

A STATEMENT OF FAITH

IN THE YEAR, 2017, COMMEMORATING THE 500TH CELEBRATION OF THE REFORMATION

By Dr Christo A. Nel

A Statement of Faith

Copyright © 2017 by Christo A. Nel

Obtain more information at: www.nuwewyn.co.za

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means – electronic, mechanical, photographic (photocopying), recording, or otherwise – without prior written permission from the author.

Contents

A STATEMENT OF FAITH.....	4
1 Cor. 3:9 - 4:5.....	4
The importance of investigating the foundations	5
Seeking to truly understand and know the story behind the story of the New Testament Ecclesia	5
The gateway to becoming a member of the New Testament Ecclesia, was a normal Christian birth ...	6
The truth will set you free.....	9
In conclusion	11
About the Author	13
Contact Information:.....	13

A STATEMENT OF FAITH

IN THE YEAR, 2017, COMMEMORATING THE 500TH CELEBRATION OF THE REFORMATION

1 Cor. 3:9 - 4:5

“For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building.

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.

For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw – each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.

If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.

If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?

If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,” and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.”

So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future –

all are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.

But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.

I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.” (ESV)

The importance of investigating the foundations

I believe it is important for the Ecclesia all over the world, in this year when we are commemorating the 500th celebration of the Reformation of 1517 and the events following, to sit at the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body of Christ, His One Ecclesia, together with the members of His One Ecclesia all over the world, with only His Word, the Bible, as our only Norm and Test for Truth, to again, as part of our search for radical church reform and as part of our investigation of the foundation of truth that we are building Ecclesia on.

Seeking to truly understand and know the story behind the story of the New Testament Ecclesia

An integrated part of this investigation is to look back in history to the birth of the Ecclesia, the Church and Body of Christ Jesus, on that Day of Pentecost, on the 31st May 32 AD, and what God through His Spirit, taught His representatives here on earth since then.

Read again about that remarkable day recorded in Acts 2, and about God's Spirit leading the new-born believing followers of Christ Jesus. Put yourself in their shoes and hear their heart about how to be Ecclesia and Body of Christ. Watch as they loved one another every day and ministered to one another with the gifts of the Spirit, while testifying through power and gifts of the Spirit about the healing and the life in abundance possible under the reign of the new King of kings, Jesus Christ, while proclaiming the coming of His Kingdom also here on earth.

While reading the Story about Jesus, the Head of the Body, leading His people and ministering to His people through the Holy Spirit, you will discover again, anew, the secret of exponential growth inwards and outwards in the Ecclesia and how they, without any formal Old and New Testament Bible as we know today, and without any humanly created church structures or regular Sunday meetings, or any of what we, nowadays, see as part and partial of effective outreach and evangelism to the end of the earth, somehow, effectively witnessed and submersed their world with the Gospel about the Kingdom and the new King on Earth, Jesus the Christ, till even the Roman Caesar, Constantine the First, came to Christ, all in about 270 years.

To put this in perspective, this year, 2017, in the 500th celebration year of the Reformation, a world-wide evangelism ministry like OPERATION WORLD tells us, that we, with all the resources we nowadays have to our disposal in the Body of Christ, even with the help of radio, TV, internet, and satellite, we only effectively witnessed to and brought about a tenth of the whole population of the world to Christ.

I really believe that for us to come to a place of radical church reform, it is important to understand the story behind the history of the early church, starting with the events recorded in the book of Acts, chapters 1 to 15:35 (49 AD), followed by the teaching in the letters to the Galatians; the letter of James; followed by the events recorded in Acts 15:36 to Acts 17 (50-51 AD). Then, you need to read the first letter to the Ecclesia in Thessalonica; followed by the second letter to them; and with the events of Acts, chapters 16:16-23 as background. Then, one can read Paul's first letter to the

Ecclesia in Corinth; followed by his second letter to them; and with the events in Acts 18 and 19 as background; while keeping in mind Paul's training and ministry to six men during these three years in Ephesus. They were: Titus of Antioch, Timothy of Lystre, Gaius of Derbe, Sopater of Berea, Aristachus and Secundus of Thessalonica. Two new converts, Tychicus and Trophimus, were added to this group (see Acts. 19:22; 20:4; 21:29; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10.20. etc.). Philemon and Epaphras also came to Christ during those three years in Ephesus.

