



ARTICLES OF FAITH



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The meaning of “Congregationalism”.

Congregationalism means that the church is autonomous in terms of governance.

The origin of congregationalism, is normally traced back to England during the 1558 - 1603 era. Congregationalists repudiated the concept of a state church and favoured the “gathered church” principle. There are others who believe that autonomous churches consisted of Christians who refused to be part of the Roman church that was established under Constantine in 314AD. The ordination of its ministers is not subject to bishops, magistrates or elders, but is determined by the congregation in accordance with the church constitution. The legacy of independency is embraced by Congregationalist. The congregational system of church government has often been wrongly interpreted as democratic. Ideally the church is seen as being under the rule of Christ and the church seeks to discern His will through the collective vote or consensus of it’s members. Membership of the church is on profession of personal faith in Christ and new members are normally welcomed by being given the right hand of fellowship at a communion service. The congregation chooses its minister and mandates him to lead the church as a shepherd leads his flock and as a captain leads his team.

For more information consult R.W. Dale – Manual of Congregational Principles, London 1884.

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UNITY

We affirm that the seven-fold unity expressed in Ephesians 4:1-7 is the Holy Spirit's doctrinal Statement for the Church that is the Body of Christ.

We recognise other doctrinal unity as given for the various programmes found in Scripture but we affirm that Eph. 4 stands alone as the doctrinal unity for the Church today.

SCRIPTURES

In keeping with orthodox belief, we affirm that the entire Bible written in the original languages is inerrant, verbally inspired by God and is of plenary authority (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21).

GOD

We believe that there is but one living and true God (Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4) an infinite, intelligent Spirit (John 4:24); perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, existing and subsistent in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14).

God the Father is the first person of the Trinity (1 John 5:7). He is the Creator of all things (Gen. 1:1-31). He is sovereign (Rom. 11:33). His Fatherhood denotes a spiritual relationship within the Trinity, secondly within mankind creatively and thirdly in spiritual relationship to all believers.

JESUS CHRIST

The Son, Jesus Christ, is the second person of the Trinity and possesses all divine attributes. He is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father (John 10:27-30). We teach that in His incarnation He surrendered the prerogatives of deity, but nothing of divine

essence, either in degree or kind. His divine nature and human nature is an indissoluble union.

We teach that Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:26) and that through His merits and work of salvation, redemption is made possible to all who believe and receive His grace through faith.

The Lord's death was voluntary, vicarious, propitiatory, redemptive and substitutionary (Rom. 3:25; 5:8). We believe His resurrection from the dead was literal and physical and He ascended to the right hand of the Father where He ministers as our Advocate.

We teach that His resurrection from the dead confirmed His deity and guarantees our future resurrection (Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:22-23). He is the only Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5).

He is the Head of the Body, the Church (Eph. 1:22); He is the coming universal King who will reign on the Throne of David (Isaiah 9:6, 7; Luke 1:31, 32).

We teach the return of Christ to receive the Church as His Body unto Himself (1 Thess. 4:13-18) and that He will come again to judge all mankind.

HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, possessing all the divine attributes and is co-equal with the Father and the Son (Acts 5:3-4). We believe the work of the Holy Spirit is to execute the divine Will of God. The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness and judgement, glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into Christ-likeness (2 Cor. 3:8; Eph. 2:22).

The Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration, baptising all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). He indwells, empowers and has sealed all who believe, until the day of redemption (Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 1:13).

Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all believers to be filled (controlled by the Holy Spirit moment by moment, Eph. 5:18).

We believe the Holy Spirit has bestowed gifts to the Church for the perfecting of the saints. Sign gifts and spiritual gifts must be distinguished. It is evident in Scripture that the sign gifts were given to manifest and reveal Christ as the Messiah both in His earthly ministry and through the delegated authority of the Apostles (Matt. 10:5-11; Mark 16; 1 Cor. 12,14; 1 Cor. 1:22; Acts 28:26-28; 1 Tim. 5:23).

It is evident in Scripture that the sign gifts continued to authenticate Apostleship until the complete revelation was given (2 Cor. 12:12; 1 Cor. 13:8-13). These texts indicate a functional change in the demonstration and purpose of the gifts. Therefore today only spiritual gifts are in operation and not sign gifts.

MANKIND

We teach that mankind was directly created by God in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26; 2:15-25).

We teach that the purpose of man's creation was with the divine intention that he should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship and live his life in the will of God. By this he shall accomplish God's purpose in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11).

Adam's sin of disobedience to the Will and Word of God resulted in man losing his innocence. Mankind incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became inherently corrupt and incapable of doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace.

