

The
WORD

The LIGONIER
STATEMENT
on CHRISTOLOGY

Made

FLESH

The Word Made Flesh

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STATEMENT
on CHRISTOLOGY



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

Who is Jesus Christ? Nearly every adult person has formed some opinion of Jesus. These opinions may be superficial, uninformed, or downright heretical. The truth about Jesus, not mere opinion, matters . . . and it matters eternally.

Those who bear the name *Christian* profess to follow Christ as His disciples. They hold a Christology—a doctrine of Christ—that reflects their view of Christ. This Christology may be articulated implicitly or explicitly. It may represent the depth of biblical revelation and historic Christian reflection on Scripture, or it may be novel and disconnected from God’s Word. But no professing Christian lacks a Christology.

Since following Christ is central to Christianity, the church has labored for centuries to proclaim the Christ of history and Scripture, not the Christ of our imaginations. In historic statements of faith such as the Nicene Creed, the Definition of Chalcedon, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Westminster Confession, Christians have articulated the biblical teaching on Christ.

Today, these statements are often neglected and misunderstood, resulting in widespread confusion regarding the person and work of Christ. For the glory of Christ and the edification of His people, the Ligonier Statement on Christology seeks to encapsulate the historic, orthodox, biblical Christology of the Christian church in a form that is simple to confess, useful in helping to teach the church’s enduring faith, and able to serve as a common confession around which believers from different churches can rally for mission together. This statement is not a replacement for the church’s historic creeds and confessions but a supplement that articulates their collective teaching on who Christ is and what He has done. May Christ use it for His kingdom.

In the name of God’s Son incarnate, our Prophet, Priest, and King,

R. C. SPROUL
SPRING 2016

The Word Made Flesh: The Ligonier Statement on Christology

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Second edition

Published by Ligonier Ministries

421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771

Ligonier.org | ChristologyStatement.com

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ISBN: 9781567698145

We confess the mystery and wonder
of God made flesh
and rejoice in our great salvation
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

With the Father and the Holy Spirit,
the Son created all things,
sustains all things,
and makes all things new.
Truly God,
He became truly man,
two natures in one person.

He was born of the Virgin Mary
and lived among us.
Crucified, dead, and buried,
He rose on the third day,
ascended to heaven,
and will come again
in glory and judgment.

For us,
He kept the Law,
atoned for sin,
and satisfied God's wrath.
He took our filthy rags
and gave us
His righteous robe.

He is our Prophet, Priest, and King,
building His church,
interceding for us,
and reigning over all things.

Jesus Christ is Lord;
we praise His holy Name forever.

Amen.

Affirmations and Denials

*with
Scripture
Proofs*

- Article 1* We affirm that Jesus is the incarnation in history of the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity. He is Christ, God’s promised Messiah.¹
We deny that Jesus Christ is a mere man or was a fictional creation of the early Christian church.
- Article 2* We affirm that in the unity of the Godhead the eternally begotten Son is consubstantial (*homoousios*), coequal, and coeternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.²
We deny that the Son is merely like God (*homoiousios*) or that He was simply adopted by the Father as His Son. We deny the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father in the ontological Trinity.
- Article 3* We affirm, with the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds, that Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly man, two natures united in one person forever.³
We deny that the Son was created. We deny that there was ever a time when the Son was not divine. We deny that the human body and soul of Jesus Christ existed prior to the incarnation of the Son in history.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1, 14). See also Ps. 110:1; Matt. 3:17; 8:29; 16:16; Mark 1:1, 11; 15:39; Luke 22:70; John 4:25–26; Acts 5:42; 9:22; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9; Heb. 5:7; 1 John 5:20.

²Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). See also John 1:18; 3:16–18; 10:30; 20:28; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 2:18.

³For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily (Col. 2:9). See also Luke 1:35; John 10:30; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Peter 3:18.

Article 4 We affirm the hypostatic union, that the two natures of Jesus Christ are united in His one person without mixture, confusion, division, or separation.⁴
We deny that to distinguish between the two natures is to separate them.

Article 5 We affirm that in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, His divine and human natures retain their own attributes. We affirm that the attributes of both natures belong to the one person Jesus Christ.⁵
We deny that the human nature of Jesus Christ has divine attributes or can contain the divine nature. We deny that the divine nature communicates divine attributes to the human nature. We deny that the Son laid aside or gave up any of His divine attributes in the incarnation.

