



EFCA Statement of Faith: Article 3
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The Human Condition

3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

5. We believe that man was created in the image of God but fell into sin and is therefore lost and only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit can salvation and spiritual life be obtained.

I. Introduction

II. Change of Order in Articles 3 and 5

- A. This follows the biblical narrative which reveals the creation and fall/sin of humanity.
- B. It follows logically in that the truth stated in this article outlines the problem – sin incurring God's wrath – that Jesus Christ came to address through His person and work (articles 4 and 5).
- C. This does not, however, preclude the notion that the full extent of our sin is known only after the revelation of the gospel of Christ.
- D. The regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is reserved for article 6 on the Holy Spirit, where the emphasis is on His application of the work of Christ.

III. Article 3

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Creation

- A. We believe God created Adam and Eve in His image (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:10; Jms. 3:9).

- God created Adam and Eve
- In His image

Sin (Fall)

B. We believe Adam and Eve sinned when tempted by Satan (Gen. 3:1-6; Jn. 8:44; Rom. 5:12-14; 16:20; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:13-14).

- Adam and Eve sinned
- When tempted by Satan

C. We believe all human beings are in union with Adam (Job 14:4; Ps. 51:5; Jn. 3:6; Rom. 3:12; 5:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:22a; 1 Jn. 1:8), and are thus sinners by nature and by choice (Gen. 6:5; Jer. 17:9; Isa. 6:5; Rom. 5:15; 8:5-8; Eph. 2:1-2; 4:17-19

- All human beings
- Union with Adam
- Sinners by nature and by choice

D. We believe every human being is alienated from God (Rom. 5:10), and under His wrath (Rom. 1:18; 2:5; 3:9-19; 3:23; Eph. 2:3).

- Alienated from God
- Under His wrath

God's Saving Work

E. We believe it is only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ (Act 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5) that we can be rescued (1 Thess. 1:10), reconciled (Rom. 5:1,2,10; Col. 1:20) and renewed (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:24; Phil. 3:21; 1 Jn. 3:2).

- Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ
- Rescued, reconciled, renewed

Summarizing connection to the gospel: *"God's gospel alone addresses our deepest human need."*

IV. Specific Ways the Article on the doctrine of **The Human Condition** has been strengthened, or new issues addressed

- Specific reference to Adam and Eve, not just “man.”
 - Reference to Satan.
 - Recognition of our union with Adam.
 - Sinners by nature and by choice (over against the weaker, “fell into sin”).
 - Alienated from God (further explaining what it means to be “lost”).
 - Under God’s wrath (emphasizing the biblical truth of what our sins incur).
- V. Importance of Reaffirming the Biblical/Doctrinal Truths of **The Human Condition** Today (which also carries with it denials)
- God created Adam and Eve – historical particularity of creation of mankind
 - Created in the image of God – human worth and dignity, bioethics
 - In union with Adam , sinned and sinners by nature and choice – anthropology
 - Satan – historical figure as opposed to a myth
 - Alienated from God and under His wrath – sin incurs God’s personal wrath, this is not simply a cause and effect, God is both loving and holy, not just loving.
 - God’s saving work in Jesus Christ – God’s initiative, exclusivity of Jesus Christ to rescue, reconcile and renew

VI. Additional Resources

Questions for Further Study

1. Why is it important to state that God created Adam and Eve?
2. What does it mean that they are created “in God’s image”? What does that mean for all humanity?
3. What is the significance of the reference to “in union with Adam?” Who does that include?
4. Because of “union with Adam,” there are implications? What are they? How do they affect us?
5. What does it mean that we are “sinners by nature and by choice?”
6. Often sin is mentioned alone, without mentioning anything else. It becomes something we do, that adversely affects us. Why is it imperative to mention the vertical implications of our sin against God, viz. alienation and under His wrath? Why is that avoided today?
7. What is the lone remedy that God has provided to our sin?

8. What is the significance of the words “rescued, reconciled and renewed?” How does this prepare for the next article in the flow of redemptive history?

Preaching/Teaching Texts

Genesis 3

Romans 5:12-21

Memory Verses

Genesis 1:26-27

Romans 3:23

Hymns

Come, Ye Sinners, Joseph Hart

Depth of Mercy, Charles Wesley, Bob Kauflin

Kind and Merciful God, We Have Sinned, Brian Jeffrey Leech

To the Praise of His Glorious Grace, D. A. Carson

Choruses

EFCA Statement of Faith Commentary¹

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[5. We believe that man was created in the image of God but fell into sin and is therefore lost and only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit can salvation and spiritual life be obtained.]