Man had no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself. Man is hopelessly lost, apart from the salvation which is in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 2:16, 17; John 3:36; Romans 6:23; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that all mankind, in the loins of Adam are partakers of his sin that has been transmitted to all humanity, Jesus Christ being the exception. All mankind is sinful by nature and by choice (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:9-18; Rom. 5:12).

SALVATION

We believe that salvation is by God's grace through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood and not on the basis of human works (Eph. 1:7; 2:8-10).

We believe in the all-inclusive complete work of salvation performed on the cross (1 Cor. 1:17-18).

REGENERATION

We believe that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God so as to secure voluntary obedience to the gospel. This work of regeneration is manifest by God's grace through faith (Tit. 2:11, 12; Eph. 2:10; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).

ELECTION

We believe that election is an act of God and the human response to the gospel. It is consistent with the responsibility of man because it comprehends all the means in connection with the end achieved.

We teach that election should not be mistaken as merely based on abstract sovereignty, independent of man's responsibility, but that through faith, men and women may exercise their responsibility to accepting God's grace which is a free gift and completely unmerited.

God's sovereignty is in harmony with His other attributes. This sovereignty must never exalt the Will of God as separate and apart from His character. Our salvation and election are in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:4-11).

JUSTIFICATION

We teach that justification before God is an act of God by which He declares righteous those who believe in Christ (Rom. 8:33).

SANCTIFICATION

We teach that every believer is sanctified, that is set apart unto God by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every believer is declared holy and is identified with the Body of Christ. This act of sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his state (1 Cor. 1:2,30; 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13).

We believe that experiential sanctification is the means by which the state of the believer is progressively brought closer to the standing that the believer enjoys in Christ. As the believer obeys the Word of God and is empowered by the Holy Spirit, he will live

a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the Will of God (Rom. 6:1-22; Eph. 5:26; 1 Thess. 5:23; Titus 2:12).

We do not embrace the doctrine of subsequence. The practical outworking of our standing in Christ ought to be the result of the finished work performed on Calvary. Now that we are in Christ, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3).

SECURITY

The eternal security of a believer does not imply that one has a licence to live recklessly, irresponsibly and immorally. We teach that all redeemed - once saved, are kept by God's power and are secure in Christ forever (Rom. 5:9-10; Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Cor. 1:4-8; Eph. 4:30). It is therefore impossible for believers to lose their salvation. We have reason to doubt a person's salvation should they use Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Rom. 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Gal. 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-15).

SEPARATION

In light of our present permissive and corrupt generation, believers must abstain from all practices of compromise with the world. All saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Saviour and should separate themselves from religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices.

A believer ought to walk circumspectly (Eph. 5:5-16; Rom 12:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Titus 2:12-14) as he or she is an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-20).

GOSPEL

The gospel of grace as revealed in the New Testament is distinct from the works of the individual and is based solely on the merits

and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In all other programmes, faith was expressed in works. Under the present programme, faith is the element by which we receive the gift of salvation, a work that God has already performed by the cross.

The uniqueness of this gospel is particularly taught in the Pauline writings. It is important to note that in all programmes in the Old and New Testament, salvation was by grace through faith, but was expressed through the works that were a shadow of the work accomplished by Christ alone.

When Paul states that there is only one gospel (Gal. 1:6-8), it is in reference to the gospel of grace distinct from the other messages for the past programmes in Scripture (Gal. 1:6-8).

The gospel of the good news of the kingdom was primarily intended for Israel (Matt. 10:5-8). Through the change of programmes and the call of Paul the Apostle to reveal Christ to the Gentiles, the emphasis of salvation is not on the works of the law but by the gift of grace. This is the gospel we preach (Eph. 2:8, 9; Rom. 16:25).

MYSTERY

We believe that the mystery of the Body of Christ is revealed through the writings of Paul the Apostle. It was hid from all generations and ages (Col. 1:26; Eph. 3:9) but was revealed to the Apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 16:25). This revelation came from the Lord Jesus Christ directly from heaven (Gal. 1:11-12).

Paul is the dispenser of this revelation to the Church (Col. 1:25; Eph. 3:2; Gal. 1:11). Much of what Paul taught, was difficult for the apostles to receive because their programme was primarily Jewish in content (2 Peter 3:15-16).

The preaching of the Kingdom embraced the Gentile world. (Matt. 28:19). The apostles understood that their primary thrust of ministry was to reach the nation of Israel, thereafter, to carry the message of the Messiah to the uttermost parts of the world. We discover through careful study of the N.T. and the book of Acts that Peter was surprised when God called him to minister to one Gentile - this is evidence that Peter needed to see that a change in programme was taking place (Acts 10). Peter was able to say in Acts 15 that God had revealed a new programme for the Gentiles.