The events of Acts 20 help you understand something about what leadership in the early Ecclesia looked like, especially in the light of Paul's second letter to the Ecclesia in Corinth.

During the time of the events recorded in Acts 21 to 27, Paul, most probably, wrote his letter to the Ecclesia in Rome; and then the events of Acts 28 during that winter of 60-61 AD followed.

The Gospel of Mark and the Gospel written by Matthew, followed by the Gospel written by Luke, most probably, were recorded during this period.

This was followed by Paul's letters to the Ecclesia in Colossus; and his letter to Philemon; then his letter to the Ecclesia in Ephesus; and the one to the Ecclesia in Philippians. Most probably Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy in 63 AD.

This was also the time when Luke recorded the events in the Ecclesia in the book of Acts.

The letter to the Hebrew speaking believers, when the Ecclesia in Rome came under severe attack, followed.

Paul's letter to Titus (in 65 AD) followed.

Sometime during this period, the Gospel of John was written; followed by his three letters, 1 John, 2 John and 3 John.

The first letter of Peter was written in Rome in 65 AD.

In 67 AD Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy.

The second letter of Peter was also written in Rome during this year most probably.

The letter to Jude to expose false teachers operating in the Ecclesia, was also written during this time.

John was exiled to the Island of Patmos, where Jesus Christ appeared to him and gave him a breath-taking revelation of His Kingdom and its triumph over the kingdom of darkness. He wrote about what was revealed to him in a book called "The Revelation of Jesus Christ".

The gateway to becoming a member of the New Testament Ecclesia, was a normal Christian birth

We, as the Church today, are standing in front of a new reformation.

A reformation, where the Spirit of God is, again, taking us back to what we read in the Book of Acts. Because, if you look at the church as we know it today, it is so different from what we read in the Book of Acts.

Since about 315 AD., till today, we have 1700 years of history, where the church has been changed repeatedly by mankind, moving further and further away from what it was and how it was, there in the beginning.

In the Book of Acts the Ecclesia was a living body, a body of believers who were led by the Holy Spirit. The Ecclesia was a movement, a disciples' movement.

Torben Sondergaard, in the movie, THE LAST REFORMATION, said, looking back in Church History, that we saw Christianity moving to Greece, where it became a philosophy. It later, came to Italy and became an institution. When it came to Europe much later, it became a culture. But when it came to America, it became a business.

He, therefore, asked the question: If you take a living body, a person, and make a business out of a body, is that not prostitution?

That is what he felt we've done with the church. We have prostituted the church of Christ, the body of Christ.

Because of that, we need to see, again, a radical reformation.

We need, again, to go and sit at the feet of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body, and allowing Him to teach us through His Spirit, as in the beginning.

Then, after listening to Him and what His will for the church for now is, we should start talking again with one another about all our doctrines, and about the Spirit, and about all the church systems and Christian organizations around us. And why we do church the way we do it.

It's time to go back to what we read in the Book of Acts, in the beginning of what we call, the church of Jesus Christ.

I believe God is bringing us as believers from all over the world back to that beginning.

I believe it is only then when we will again acknowledge that the normal beginning of the life of a believer, a follower of Christ, was a normal Christian birth.

That is how Jesus describes it in Joh. 3 where He said that *"unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."* And later: *"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."*

Then Jesus used the events recorded in Numbers 21, where the people were dying because of snakebite because of their sins, and Moses made a bronze serpent and hang it where people could see it.

Everyone who looked up to the serpent hanging on the pole in faith, trusting the Word and promises of God in this regard, were saved and did not die.

In the same way, when we see (and hear, according to the word in Rom. 10:9 and 10 in this regard) people "looking up" in faith to Jesus Christ hanging on the cross as Saviour, we see and hear the evidence of this new birth that happened.

Jesus said in this regard:

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (ESV)

Another crucial passage that helps us understand this process of “new birth” as we see and hear it from our side as human beings, is Acts. 2:38 and 39 where Peter is answering the question of Jews who believed all along that they were part of God’s people because of the circumcision and being in covenant with God, but discovered that they were lost and under God’s eternal judgement, and therefore asked: *“Brothers, what shall we do?”*

Then Peter answered them: *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” (ESV)

We see therefore, that this normal new birth-process really is a process of four things happening in the life of that person, all on day one in their life as a new being, and as part of the new creation Jesus Christ as the new King on earth was creating through His Spirit.