Article 6 We affirm that Jesus Christ is the visible image of God, that He is the standard of true humanity, and that in our redemption we will be ultimately conformed to His image.⁶
We deny that Jesus Christ was less than truly human, that He merely appeared to be human, or that He lacked a reasonable human soul. We deny that in the hypostatic union the Son assumed a human person rather than a human nature.

⁴Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 16:16–17). See also Luke 1:35, 43; John 1:1–3; 8:58; 17:5; Acts 20:28; Rom. 1:3; 9:5; 2 Cor. 8:9; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Peter 3:18; Rev. 1:8, 17; 22:13.

⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Phil. 2:5–7). See also Matt. 9:10; 16:16; 19:28; John 1:1; 11:27, 35; 20:28; Rom. 1:3–4; 9:5; Eph. 1:20–22; Col. 1:16–17; 2:9–10; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:3, 8–9; 1 Peter 3:18; 2 Peter 1:1.

⁶He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him (Col. 1:15–16). See also Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 4:4–6; Eph. 4:20–24; Heb. 1:3–4.

Article 7 We affirm that as truly man, Jesus Christ possessed in His state of humiliation all the natural limitations and common infirmities of human nature. We affirm that He was made like us in all respects, yet He was without sin.⁷
We deny that Jesus Christ sinned. We deny that Jesus Christ did not truly experience suffering, temptation, or hardship. We deny that sin is inherent to true humanity or that the sinlessness of Jesus Christ is incompatible with His being truly human.

Article 8 We affirm that the historical Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was miraculously conceived, and was born of the Virgin Mary. We affirm with the Chalcedonian Creed that she is rightly called mother of God (*theotokos*) in that the child she bore is the incarnate Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity.⁸
We deny that Jesus Christ received His divine nature from Mary or that His sinlessness was derived from her.

⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Heb. 2:17–18). See also Mic. 5:2; Luke 2:52; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:5–8; Heb. 4:15.

⁸In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary (Luke 1:26–27). See also Matt. 1:23; 2:11; Luke 1:31, 35, 43; Rom. 1:3; Gal. 4:4.

Article 9 We affirm that Jesus Christ is the last Adam who succeeded in His appointed task at every point where the first Adam failed, and that Jesus Christ is the head of His people, the body of Christ.⁹
We deny that Jesus Christ assumed a fallen human nature or inherited original sin.

Article 10 We affirm the active and passive obedience of Jesus Christ, that in His perfect life He completely fulfilled the righteous demands of the law on our behalf, and that He bore the penalty of our sin by His death on the cross.¹⁰
We deny that Jesus Christ at any point failed to obey or fulfill the law of God. We deny that He abolished the moral law.

⁹Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:12–21). See also 1 Cor. 15:22, 45–49; Eph. 2:14–16; 5:23; Col. 1:18.

¹⁰For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous (Rom. 5:19). See also Matt. 3:15; John 8:29; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8.

Article 11 We affirm that on the cross Jesus Christ offered Himself as a penal substitutionary atonement for the sins of His people, propitiating the wrath of God and satisfying the justice of God, and was victorious over sin, death, and Satan.¹¹
We deny that the death of Jesus Christ was a payment of ransom to Satan. We deny that the death of Jesus Christ was merely an example, merely a victory over Satan, or merely a display of God's moral government.

Article 12 We affirm the doctrine of double imputation, that our sin is imputed to Jesus Christ and His righteousness is imputed to us by faith.¹²
We deny that sin is overlooked without judgment. We deny that the active obedience of Jesus Christ is not imputed to us.

Article 13 We affirm that on the third day Jesus Christ rose from the dead and that He was seen in the flesh by many.¹³
We deny that Jesus Christ merely seemed to die, or that only His spirit survived, or that His resurrection took place merely in the hearts of His followers.

¹¹Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:25–26). See also Isa. 53; Rom. 5:6, 8, 15; 6:10; 7:4; 8:34; 14:9, 15; 1 Cor. 15:3; Eph. 5:2; 1 Thess. 5:10; 2 Tim. 2:11; Heb. 2:14, 17; 9:14–15; 10:14; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 2:2; 3:8; 4:10.

¹²For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). See also Matt. 5:20; Rom. 3:21–22; 4:11; 5:18; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 9:9; Eph. 6:14; Phil. 1:11; 3:9; Heb. 12:23.

