

# ACOP Beliefs & Distinctives

---

## Statements of Faith

- **Dogma** – Critical points of orthodoxy.
- **Doctrine** – Concepts that shape our understanding of the nature of the church.
- **Beliefs** – Important Ideas.
- **Personal preferences** – Opinions and cultural norms.

### Notes

Statements of faith are a current Western concept purposed to summarize key truths, both of essential (Dogma) and non-essential (Doctrine and Beliefs) beliefs.

Deity of Jesus, virgin birth, nature of God, nature of man

Denominational distinctives

May be a matter of difference of opinion

Worship style, music, clothes, communion

---

## Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell\*.

The third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic\*\* church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed is an example of a first century oral tradition practiced to maintain the orthodoxy of belief as churches gathered without the written New Testament.

This was followed by many Councils where Church leaders gathered to agree on essential beliefs. eg: The First Council of Nicaea (325A) and the First Council of Constantinople (381) are often referenced in this discussion.

\*'Hell' – this is the Greek word 'Hades'.

\*\*'Catholic' means universal which is the true church without sectarian labels.

---

## ACOP's Interactive Questionnaire

1. The Bible is the inspired, infallible, authoritative written Word of God. (Dogma)
  - (a) The original manuscripts are the authoritative inspired word of God.
  - (b) The original manuscripts of the scriptures are inerrant.
  - (c) The Bible is infallible.
  - (d) Contemporary translations reflect the scriptures with varying degrees of accuracy.
  - (e) Contemporary prophetic utterances should be accepted with equal authority of the scriptures.

### Notes

These multiple-choice questions are designed to create discussion and clarity about our beliefs. So, although we will identify some as wrong, the reality is that for most of them there could be discussion about the semantics of the words, and much is meant to be left open-ended.

Among the options in this question, only (e) is clearly wrong. Many of the words used here have definitions that Bible scholars have agreed on in many different studies.

In 1982, a team of Bible scholars concluded a series of conferences on the subject of Biblical Inerrancy with what is called the 1982 Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics; with a shorter statement on The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. A Google search will quickly help you resource this study.

The big difference among Christians is the distinction between inspired words and inspired thoughts. We believe that the words contained in the original manuscripts are inspired, infallible and inerrant.

- 
2. The eternal existence of one true God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Dogma)
    - (a) Father, Son and Holy Spirit are different expression of the one true God.
    - (b) The Son was created by the Father.
    - (c) The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three separate persons who partake of one divine nature.
    - (d) Christ alone is the true God.

This statement is our attempt to harmonize the differing descriptions of belief in the Godhead that come from our roots as a movement in the ACOP and ECOP, where each expressed their understanding differently.

(b) is wrong, and

(d) is also incorrect, or at least sets up some discussion.

3. The Saviour of men, the Lord Jesus Christ; conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary; very God and very man. (Dogma)

- (a) The Father created the Son.
- (b) The virgin birth is a miraculous fact of history.
- (c) Jesus Christ is the full revelation of God.
- (d) When Jesus was on earth, heaven was empty of divinity.
- (e) Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of mankind.

### Notes

Orthodox Christianity finds its primary focus on the person of Jesus. I like to use an Old English outline to identify the essential beliefs about Jesus that conform to orthodox beliefs.

Jesus, his...

Virgin Birth

Virtuous Life

Vicarious (substitutionary) Death

Victorious Resurrection

Visible Return

Wrong options include (a) and (d)

---

4. The creation, test and fall of man, as recorded in Genesis; His total spiritual depravity and inability to attain to divine righteousness. (Dogma)

- (a) Adam's disobedience caused all of humanity to become sinners.
- (b) Spiritual depravity means there is no value in unregenerate people.
- (c) Adam had no choice but to sin.
- (d) Good works produce grace for salvation.
- (e) Fallen humanity still bears the image of God.

The Biblical revelation about mankind is very critical to a full understanding of salvation.

There is a lot of discussion to be had around the issues raised in (b), (c), and (d), which are basically incorrect.

The discussion around free will and election are a continuing search for Biblical perspective and definition.

5. Forgiveness of sin and eternal life is freely offered to all by our Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation of sinners is by grace through faith alone, in the perfect all sufficient work of Christ, who died for our sins, was buried and rose again the third day for our justification. (Dogma)

- (a) To be “justified” and to be “made righteous” means the same thing.
- (b) The grace of God is available only to those who believe.
- (c) Jesus' death was spiritual.
- (d) Jesus' bodily resurrection is a fact of history.

### Notes

The discussion around (b) and (c) have lots of history. (c) in particular is wrong, because it usually is in denial of his physical death.

ACOP founder Frank Small had a revelation of “The Finished Work of Calvary”, which is a significant foundational teaching in ACOP.

Current ACOP understanding would be a majority leaning towards ‘eternal security’, but we have many who can subscribe to this statement while maintaining a ‘conditional’ view of salvation.

“Hand in Hand” by Randy Alcorn is a well written book describing an attempt to harmonize and define ‘Calvinistic’ views with “Arminian” views

---

6. The baptism of the Holy Spirit as an experience subsequent to salvation, with the scriptural evidence, namely, speaking in tongues. (Doctrine)

- (a) Speaking in other tongues is a sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- (b) Speaking in other tongues is the sign of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- (c) The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is essential to be saved.
- (d) The purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to enable one to speak in tongues.
- (e) One could be baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues at some later date.