We see how people, after hearing the message of the gospel of Christ in one way or another, being convicted of sin and discovering they are lost and dead in sin, starting to repent, and then coming in faith to Christ and accepting Him as their new Lord and Saviour.

At that moment, the other believers around them, after hearing their confession of faith, knew a new birth of a new-born Christian happening in front of them.

For that reason, they immediately took those new-born believers and went and baptized them in water.

There, in the water, we hear them explaining to these new born believers while baptizing them in water, what we read in Romans 6.

That they, when accepting Christ as their Saviour, in faith actually died with Christ from their old way of life, and were raised with Christ, to live this new life in and through the life of Christ given to them, through the work of the Holy Spirit now living in them.

After baptizing them in the Name of Christ in water, the believers laid hands on these new believers, and prayed for them for the baptism with the Spirit. (See the events in Acts 8 and chapter 19, from verse 1, in this regard).

They prayed that Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, but also as the Baptizer with the Spirit, should baptize them now with His Spirit, filling and anointing them with His Spirit, so that He could start using them to minister through them through the gifts and power of the Spirit.

Scripture teaches us, that while all of this happened, these new believers sometimes started speaking and praying in tongues and ministering in the other gifts of the Spirit.

Deliverance and healing even happened there in the water, if necessary.

This was all part of this normal beginning, the normal process of birth, in the life of every believing follower of Christ Jesus in the early Church.

The truth will set you free

For that reason, we hear believers now-a-days declaring while baptizing new believers, “Flesh and sin, die. Die with Christ. And rise with Christ.”

Then, they start laying hands on these new, baptized believers, while praying: “Holy Spirit, come and baptized this person, and if necessary, set him/her free. Come and fill him/her, equipping them with Your gifts, anointing and power.”

Scripture teaches us, that these new believers, then, from Day 1 as new-born believers and followers of Christ, started healing people who were sick, while sharing the gospel of the kingdom of Christ Jesus as they went where they felt Jesus led them to.

Because these four processes were an integral part of the new birth of believers in the early church, we understand why the following New Testament truths were so important to them also:

Everyone that were baptised, understood the baptism in water as, according to Titus 3:4-7:

“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (ESV)

They also understood that baptism in water and baptism in and with the Spirit, being integral parts of this normal process, also meant that every new believer been “baptized into the Body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:13).

The day you are born again and experienced the normal Biblical process of new birth as a believer, you became part of the one Ecclesia and one Body of Christ, and therefore, a member of the family of God, being a child of God, with Him as your Father, Jesus as your Brother, and with all the other believers as brothers and sisters in this new family of God.

For that reason, Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:19-22:

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” (ESV)

And in Romans 12:5-10:

“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.” (ESV)

It is only then you understand what the newly born believers, under the leading of the Holy Spirit, did from Day 1, as we read in Acts 2:

“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (ESV)

In Acts 4 we read:

“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.” (ESV)

That is why these new believers also understood the necessity and the importance of the unity in the Body of Christ, where nothing and no one would be allowed to bring about any obstruction or division in any way within the one Body and Family of God.

For that reason, Jesus Himself said that the one thing that would distinguish the believers as followers of Christ (and being part of His One Body and One Family on earth), would be the way that they would love one another. (Joh. 13:34,35)

But also, knowing that the Holy Spirit, being God Himself, living in them, leading them as His children (Rom. 8:9), a life of holiness as Jesus Christ would have lived Himself, characterised by the fruit of the Spirit, would be an integral part of their way of life. (See Gal. 5:16-26; Heb. 12:14; etc.)

This also brought about a certain way of understanding Ecclesia and the way the Body of Christ functions and operate. (See 1 Cor. 12, 13 and 14; Rom. 12 to 16; Ephesians 1 to 6; etc.)