¹³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve (1 Cor. 15:3–5). See also Isa. 53; Matt. 16:21; 26:32; 28:1–10; John 21:14; Acts 1:9–11; 2:25, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; Rom. 4:24–25; 6:9–10; Eph. 4:8–10.

Article 14

We affirm that in His state of exaltation Jesus Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection, that He has conquered both sin and death, and that in union with Him we too will be resurrected.¹⁴

We deny that the glorified resurrected body of Jesus Christ was a wholly different body from the one that was laid in the garden tomb. We deny that our resurrection is merely a resurrection of our spirits apart from our bodies.

Article 15

We affirm that Jesus Christ ascended to His heavenly throne at the right hand of God the Father, that He is presently reigning as King, and that He will return visibly in power and glory.¹⁵

We deny that Jesus Christ was mistaken about the timing of His return.

Article 16

We affirm that Jesus Christ poured out His Spirit on the day of Pentecost and that in His present session He is reigning over all things, interceding for His people, and building His church, of which He is the only head.¹⁶

We deny that Jesus Christ appointed the bishop of Rome as His vicar, or that any person other than Jesus Christ can be the church's head.

¹⁴But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. . . . "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:20, 55). See also Rom. 5:10; 6:4, 8, 11; 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:23; 2 Cor. 1:9; 4:10–11; Eph. 2:6; Col. 2:12; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 2:9, 14; 1 John 3:14; Rev. 14:4; 20:14.

¹⁵So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:6–11). See also Luke 24:50–53; Acts 1:22; 2:33–35; Eph. 4:8–10; 1 Tim. 3:16.

¹⁶And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22). See also Acts 2:33; 1 Cor. 11:3–5; Eph. 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18.

Article 17

We affirm that Jesus Christ will come again in glory to judge all people and will finally vanquish all His enemies, destroy death, and usher in the new heaven and the new earth in which He will reign in righteousness.¹⁷

We deny that the final return of Jesus Christ took place in AD 70 and that His coming and its attendant events are to be viewed as symbolic.

Article 18

We affirm that those who believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be welcomed into His eternal kingdom, but those who do not believe in Him will suffer eternal conscious punishment in hell.¹⁸

We deny that every person will be saved. We deny that those who die without faith in Jesus Christ will be annihilated.

Article 19

We affirm that all who have been chosen in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world and who are united to Him through faith enjoy communion with Him and with one another. We affirm that in Jesus Christ we enjoy every spiritual blessing, including justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification.¹⁹

We deny that Jesus Christ and His saving work can be separated. We deny that we are able to partake of the saving work of Jesus Christ apart from Jesus Christ Himself. We deny that we can be united to Jesus Christ and not be united to His body, the church.

¹⁷And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42). See also John 12:48; 14:3; Acts 7:7; 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8.

¹⁸The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear (Matt. 13:41–43). See also Isa. 25:6–9; 65:17–25; 66:21–23; Dan. 7:13–14; Matt. 5:29–30; 10:28; 18:8–9; Mark 9:42–49; Luke 1:33; 12:5; John 18:36; Col. 1:13–14; 2 Thess. 1:5–10; 2 Tim. 4:1, 18; Heb. 12:28; 2 Peter 1:11; 2:4; Rev. 20:15.

¹⁹For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—

Article 20

We affirm the doctrine of justification by faith alone, that God declares us righteous by an act of His grace alone through our faith alone in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone, apart from our own personal merit or works. We affirm that to deny the doctrine of justification by faith alone is to deny the gospel.²⁰

We deny that we are justified on the basis of any infusion of grace into us. We deny that we are justified only once we have become inherently righteous. We deny that this justification is now or ever will be based on our faithfulness.

Article 21

We affirm the doctrine of sanctification, that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, based on the work of Jesus Christ, delivers us from the reigning power of sin, sets us apart, and makes us holy by conforming us more and more to the image of His Son. We affirm that sanctification is a work of God's grace and is inseparably joined with justification, although it is different from justification. We affirm that in this divine work of sanctification we are not merely passive, but we are responsible to apply ourselves to the appointed means of grace in our ongoing endeavor to die to sin and live in obedience to the Lord.²¹

We deny that a person is justified without immediately bearing the fruit of union with Jesus Christ in sanctification. We deny that our good works, while acceptable to God in Jesus Christ, merit justification. We deny that in this life our struggle with indwelling sin will cease, even though sin has no dominion over us.

and all were made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). See also John 14:20; 15:4–6; Rom. 6:1–11; 8:1–2; 12:3–5; 1 Cor. 1:30–31; 6:15–20; 10:16–17; 12:27; 2 Cor. 5:17–21; Gal. 3:25–29; Eph. 1:3–10, 22–23; 2:1–6; 3:6; 4:15–16; 5:23, 30; Col. 1:18; 2:18–19.

