Understanding the “Declaration of Faith”
Discussion of the Official Faith Statement of the
Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)
by French L. Arrington, Ph.D.

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Study Recommendations
The Bible on the Internet in various versions and languages:

The Bible in contemporary language (for students, adults, or those learning English):
New Living Translation (NLT) – Tyndale House Publishers. The text of the NLT is available on the
Internet at:  Bible Gateway or Crosswalk.com or www.newlivingtranslation.com

Study Bibles:
Life in the Spirit Study Bible (formerly Full Life Study Bible)
Zondervan Publishing House (pentecostal perspective / available in KJV and NIV)

Life Application Study Bible
Tyndale House Publishers (available in KJV, NKJV, NIV, NLT)
Zondervan Publishing House (available in NASB and NIV)

TruthQuest Inductive Student Bible
Broadman & Holman Publishers (available in NLT)

New Testament commentary:
Life in the Spirit New Testament Commentary (formerly Full Life Bible Commentary to the New

Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) and other pentecostal or charismatic churches and
organizations:
Hal Bernard Dixon, Jr. Pentecostal Research Center  www.leeuniversity.edu/library/dixon
260 11th Street, N.E., Cleveland, Tennessee 37311
(423) 614-8576  email: dixon_research@leeuniversity.edu
DECLARATION OF FAITH
Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)
adopted in 1948

ARTICLE 1
We believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

ARTICLE 2
We believe in one God eternally existing in three persons; namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

ARTICLE 3
We believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. That Jesus was crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. That He ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as the Intercessor.

ARTICLE 4
We believe that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sins.

ARTICLE 5
We believe that justification, regeneration, and the new birth are wrought by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE 6
We believe in sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word, and by the Holy Ghost.

ARTICLE 7
We believe holiness to be God’s standard of living for His people.

ARTICLE 8
We believe in the baptism with the Holy Ghost subsequent to a clean heart.

ARTICLE 9
We believe in speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance and that it is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

ARTICLE 10
We believe in water baptism by immersion, and all who repent should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

ARTICLE 11
We believe divine healing is provided for all in the atonement.

ARTICLE 12
We believe in the Lord’s Supper and washing of the saints’ feet.

ARTICLE 13
We believe in the premillennial second coming of Jesus. First, to resurreact the righteous dead and to catch away the living saints to Him in the air. Second, to reign on the earth a thousand years.

ARTICLE 14
We believe in the bodily resurrection; eternal life for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked.
INTRODUCTION

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
(2 Timothy 2:15)

The growing interest in learning about the teachings and spiritual truths in the Bible is encouraging. Every person needs to have a basic knowledge of the teachings of God’s Word. These teachings, referred to as “Christian doctrine,” are what Christians believe about God and human life. Such beliefs are presented in a systematic and orderly form in the creeds and confessions of the Christian church. One example is the “Declaration of Faith” of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), which is a statement of what Christians who belong to this denomination believe.

The Christian Faith

The Christian faith is a matter of trusting in God through Jesus Christ for salvation. As Christians, the basis for our knowledge and trust is God’s divine revelation. God communicates His primary revelation to us through the Bible. The Bible is God’s Holy Word, which contains records of events and thoughts through which God has revealed Himself. This Holy Book presents Jesus Christ as God’s supreme revelation. Thus Christian doctrine (teaching) is an explanation of God’s revelation of Himself in the Bible.

From the standpoint of this study, the Bible is the supreme authority and definitive source for Christian doctrine. To study the Bible is to study doctrine, for the Bible is a doctrinal book.

Why Study Christian Doctrine?

• One answer is that studying God’s Word keeps us from falling into error and enables us to distinguish between what is true and false.

• At a more devotional and personal level, Christian doctrine nurtures our spiritual lives and enables us to grow in our commitment to Christ and our understanding of the faith.

