

Bethlehem PBC OKC

Articles of Faith

- Article 9

What are the Articles of Faith?

Articles of Faith (AOF) are short summaries of doctrines that a church publishes and holds to as a statement of belief. Most PB Churches still have them, and most are similar (but not identical).

When the Bethlehem Primitive Baptist Church of Jesus Christ in Oklahoma City was constituted in November 1900, the body of believers there adopted these articles as a public declaration of "those things which we most surely believe."

AOF do not rise to the level of Scripture, but they are central points upon which anyone who joins our assembly must believe and affirm.

Bethlehem PBC AOF: <https://pbokc.org/us/articles-of-faith/>

Article 9

We believe that none but those who give a reason of a spiritual birth and have been legally baptized have a right to commune at the Lord's Table.

What does this Article mean?

Discipleship – Our Walk With God

The word “Discipleship” does not appear in AOF 9, but this is the central theme of this article. A disciple is one who follows the teachings and examples of a master. We are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

AOF 9 sets forth the connection between Spiritual Birth, Baptism and Communion in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The basic idea in AOF 9 is not to deny access to the Lord’s Table based on technicalities, but rather, to emphasize the crucial importance of the link between our inward experience with God and our faith in Him, and our outward obedience toward God and our fellowship with Him and the Church (that is, with our fellow believers in the local body).

Giving a Reason for Our Spiritual Birth

Everyone who is born by the Spirit of God has a personal, individual encounter with Him. He speaks life to us, and we become spiritually alive. God does this sovereignly, irresistibly, and immediately for all of His Elect at some point in their lives. John 3:8.

The new birth can happen when we are young, as with John the Baptist (Luke 1:44), when we are near death, as with the Penitent Thief (Luke 23:42), or anywhere in between, as with the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:5-6).

Regardless when it happens, the new birth brings a wondrous change; we are a new creature (creation) in Christ (2 Cor 5:17).

To give a “reason for a spiritual birth” means to confess our own state as sinners and our need for a Savior. This outward confession shows the inward work in our heart by God. (Matt 3:7-12; 1 Pet 3:15). We may stammer and stutter, and that is understandable. What we are looking for is a confession of Jesus, and evidence of the new birth.

The Necessity of Baptism

The term “legal” means conforming to law or authority.

The term “legally baptized” means to be baptized in accordance with the pattern and requirements set forth by the Bible.

A legal baptism a believer’s baptism. It is based upon a public profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and an expressed desire to follow Him in newness of life.

A legal baptism is an immersion in water. This shows our desire and belief that we participate in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and it shows our commitment to follow Him.

A legal baptism is based on proper biblical principles, is made based on proper motivations, and is administered by a qualified, ordained elder (see AOF 8).

A legal baptism is a public declaration of faith in Jesus Christ, and is the answer of a good conscience before God. It is evidence of the new birth.

The Right to Commune at the Lord's Table

AOF 9 states that only those who have given a reason for a spiritual birth and have been legally baptized have a right to commune at the Lord's Table. These qualifications are biblical and serve both an encouraging and a warning purpose.

The encouraging aspect is that this promotes self-examination and introspection, and causes us to draw nearer to God and our Lord Jesus Christ. It deepens our faith and reminds us of our full and complete dependence upon Him. Hebrews 10:22.

The warning aspect is that it is a dangerous thing to disregard the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and to consider his death a light thing. Many in the Corinthian church were struck with severe sicknesses, and many others died, because they abused the Lord's Supper: they did not discern the Lord's body, nor examine themselves prior to participating in the communion. 1 Cor 11:27-30. While extreme, we warn others of the dangers of entering into this lightly. The judgment of God must begin with the house of God. 1 Peter 4:17.

Final Thoughts and Points

AOF 9, and indeed all of the Articles of Faith, emphasize our position in Jesus Christ and our faithful walk with Him.

God sovereignly gives life to His People, and calls them to His fellowship. The outward expressions of our faith show the inward work of God in our hearts.

We do these outward things such as always being ready to give a reason for the hope that lieth within us, by submitting to water baptism based on a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, by walking in accordance with the commands and teachings of Jesus, and by participating in the Lord's Supper with the Saints in the local church after examining ourselves to ensure we are in the faith.

But these outward things are only valid and acceptable if they spring from that fountain of life, the Holy Spirit, that is within us. We experience the joys of our salvation through integration of our inward relationship with God and our outward walk of faith before Jesus Christ.

Someone who has not given a reason for their spiritual life and submitted to proper water baptism has not sufficiently examined themselves in these things, and therefore is not qualified to partake. We are saving such from judgment.

What are some Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 9?

Some Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 9

1 Peter 3:15-16: “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.”

John 3:8: “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

Luke 1:44: “For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.” (Elizabeth speaking of her son, John the Baptist)

Luke 23:42: “And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” (the Penitent Thief on the cross)

Some more Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 9

Luke 3:7-9: “Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

Acts 8:36-38: “And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”

Some more Scriptures that teach the Principles of Article 9

1 Corinthians 11:26-32: “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

Hebrews 13:10: “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.”

1 Corinthians 10:21: “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.”

A Further Listing of Scriptures from the Group On Article 9

- 1 Peter 1:23
- 1 Peter 3:15
- 2 Corinthians 6:14
- 1 Corinthians 11:20-34
- Acts 8:36-38
- Acts 2:42
- Matthew 28:18-20
- 1 Corinthians 10:14-17
- Romans 6:4-6
- Galatians 3:1-14
- John 10:24-30
- 1 John 1:3-7

* And there are many, many more.

Conclusion

This ninth and final Article of Faith sets forth the Biblical qualifications for disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in His Kingdom and Fellowship. It shows the connection between spiritual birth, water baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper.

We do not deny access to the Lord's Table based on technicalities. Rather, we emphasize the necessary integration of our inward faith and experience in God with our outward obedience and fellowship with Him and the Church.

Only those who have provided evidence that they have been born again and have been obedient in water baptism have a right to commune at the Lord's Table. Even so, such must also examine themselves to ensure that they are in the faith. No one is worthy, but we are invited to partake when we recall our our unworthiness.

Discipleship of Jesus Christ is a serious matter, and God's judgment begins with the house of God.