²⁰Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). See also Luke 18:14; Rom. 3:24; 4:5; 5:10; 8:30; 10:4, 10; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21; Gal. 2:16–17; 3:11, 24; 5:4; Eph. 1:7; Titus 3:5, 7.

²¹Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before

Article 22

We affirm that Jesus Christ is the sole mediator between God and His people. We affirm the mediatorial role of Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King in both His state of humiliation and His state of exaltation. We affirm that He was anointed by the Holy Spirit in order to execute this mediatorial office to which He was called by the Father.²²

We deny that God has had or will have any other incarnations or that there are or will be any mediators of redemption other than the Lord Jesus Christ. We deny salvation apart from Jesus Christ alone.

Article 23

We affirm that as the supreme Prophet of God, Jesus Christ was both the subject and object of prophecy. We affirm that Jesus Christ revealed and proclaimed the will of God, prophesied future events, and is in Himself the fulfillment of God's promises.²³

We deny that Jesus Christ ever uttered a false prophecy or false word, or that He failed or will fail to fulfill all prophecies regarding Himself.

the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him (Eph. 1:3–4). See also John 17:17; Acts 20:32; Rom. 6:5–6, 14; 8:13; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:24; Eph. 3:16–19; 4:23–24; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:10–11; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 12:14.

²²For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). See also Job 33:23–28; Luke 1:33; John 1:1–14; 14:6; Acts 3:22; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:1–4; 5:5–6; 9:15; 12:24.

²³And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Moses said, "The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you" (Acts 3:17–22). See also Matt. 20:17; 24:3; 26:31, 34, 64; Mark 1:14–15; Luke 4:18–19, 21; John 13:36; 21:22; 1 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 19:10.

Article 24

We affirm that Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, having made the perfect sacrifice of Himself on our behalf and continuing to intercede for us before the Father. We affirm that Jesus Christ is both the subject and object of the supreme atoning sacrifice.²⁴

We deny that Jesus Christ, being from the tribe of Judah and not from the tribe of Levi, is disqualified from serving as our priest. We deny that He continually offers Himself as a sacrifice in the Mass as victim and priest, even in an unbloody manner. We deny that He became a priest only in heaven and was not a priest on earth.

Article 25

We affirm that as King, Jesus Christ reigns supremely over all earthly and supernatural powers now and forever.²⁵

We deny that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is merely a political kingdom of this world. We deny that earthly rulers are not accountable to Him.

Article 26

We affirm that when Jesus Christ has conquered all His enemies, He will hand over His kingdom to the Father. We affirm that in the new heaven and the new earth, God will be with His people, and that believers will see Jesus Christ face-to-face, will be made like Him, and will enjoy Him forever.²⁶

We deny that there is any other hope for humanity or any name or way in which salvation may be found except in Jesus Christ alone.

²⁴For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him (Heb. 9:24–28). See also John 1:36; 19:28–30; Acts 8:32; 1 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 2:17–18; 4:14–16; 7:25; 10:12, 26; 1 Peter 1:19; Rev. 5:6, 8, 12–13; 6:1, 16; 7:9–10, 14, 17; 8:1; 12:11; 13:8; 15:3.

²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:25). See also Ps. 110; Matt. 28:18–20; Luke 1:32; 2:11; Acts 2:25, 29, 34; 4:25; 13:22, 34, 36; 15:16; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Heb. 4:7; Rev. 3:7; 5:5; 22:16.

²⁶Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:24–28). See also Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Phil. 2:9–11; 2 Peter 3:13; 1 John 3:2–3; Rev. 21:1–5; 22:1–5.

Explanatory Essay

*with
Suggestions
for Use*

Someday the entire earth will resound with one singular confession: “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:11). This short sentence overflows with meaning. To say that Jesus is the *Christ* is to say that He is the “Anointed One.” It is to say that He is the promised and long-awaited Messiah.