The study of Christian doctrine is a matter of head and heart. Through the head, the Word of God reaches the heart and provides spiritual food for the believer. The more we understand about God’s teachings, the more we understand about divine grace and our need of Jesus Christ as our Savior. The more we learn about God’s character, the more our hearts are set on fire with divine love, and the more we will be inspired to worship God. Furthermore, only by the study of Christian doctrine do we prepare ourselves for the task of Christian living and witness. Christians need to know the Word of God in order to be able to live meaningful lives and to be effective in sharing God’s truths and their faith with others.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to lead God’s people toward a deeper understanding of the truths of the Bible—toward a greater dedication to Spirit-filled living, toward a more passionate commitment to sharing the Good News of Christ’s saving love with others, and toward a more fervent expectation of the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To accomplish this purpose, we all need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Since the author of the Bible is the Spirit, we can have no better help in understanding Christian doctrine than from the author Himself. A willingness to learn from the Holy Spirit is essential to
understanding His Book. The human mind by itself is unable to understand the ways of God, but the Holy Spirit illuminates our understanding to the mysteries of God’s Word.

Using This Study

This study is organized so that it may be used by individuals or groups. The focus of the study is on the doctrinal significance of the fourteen articles of the “Declaration of Faith.” I hope that those who use the study will take the time to open their Bibles and read the Scriptural references that are provided throughout the text.

Origin of the “Declaration of Faith”

The Church of God began in 1886. Then known as the Christian Union, it adopted its present name Church of God in 1907 as a more biblical designation. From its beginning, the Church of God was deeply committed to the teachings of the Bible, but it was primarily an evangelistic movement and focused on converting people to Christ rather than on recording its beliefs in creedal statements. Over the years the leaders of the Church recognized that there was a need for a Declaration of Faith to aid the Church in remaining unified in its faith. At the 1948 meeting of the General Assembly of the Church of God, the General Council discussed the need for a denominational faith statement, and a committee was appointed to write the statement. The appointed committee gave a report during the same conference, and the assembled ministers of the Church of God accepted the declaration that has been the official expression of Church of God belief ever since.

Discussion

The Christian Faith

1) What is the basis for Christians’ knowledge and faith in God?

Why Study Christian Doctrine?

2) What does the word “doctrine” mean?

3) Why do we need to study the Word of God?

Purpose of This Study

4) What is the purpose of our study on the Declaration of Faith?

Origin of the “Declaration of Faith”

5) Why did the Church of God decide that it needed an official faith statement?

Your Study of the “Declaration of Faith”

6) What would you like to learn in this study?
7) Is there a particular question that you would like to have answered?

If you are doing this study in a classroom setting and are comfortable doing so, please share your question with the class and/or instructor; (or) the whole class may answer this question by writing their questions on slips of paper and passing them to their instructor.

Prayer

Our Father, the Fountain of all wisdom, to You we dedicate this study and invite the Holy Spirit to illuminate our minds and hearts so that the knowledge of Your Word may increase among us. May this study be used for Your honor and glory and for strengthening Your people in Jesus Christ.

Our Father, we pray for those who teach and for those who learn that they may be able to lead others to Christ and submit themselves in obedience to Jesus Christ.

Our Father, we pray for our own denomination, the Church of God. Increase among us knowledge of God’s Word and help us to show the learning of Your ways in all that we do.

Our Father, we pray for the universal church throughout the world, as Your people study your Word and serve You. May there be a fresh outpouring of Your Spirit accompanied by mighty “signs and wonders,” as in the days of Jesus and the apostles. May Jesus Christ be exalted; may Your people be led into all truth; and may they be empowered to live the Christian life, sharing the Good News of Your love with others.

Amen.

Resources for Additional Study:


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The Hal Bernard Dixon, Jr. Pentecostal Research Center contains materials concerning the pentecostal, charismatic, and holiness movements as well as the archives of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee). The Research Center collects, organizes, and preserves materials that show the origin, history, development, and theology of the Church of God, other pentecostal denominations, and charismatic ministries. The Research Center’s website includes links to other pentecostal and charismatic resources on the Internet.