This statement is one of the distinctives of ACOP aligned with many of the ‘classical’ Pentecostal movements.

(c), (d), and (i) would generally be considered false statements in our movement; some of the others are widely debated.

The impact the Charismatic move across many denominations and then the wide work of the Holy Spirit in manifestation through the spread of Christianity in the Third World in recent decades has caused many questions and differences about whether there is a subsequent baptism to salvation and about the exact role of tongues.

ACOP has remained convinced that this is a subsequent experience, but the reality that many people do not speak in tongues has among other reasons caused a challenge to the definition of tongues as initial evidence.

- (f) Any of the spiritual gifts listed in I Corinthians 12 is evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- (g) Being filled with the Spirit and being baptized in the Holy Spirit is the same thing.
- (h) When a person speaks in tongues they speak to God.
- (i) Tongues should always be interpreted

### Notes

We continue to believe in the universal opportunity for believers to speak in tongues and often refer to this as a 'normative' experience with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The challenges to this statement come from a variety of objections, making it easy to choose to revise it. But no revision to date has gained any great agreement.

We treasure the work the Holy Spirit through speaking in tongues and continue to wait on the Lord to work in and through us.

## 7. The gifts of the Spirit as enumerated in the book of Acts and the Epistles. (Doctrine)

- (a) A believer should expect to experience the operation of only one or two of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in their life.
- (b) The most important spiritual gift is tongues.
- (c) Spiritual gifts are only to be operational in church services.
- (d) Any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit may be manifest if a believers' life once a person is baptized in the Holy Spirit.
- (e) Spiritual gifts are supernatural abilities that we could not do apart from the Spirit of God at work in our lives.

There is wide divergence of views, definitions and practices of the gifts of the Spirit.

This statement is usually aligned with 1 Corinthians 12; whereas there are several other passages which lift other gifts, ie. Ephesians 4, Romans 12, etc.

A common understanding is to identify the Corinthian list as 'manifestation' gifts which Pentecostals tend to define differently from other teachers.

(b) and (c) would be considered wrong answers.

(a) and (d) provide discussion interest.

8. The Lord's Supper, as a memorial for believers. (Doctrine)

- (a) We receive grace for salvation by participating in the Lord's Supper.
- (b) The communion service is a service of remembrance.
- (c) Participating in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner is dangerous.
- (d) Only clergy can administer the Lord's supper.

Notes

As Protestants the rejection of teaching on transubstantiation has marked our focus on The Lord's Supper as a memorial with the use of symbols for this ceremony.

(d) is wrong.

Both (a) and (c) have produced lots of differences in definition and created good discussion.

---

9. Divine Healing as practiced throughout the New Testament. (Doctrine)

- (a) When someone is not healed it is a sign of a lack of faith.
- (b) Divine healing is in the atonement.
- (c) Healing always occurs when there is sufficient faith.
- (d) Sickness and disease are the result of the curse.
- (e) It is never wrong to pray for healing.
- (f) It is always God's will to heal.

(d) and (e) are obviously correct, and the others create lots of great discussion and comparison of beliefs and practices.

10. The eternal life of the believer and the eternal punishment of the unbeliever.  
(Dogma)

- (a) Eternal life begins when we die.
- (b) Everyone has eternal life, but they must choose where they will spend eternity.
- (c) God wants everyone to spend eternity with Him.
- (d) Assurance of salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit.

### Notes

An argument can be made that all of these options are true; but semantics on some of these propositions create good discussion.

---

11. In the Spirit-filled life, the Holy Spirit is the catalyst for sanctification and seeks to produce His fruit in the believer's life as their minds are renewed and they are conformed to the image of Christ.  
(Doctrine)

- (a) Sanctification is a process.
- (b) Sanctification comes as a result of yielding to the Holy Spirit.
- (c) Separation means we have nothing to do with unbelievers.
- (d) Perfecting holiness means that we become sinless.

(a) and (b) are good options.

(c) and (d) are problematic.

12. The personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Church. (Dogma)

- (a) The return of the Lord is imminent.
- (b) The return of the Lord and the rapture occur at the same time.
- (c) The Judgment seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment are the same thing.
- (d) The tribulation is a literal seven years of hell on earth that is yet to occur.

Notes

Differing views of Eschatology have been accepted within ACOP.

Only (a) would be considered in the Dogma category, the other options provide fuel for discussion of differing views of the Second Coming of Jesus.

---

13. In the sanctity of marriage, as a lifelong, exclusive commitment between one man and one woman.

(Doctrine or Belief)

- (a) Heterosexual marriage is the building block of the home, church and society.
- (b) Marriage is first and foremost a covenant between a man and a woman and God.
- (c) God permits divorce in certain situations.
- (d) Divorce is acceptable but not remarriage.
- (e) Marriage was God's idea from the beginning.
- (f) Homosexual feelings are okay but homosexual activity is always sinful.
- (g) Physical or sexual abuse are grounds for divorce.

Current Western ideology has challenged the traditional view of Biblical marriage and this Statement is intended to place ACOP strongly in the conservative view of Scripture.

All of these statements could be viewed as true, but (d) and (g) will be disputed.

In recent years, ACOP has done extensive work to clarify our understanding of this issue in our culture from the Biblical teaching.

This information can be accessed on our website; you will be given the password for the Members Only section once this weekend is over.

On that site you can access two articles on Human Sexuality; the Summarized Statement and the Expanded Statement.