

THE BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE | SESSION 2

GOD, MAN, AND THE CHURCH

THE STATEMENT ON GOD

- I. The General Statement:
 - The statement is largely positive, as are most evangelical statements of faith.
 - On statements about God, there are two issues:
 - What it *doesn't* say.
 - What it says about foreknowledge and, indirectly, about the purpose of man.
 - This statement would be effective for:
 - Open theism
 - Unitarianism
 - Deism
 - This statement is lacking in chronological issues.
 - He is not *eternally* Redeemer.
 - He is not currently taking a *Ruler* role. Dominion was given to man and stolen by Satan.
 - Though it is not directly stated, one could conclude that “the future decisions of His free creatures” are pre-determined, though the word *free* does mitigate that some.
 - There is nothing about the loving nature of God. He is an Almighty to whom “we owe...”
 - There is nothing about how God is known (e.g.: through the Scripture).
- A. God the Father
 - The phrase “God as Father” sounds modalistic. The title is different (and better). The phrase “God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ” implies that God is not “eternally Father” even separate from those who come to faith in Christ. It also implies either that
 - Those prior to the time of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ were not in relation to God as Father. OR
 - The convention rejects the dispensational truth of Galatians 3:25, which insists that the time of faith has not always been, but **has come**. This second position would be the one that would be most in line with SBC thinking.
 - The phrase, “God is fatherly in His attitude...” says that He is not *Father* but He is *fatherly*. In truth, God the Father is the Father of all.
- B. God the Son
 - The statement presents Jesus as “the eternal Son,” which it should have done for God, “the eternal Father.”
 - The statement “He honored the divine law” needs clarification. What is this? The Torah? If so, it is true, but “honored” is a strange word. Perhaps “fulfilled” or “abolished” or simply “obeyed” would be better.
 - “He made provision of redemption of men for sin.” Did He “make provision” or did He redeem all of creation, and now offers a gift of eternal life?
- C. God the Spirit
 - The statement implies that “truth” can only be understood “through illumination.” In truth, we are to “study to shew thyself approved,” and through study of the Word we can be “thoroughly equipped.”

- The *evangelistic* role of the Spirit, as described here, fully undergirds Calvinism. The role of the Gospel presentation is left unspoken, at best.
- It has a place of “spiritual gifts” for the church today – a matter of debate but fully accepted by evangelicals.
- It implies that all spiritual gifts are operational today, thus allows for charismatic theology.
- The statement undergirds a “preservation of the Saints” Calvinistic view.
- The Spirit “enlightens...the believer and the church,” with no mention of the Scripture, thus an “enlightenment” view sans Scripture is possible.

THE STATEMENT ON MAN

- It fails to present man as created in a singular man and singular woman, Adam and Eve. It also fails to say *when* man was created. It thus allows for a theistic evolutionary view of the creation of man.
- It says that “in the beginning” man “was endowed...with freedom,” but does not continue that freedom to after the fall. Thus undergirds a Calvinist point of view.
- It holds to the “sin nature” view promoted so heavily by Calvinism that it is almost “gospel truth” today. (Man does not need a sin nature to need a Savior). Furthermore, if man has a sin nature, what does it matter whether or not he has, “an environment inclined toward sin?”
- It is inconsistent to say that man has a sin nature and also, “as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation.” Can God allow someone with a sin nature to enter his presence? This statement all but demands Calvinism.
- The phrase, “Only the grace of God can bring man...” is Calvinistic. It would have been better to say, “Only by God’s grace can man come into His holy fellowship...”
- The statement about “every race” implies there is something more than “the human race.” A positive statement about ethnicity within the human race would have been more appropriate.

Note: sections IV and V on Salvation and God’s Purpose of Grace will be in session 3.

THE STATEMENT ON THE CHURCH

- The church is “baptized believers,” thus baptism is required to be part of the “New Testament church.” It would have been much better to word this more precisely, such as “We believe that baptism of believers is required for membership in local churches.”
- The “associated by covenant” phrase has no definition. What covenant? How do they enter association?
- The church is “observing the two ordinances.” When? How? (some of this is addressed later). Any proof that these are “ordained?” Are there other things ordained?
- Which of “His laws” are they governed by? How do we know if a professor is teaching otherwise?
- What are, “the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them?” If a professor teaches that the gift of prophecy is one of the gifts, can this statement do anything? Or, if he teaches that prophecy is *not* a gift, is he in violation of the statement?
- Are the “democratic processes” required? What if a church places all authority in Elders, or the Pastor? Is it out of fellowship?
- If the officers are “Pastors and Deacons,” can a church have elders? Are the elders the Pastors? What if a church has Pastors, Elders, and Deacons? What if a church doesn’t have deacons? If “the office of a Pastor” is limited to men, what about “Youth Pastor,” or is the Youth Pastor a Pastor?
- Does the second paragraph align with the first? If the New Testament church is a local body of baptized believers, is it autonomous in light of “all of the redeemed” which may not have fulfilled the requirements of a church as presented?
- These questions are given not in support or defense, but to display the utter fallacy in believing a statement of faith can guard a denominational body or a church from anything.