In the interest of logical order, this statement of the human condition has been moved up in the order of statements (from #5 to #3) as it outlines the problem that the work of Christ addresses. In this sense it follows the order of the biblical narrative which reveals the creation and fall of humanity in the early chapters of Genesis and recounts the consequences of that fall throughout the pages of the Old Testament. This, however, does not preclude the notion that the full extent of our fallenness is known only after the revelation of the gospel of Christ.

God created Adam and Eve—

We have moved from the generic statement about the creation of "man" to a specific reference to the first human beings, Adam and Eve. This ties our doctrinal statement more closely to the biblical story itself (Gen. 3), and indirectly affirms the equal value of men and women as equally created in God's image. In addition, this created order has important ramifications in the current debates concerning homosexual belief and behavior.

The mention of these two by name also supports the notion that the Bible is not a set of abstract philosophical propositions but a record of the work of God in history. This creative act of God and the tragic events that follow set the stage for the unfolding story of God's saving work and points to the significance of Christ as the "last Adam" (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:22,45).

in His image—

The creation of the first human beings was a unique and special act of God which separated them from any other creature in the natural world.

sinned—

We have replaced "fell into sin" to emphasize the deliberate and rebellious nature of this act.

¹This commentary will only highlight changes from the 1950 Statement of Faith and not expound the theological truth common to both statements.

when tempted by Satan—

This is one of three changes in this revised statement of faith that indicate the reality of the spiritual realm, which is not mentioned in the 1950 statement. Significantly, Satan provides only the occasion of human sin, not its cause.

In union with Adam—

Though the Bible declares that both Adam and Eve sinned, Paul attributes the lasting impact of sin upon the human race to Adam in particular (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21,22). This union is how Adam's sin affects us, and it provides a parallel with our union with Christ stated below.

human beings are sinners by nature and by choice—

This spells out what that lasting effect of our union with the sinful Adam is. The "and" in this clause means "as well as", "in addition to." In other words, both of these are true: human beings are sinners by the nature they inherit *and* they are sinners by the choices they make. This is not meant to declare that humans are sinful only when the sinful human nature is confirmed by some conscious human choice.

alienated from God, and under His wrath—

This strengthens the 1950 statement in the assessment of the human condition, further defining what it means to be "lost". Sin is not simply an impersonal cause and effect reality, but sin incurs the wrath of God. This means that not only do human beings need to be saved from sin, but they need to be saved from what sin incurs: the wrath of God. This is a doctrine being questioned by some today.

rescued, reconciled and renewed—

This includes both the negative and positive aspects of God's saving work in Christ, and, implicitly, its past, present, and future dimensions in the life of the believer as well: we have been *rescued* (1 Thess.1:10) from the consequences of sin (including legal condemnation and moral captivity), we are *reconciled* into a new relationship of peace with God as our Father (cf. Rom. 5:1,2), and we will ultimately be *renewed* into the image of God (which is the image of Christ) when we are glorified with Christ at the resurrection (Rom. 8:29,30; Phil. 3:20,21; 1 Jn. 3:2). Reference to the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit which is mentioned at this point in the 1950 statement is reserved for statement #6.

Appendix 2

Frequently Asked Questions – Article 3

Is there an attempt to lessen the impact of the fall, of sin?

In article 1, it is explicitly stated that God will “redeem a people for Himself,” which implicitly means that people need to be redeemed. Moreover, the statement that He will “make all things new for His own glory” refers not merely a spiritual state but a literal reality. This is related to the saving work of Christ in whom we are “rescued, reconciled and renewed.”

In article 3, it is explicitly stated that because of our sin we are “in union with Adam . . . sinners by nature and choice.” Moreover, in this state we are “alienated from God, and under His wrath.”

In article 4, it explicitly states the Jesus “arose bodily from the dead,” and because His resurrection is the “first fruits,” we too will be raised bodily. This is part of the physicality of it, though “flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God,” there will be a transformation, a glorification of our bodies.

In article 9, it is explicitly stated that Jesus will return “bodily.” Once again, this has implications to us. His resurrection is “bodily,” and His return will be “bodily.”

