part of the reason why we are under God’s wrath. When Adam, our representative head, sinned and was found guilty by God, so were we; his sin and guilt were imputed to us. Consider these texts within the broader context of Romans 5:12-2, particularly verses 13-14, 18-19. This then prepares the way for the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, to take that guilt upon Himself as our representative, and to impute His righteousness to us. This is what we spell out in article 6 when we address the “union with Christ” language. As the Holy Spirit applies the work of Christ to our lives by faith, we are placed “in union with Christ,” and our guilt, the guilt from being “in union with Adam,” is placed on Christ, God’s wrath against us is placed on Christ and Christ’s righteousness is given to us (cf. article 5). As is obvious, guilt is not being referred to as a psychological state, a personal feeling that comes from being convinced I am a sinner. The way the Bible uses it, and the way it is being used here, is as an objective state of being guilty before God whether we feel it or not.

What is the Free Church position on the miraculous gifts? What does this statement about baptism mean?

Although the EFCA does not have an official policy on miraculous gifts, we do have a position rooted in our ethos. We believe that regeneration/conversion and Spirit-baptism occur simultaneously when one by grace through faith in Christ becomes a Christian. We do not believe that a post-conversion baptism of the Holy Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues is required to live a full life. Other than this theological conviction, the EFCA is on a continuum from cessationist to continuist, on this side of Pentecostalism. We know that the Christian life, including the beginning, middle and end, is impossible apart from the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9; Galatians 3:2-3). Therefore, we are committed to “be being filled” (Ephesians 5:18)—a present continuous command—and to “live by the Spirit” and to “walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

Appendix 3

“A Theological Primer: The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit,” *EFCA Today* 81/3 (Fall 2007), 16-17.

http://www.efca.org/today/media/07fa_features.pdf