Paul the Apostle was raised up to carry out this new programme (Acts 9:15). Controversy and disputes became the order of the day as the apostles grappled with the revelation revealed distinctively to the Apostle Paul. This is borne out in Galatians 2:2-16.

CHURCH

We believe that all who place their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are baptised by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body (1 Cor. 12:12-13). The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; Col. 1:18).

The word "church" is taken from the Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning "called out ones". Stephen refers to Israel as those called out of Egypt (Acts 7:38). The disciples and the followers of Christ were called out as the remnant from Israel and therefore they were the Messianic Church.

The Body of Christ does not consist of one national group but Jew and Gentile have now become one church, those called out of the pagan world and unbelieving Israel (Eph. 1:22,23; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27,28; Eph. 2:11-14). The church is an organism of "called out" people placed into the living body of Christ.

The autonomy of the local church is also a principle taught in Scripture (Titus 1:5). The Church is the recipient of the spiritual promises made to Abraham through his Seed, Jesus Christ. The physical promises meant for believing Israel will be fulfilled in the future and Israel as a distinct nation will be honoured by God above all other nations. Revelation 21 testifies to this fact.

COMMUNION

Communion is not an ordinance but an act of commemoration, proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes. It is not a continuation of the Passover Supper, it is a commemoration of the New Testament, made possible to the believer through the death and life of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

ANGELS

We believe that angels are created beings and are not to be worshipped. They are ministering spirits created to serve God and His people (Luke 2:9-14; Heb. 1:6-7 & 2:6-7; Rev. 5:11-14, Rev. 19:10, Rev. 22:9).

Lucifer was a created angel who through pride, fell and became the author of sin (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:11-19; Gen. 3:1-5). Revelation 20:10 tells of his final fate.

FUTURE

We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Rev. 6:9-11; Luke 16:19-31) and that the soul of the redeemed passes into the presence of God immediately (Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8).

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all the saved to eternal life (Rom. 8:10, 11; 2 Cor. 4:14) and the unsaved to judgement and eternal punishment (Rev. 20:6,13-15; John 5:29).

CONSUMMATION

We believe in the personal, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 4:16; Titus 2:11-13) to translate His Church from this earth (1 Cor. 15:51-53). All believers will receive rewards according to their works (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

TRIBULATION

We teach that the righteous judgement of God will be poured out upon all unbelievers in the world (Jer. 30:7; Dan 9:27; 2 Thess. 2:7-12; Rev. 16:1-21; Matt 24:15-31.) This will last for a period of seven years.

SECOND COMING

We teach that after the time of great tribulation, the Lord Jesus Christ will come to earth to occupy the Throne of David (Matt. 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10,11; 2:29-30) and He will establish His messianic Kingdom on the earth for a period of one thousand years (Rev. 20:1-7).

The Lord's reign will be preceded by the overthrow of a false system of the antichrist and false prophet. He will remove Satan from the world (Dan 7:17-27; Rev 20:1-7).

The Kingdom period is a fulfilment of God's promise to national Israel (Deut. 30:1-10; Ezek. 37:21-28; Zech. 8:1-8). Israel has been temporarily set aside (Rom. 11:1-26) but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the Kingdom and the land of blessing.

We teach that the time of our Lord's reign will be categorised by harmony, equity, peace, justice, righteousness and long life (Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezek. 36:33-38).

JUDGEMENT

We teach that following the thousand year reign of Christ, Satan will be released for a short period and will deceive the nations of the earth. He will convince them to attack the beloved city and Satan and his army will be devoured by fire (Rev. 20:7-9).

Satan will then be finally bound in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10). It is at this time that the Lord will judge all unbelievers (Rom. 14:10, 11; Rev. 20:11-15) at the Great White Throne Judgement.

ETERNITY

We teach that after the closing of the Millennium, the temporary release of Satan and the judgement of all unbelievers (2 Thess. 1:9,10; Rev. 20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God.

The elements of the earth will be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and will be replaced with a new earth and a new atmospheric heaven (Rev. 21).

The heavenly city, the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven (Rev. 21.22) and will be the dwelling place of the saints.

Believing Israel will play a dominant role on earth and believers making up the Body of Christ will fulfil their purpose in the heavenlies (Rev. 5:10; Phil. 3:20).

The Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission will then deliver the Kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28) that in all spheres, physical and spiritual, the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Cor. 15:28).

WE LOVE GOD, HIS WORD AND HIS PEOPLE