In conclusion

My conclusions in the light of all of this, are the following:

- It's a profound mistake to assume that the term "church" as it's used today and "the Ecclesia" is always the same thing. Jesus Christ died for the Ecclesia. The Ecclesia is His bride, His body, His house, and His family. But the Ecclesia isn't a building. Nor is it a worship service that people attend two hours on Sunday. Neither is it any human-made church structure or church organization.
- According to the New Testament, the Ecclesia is the collective people of God, the community of the king, and the beloved bride of our Lord. And Jesus Christ is fully united with her. Therefore, you can't love Him and hate her.
- Knowing Jesus Christ, will eventually lead a person to desire to experience Ecclesia in the sense the early Church experienced it. Meaning, it will lead them to seek out the practical expression of the body of Christ where God's people are meeting in face-to-face community and Jesus Christ is the true head of that community. Of course, with all the thousands of different church structures and organizations causing so much division in the one Body of Christ nowadays, this isn't so easy to find in this season of history. But I've always maintained that if your heart is desperate for her, the Lord will lead you to at least one or two local people who love Christ.
- I know that people uses Hebrews 10:25 to guilt people into attending a religious worship service of some kind. Their message then is, "If you don't attend 'church' — which for them means, a two-hour service in a building on Sunday morning — you are 'forsaking the assembly.'" But is that what Hebrews 10:25 says? Here's the full text beginning with verse 24: *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."* (ESV) Notice the words, "stir up one another" and "encouraging one another." Hebrews 10 is referring to gatherings where God's people mutually participate in exhorting each other. The "meet together" are open-participatory gatherings where the body of Christ functions and the members share the Lord "with one another." Consequently, if your church gatherings don't allow for open participation and mutual exhortation from all the members of the body, then you can't use Hebrews 10:25 to put the Lord's people under a pile.
- Now before anyone jumps to unfounded conclusions, I'm not suggesting that it's wrong to attend an institutional church service. Not at all. I've stated more than once that if I had to choose between being a part of most "house churches" or so-called "organic churches" and attending a full-blown traditional church, I'd run to the nearest traditional church I could find! But most of us don't have to make that choice. God's people who have hot hearts for Jesus Christ are "everywhere". So, if you are desperate to meet them, the Lord will lead you to them. Doing so may be out of your comfort zone, but if you actively look, you'll eventually find one or two. (Hint: Instead of looking for "the perfect church" that's close to your house, how about checking out the organizations and ministries in your city who are helping the poor, the homeless, pregnant teens, drug addicts, etc. These places may not dot all your theological "i's," but there's an excellent chance you will find Jesus Christ there.)
- But with that said, let me conclude with the following: I also believe that as a continuance and completion of the message and meaning of radical reformation in the Ecclesia of Jesus, we urgently need to seek Biblical guidance to make the unity in the One Body of Christ, an

undeniable practical reality. How else can the world really know and experience our love for one another as the One Family of God, when all they see and experience are more than 42 000 (yes, forty-two thousand) different churches all over the world, claiming to be the One true Church of Christ and Body of Christ?

Your brother in Christ,

Christo A. Nel

About the Author

Dr Christo Alfred Nel was born in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa, and matriculated at the Secondary High School, Voortrekker.

He obtained his B.A. degree with Greek and Philosophy as main subjects at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein and completed his seven-year Theological studies at the University of Stellenbosch completing his B. Th. and Post Graduate Diploma in Theology.

While in ministry as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, he completed his M. Th. at the University of Pretoria in 1988.

After fourteen years of ministry in the Dutch Reformed Church, a new season started in his life and that of his wife and family on the 31st October 1993, the day the Reformation was celebrated worldwide.

God started using him and his wife to minister new-wine truths to God's people across the boundaries of different denominational churches, including post-denominational congregations, house churches and other groups.

Meanwhile he also completed his D.Phil. and D.Juris. (Theol.).

Part of Christo's calling is equipping God's people for ministry. For this reason, Christo published two books: WAARHEEN MET DIE NUWE WYN (Where to with the new wine) and DIE STORIE AGTER DIE STORIE (The story behind the Story of the New Testament and the New Testament Ecclesia from 32 to 70 AD). He also produced and published two training DVD-series, JESUS DIE DOPER MET DIE GEES (Jesus, the Baptiser with the Spirit) on the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to the Bible, and HOE HOOR JY DIE HERE SE STEM (How do you hear God's voice).

Christo is also a teaching professor at Christian universities and training centres, where he equips a new generation of Christian leaders for ministry across Africa, Pakistan, India and other parts of the world.

He is also a freelance Christian writer for several Christian magazines and websites.

Contact Information:

Dr Christo A. Nel's contact details are as follows:

nchristo@lantic.net

P O Box 3114, Somerset West, South Africa 7129

Tel: 27-21-8510003 or via his cell at 27-82 770 2397

Website: www.nuwewyn.co.za