In article 10, it is explicitly stated that the unbelievers will suffer the wrath of God in that they will suffer “condemnation and eternal conscious punishment.” This refers to a physical death. And once again, the believer will be “with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth.”

Be assured that there is no attempt to minimize the fall, and there is no attempt to make it only spiritual. Of course it is spiritual, but it is not only spiritual. It also has physical implications. With the many references noted above, we believe the implications of the fall are sufficiently noted, and that they carry both spiritual and physical implications, as does, on the other side, redemption both individual and cosmic.

Why mention both Adam and Eve? Eve was tempted, not Adam, though he was responsible.

There are two responses to your question, one general and brief, and the other more specific. First, in general, the statement simply reflects the event as a whole. Since a Statement of Faith is intended to make summarizing theological statements and not direct quotes from the Bible, single words or phrases can contain a great deal of biblical truth. That is one way to read this expression of mankind's sin against God in the garden.

Second, there is a more specific response as well. Though commentators are divided about whether Adam was actually present with Eve during this temptation, I think he actually was. The text states that the serpent approached Eve: “He [the serpent] said to the woman” (3:1b). The text does not tell say anything about Adam not being present; it simply says that the serpent approached Eve. In fact, it does say a few verses later that he may have been present with Eve at this time. After she had taken the fruit and eaten it, “she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (3:6b). Adam was “with her.” Interestingly, though Eve is deceived and eats, Adam is held responsible. Note immediately after they had sinned, God did not call to the woman but to “the man” (3:9). This is stated clearly in Romans 5 in the Adam-Christ parallel.

What we state in the article is the following: “We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan.” We do not say anything about deception, either of the man or the woman, though the Bible does clearly state the “the woman” was deceived (Gen. 3:13; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14). We simply state that “they sinned when tempted by Satan.” They were both tempted by the serpent though in different ways. The serpent calls into question the person of God and the Word of God. This then comes out in what he says, how he says it and to whom he says it. I find it very interesting that the serpent approaches the woman and not the man. This gets to the very heart of God-given roles. This was the initial temptation to reverse roles. Satan goes against the roles God had created and approaches the woman. Yet after they both sinned by eating, God holds “the man” accountable as he calls to him. Why didn’t the serpent? Because he wanted to create disharmony vertically, with God, and horizontally, between man and woman. The temptation was that the woman would be the aggressor, and desire the role of the head, while the man would be passive in the responsive role. After the fall, this is precisely the consequence of sin: the woman would desire her husband’s role (Gen. 3:16; cf. 4:7), and the man would listen to the voice of woman before the voice of God and he would find his meaning and significance in his work not in his relationship with God.

In summary, it is important to note, first, that we do not say that Adam and Eve were deceived but that they sinned when tempted by Satan. Thus the emphasis is on the temptation and the sin, the fall understood as an event. Second, though the text does not say explicitly that Adam was tempted, I believe he was with Eve and he, too, was tempted, which I conclude implicitly. Silence regarding Adam’s temptation does not mean the absence of temptation.

Why mention Satan in a Statement of Faith?

First, Satan is mentioned because he is in the Bible. Second, he is real, not a mythological figure. A real historical Enemy, Satan, tempted a real historical Adam and Eve. We believed the absence of any reference to Satan and the presence of spiritual combat (article 8) was a weakness that ought to be remedied which we did in the Statement of Faith (*adopted June 2008*).

The phrase “in union with Adam” is not in the Bible. Why is it used? What does it mean?

Though the Bible declares that both Adam and Eve sinned, Paul attributes the lasting impact of sin upon the human race to Adam in particular (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21,22). This union is how Adam’s sin affects us, and it provides a parallel with our union with Christ (article 7).

It is right to note that the precise phrase is not in the Bible. But the truth of what it implies is clearly taught in the Bible. In Statements of Faith, sometimes it is necessary to use non-biblical (it is important to note that these words are not unbiblical) words or language to support biblical truth. The reason for this is that there are Biblicists who will use biblical language in an unbiblical and heretical way. For example, this is exactly what happened in the early Christological debates. Arius was using a biblical term, “firstborn,” in an unbiblical and heretical way, viz. Christ was not eternal, there was a time when Christ was not. Athanasius, and others, defended the biblical truth of the eternal nature of Christ by using non-biblical language.