

# A Statement of Faith

Jonathan Kimball, May 2019

## I. The Nature of God and Revelation

The true nature of God is ultimately incomprehensible. “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” [1 Cor. 13:12] Yet God has been revealed to humanity throughout history and throughout the world. Though our understanding is incomplete, we seek to walk on the path and build the community that God intends.

### A. God in Three Persons

We understand God to exist in three persons, eternally in mutual relationship. God is one, and yet three. [SH 5.015-5.016]

The First Person of the Trinity was called Abba, or Father, by Jesus, [BSF#28] and was known by various names by the ancient Israelites, who primarily encountered the First Person. Our Creator established a covenant through Abraham and Sarah [BSF#42] so that all people would know how to live in this world. The heavens and earth, all that is seen and unseen, were and are created by the First Person. [NC 1.1]

The Second Person of the Trinity was anointed by the First Person as a father chooses his firstborn son, and became flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth [NC 1.2]. Jesus Christ is our Lord who judges on behalf of the Creator [AC 2.2]. Yet in dying, he became our Redeemer, the one who fulfilled the Law and the Prophets. He conquered sin and death, and in rising, became the salvation of all people [C67 9.08-9.11]. The heavens and earth, all that is seen and unseen, were and are created through the Second Person. [NC 1.2]

The Third Person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit who moves through the world like breath and like fire. The Holy Spirit has been known from the beginning when God’s breath brought life to the world, and became our Advocate and Sustainer after Christ ascended to heaven. The Spirit justifies and sanctifies us, binds us together, and binds us to God [C67 9.20, BSF#54-57]. The heavens and the earth, all that is seen and unseen, were and are created with the Third Person. [BSF#53]

### B. The Bible as Our Witness

The Bible is the best witness available to God’s work in the ancient world [SH 5.001-5.002, C67 9.27]. Since the earliest days of the Hebrews, stories of God’s love of humanity have been shared from generation to generation. The Bible, as we have received it through the traditions of our ancestors, records those stories that are valid revelations of the Truth, though tinted by the customs and society of the people who received them [C67 9.29]. Good teaching bears good fruit, and so we interpret these ancient witnesses through the lens of God’s love, as expressed in the Great Commandment [Mark 12:29-31; also Matthew 22:37-40; HC 4.004]:

<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;’<sup>30</sup> you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’<sup>31</sup> The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

While the Bible is now available to everyone in their native tongue, the original stories and writings were communicated within foreign cultures in languages that are no longer understood perfectly. Therefore, we rely on scholars to interpret the words, preachers to communicate the message, and the Holy Spirit to convey the underlying meaning of the text [SH 5.004, C67 9.29-9.30].

### C. Continuing Revelation through the Holy Spirit

As the First Person of the Trinity dwelt with and spoke to ancient Israelites, and the Second Person of the Trinity dwelt with and spoke to first-century Jews, so the Third Person of the Trinity continues to dwell with and speak to God's people today. The Holy Spirit speaks to us through interpretations of Scripture, as well as through direct experiences [BSF#58-64]. Because culture, technology, and society change, so too the guidance we need from God changes. God's fundamental message of love never changes, but the way we are able to love our neighbor does [C67 9.14]. Therefore, we must continue to listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to navigate relationships that have been damaged by the structures of modern society [C67 9.34, 9.38].

Through the Holy Spirit, we may know the Truth, the Word of God that is Christ [C67 9.27]. Because of our human limitations, though, each person will understand the Truth differently. We are called to reconciliation through the power of the Holy Spirit so that we may understand the Word that is love.

## II. The Kingdom of God: Ultimate

Through the Word of God, we know of the ultimate Kingdom of God that exists outside of creation. Jesus sometimes spoke of the kingdom of heaven. We understand this to be the locus of the communion of the saints, the Church Triumphant. [SC 3.16-3.17, WC 6.146]

### A. The Nature of the Kingdom

In the Kingdom of God, the Church Triumphant dwells eternally in the presence of God. All that we know now in part, we will know in full [1 Cor. 13:12]. We will experience the radiant love that God has for us. We will respond with the deep love that comes from our rest from earthly worries, a love both of God and of our neighbors in the Kingdom. [SC 3.17]

### B. Our Citizenship in the Kingdom

Our comfort is knowing that all people will know the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ [HC 4.001]. God desires the presence of all God's children in the Kingdom and has elected all people to share in the peace, love, and joy of God's presence [compare HC 4.020-4.021; SH 5.107]. The First Person anointed the Second Person to fulfill the Law [HC 4.015, SH 5.108] and to judge each person with mercy [HC 4.052].

## III. The Kingdom of God: Provisional

The Church Militant dwells in Creation and seeks to further the Kingdom of God, within the limits set by the sinfulness and brokenness of earthly things. Each person is responsible for their own sins [SH 5.043-5.044], which separate us from each other and from God, as well as the corporate sins of our communities.

### A. Jesus's Reconciling Ministry

The Incarnation of the Second Person dwelt in Galilee and Judea to teach us how to reconcile with each other [C67 9.08]. Jesus demonstrated radical love outside of the restrictions of polite society, and transgressed every barrier erected to separate us from each other. In the same way, the Church Militant is called to work to eradicate those barriers that separate us today [CB 10.7]. Jesus demonstrated that a person can be our neighbor despite their race, their culture, their gender, or their sexual orientation. He welcomed sinners in fellowship.

### B. Our Calling to Love God

Because God loved us, we are called to love God, to worship and praise God at the center of our being [WC 6.112-6.119]. God claims privilege of space and time [C67 9.16]. We demonstrate our love by rejecting idols, by renouncing sin, and by loving God's people.

### C. Our Calling to Love Neighbors

The Church Militant becomes Christ's body when it loves all of God's people, that is, all humanity [CB 10.7]. We are called to spread the Good News that all are welcome in the Kingdom of God, both provisional and ultimate. We are called to eradicate the social structures that separate us from each other and perpetuate suffering. We are called to see the image of God in each person. We are called to seek justice for the oppressed and freedom for the captive. We are called to heal the sick, to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked. [Matthew 25:31-46] We cannot do any good in this world alone, but only by, through, and with God [SC 3.13, SH 5.045].

## IV. Epilogue

This statement of faith accurately captures my beliefs. However, in being comprehensive, it is also weak, particularly in section III. My intention is to write a separate statement that focuses on one of our most pressing issues: the lordship of God above all else, particularly above political parties, politicians, other human leaders, nations, and symbols. Flag ceremonies are essentially idol worship. I recognize the sacrifices that our ancestors made and that our fellow Americans continue to make to establish our earthly empire. However, this does not make them, individually or corporately, worthy of worship. I recognize the need for civil authorities. However, they establish earthly society, not God's Kingdom. These thoughts are not yet fully formed in a way that I can express them convincingly and succinctly.