To say that Jesus Christ is *Lord* is to say that He is truly God of truly God. The incarnation is a wonder of wonders, an astonishing mystery. God became flesh. Even to call Him *Jesus* is to say that He is the one and only Savior. He came into the world on a mission to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

“Jesus Christ is Lord” is a creed—a concise statement of belief. The English word *creed* comes from the Latin word *credo*, which means “I believe.” This short creed declares what we believe about Christ. Some think 1 Timothy 3:16 may also be a creed. Two reasons point toward this. First, Paul uses this expression, “great, indeed, *we confess*.” Second, the phrases of this verse are rhythmic and poetically expressed. These phrases form a concise summary of the incarnate Christ:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory. (1 Tim. 3:16)

The biblical pattern is important. When the early church formed councils and produced creeds, they were not creating a new method of confessing the faith. They were carrying on a biblically established tradition.

As challenges arose, the early church took a stand. Further, many think that liturgical needs, or the desire for pure worship, also prompted the church to engage in writing creeds. This is especially true regarding the doctrine of Christ. The essential truth of the person and work of Jesus has been the defining hallmark of Christianity down through the centuries.

The New Testament writers themselves battled false ideas regarding Christ's identity and work. In the early centuries of the church, various groups challenged Christ's true humanity. One group, the Docetists, claimed that Jesus only "appeared" to be human. Other heresies, such as Arianism, challenged the true deity of Christ. These heresies claimed He was less than God the Father. Later groups erred in expressing how the two natures, the true humanity and the true deity of Christ, are united in His one person. The early church responded to these challenges and errors by convening councils and writing creeds that summarized the Bible's teaching regarding the central truths of the Christian faith. These creeds are a rich legacy, handed down from one generation to the next. So today, we have the resources of the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Chalcedonian Definition. These creeds are boundary markers, drawing clear lines between orthodoxy and heresy.

These creeds have served to steel the church and, by the gracious and governing hand of God, have guided Christians to proclaim faithfully the gospel. They are recited today as a testimony to their enduring value. They remind us that Christ is at the center of our theology and at the center of our worship. These creeds summon the church "to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3).

Yet, these creeds only hint at the work of Christ. They do not fully expound on the gospel. A true division in the visible church occurred at the time of the Reformation. The work of Christ was the key issue. More specifically, debate over the doctrine of justification by faith alone was the central controversy that sparked the Reformation. Here the church divided along the lines of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Protestantism affirms the doctrine of justification by faith alone (*sola fide*), while Roman Catholicism, following the decrees of the Council of Trent, rejects the doctrine of justification by faith alone, opting instead to see justification as resulting from the cooperation of faith and works. The Reformation also revealed a difference on another issue, namely, the supreme and sole headship of Jesus Christ over His church and, in fact, over all things.

Taken together, the ecumenical creeds of the early church and these emphases of the Reformation draw guidelines for the church for proclaiming a biblically faithful gospel. Creeds and the various Reformation confessions and catechisms provide summaries of the faith and bring clarity to the faith and to the gospel.

The Word Made Flesh: The Ligonier Statement on Christology humbly attempts to offer the church of this generation—and, with God's blessing, generations to come—a succinct statement regarding the person and work of Christ that draws from the riches of the past, from both the ecumenical creeds and Reformation theology. Perhaps this statement and its accompanying twenty-six articles of affirmation and denial may serve as a catalyst for further discussion and reflection on these crucial matters of Christology. Perhaps this statement itself may even prove useful to the church. Every attempt has been made to make this statement conducive to public recital. We want every person who encounters this statement to know that "Jesus Christ is Lord."

THE STATEMENT

The statement consists of six stanzas or sections. The first serves as a preface, with two key verbs: *confess* and *rejoice*. God has revealed both Himself and His will in the pages of Holy Scripture. Yet, there are still "secret things" that belong to Him alone (Deut. 29:29). We must always be mindful of our limitations in the task of theology. So we begin by confessing the *mystery* and *wonder* of the gospel. The primary focus of this statement is the incarnation, which we succinctly define with the words *God made flesh*. The person of Christ immediately leads to the work of Christ, so we collectively rejoice in Christ's work of salvation.

The second stanza emphasizes the true deity of Christ, seeing Him equally positioned among the persons of the triune Godhead. This stanza ends with a restatement of the Chalcedonian formula from the Definition of Chalcedon. Since the incarnation, Christ has been and ever will be two natures in one person.

The exposition of the incarnation occupies the third stanza, emphasizing Christ's true humanity. He was born. He is Immanuel,

which means “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). Here we confess His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and second coming. These are the historical facts of the incarnation.

The theological facts of the incarnation follow in the fourth section, drawing on the recovered insights from the time of the Reformation. For us, Jesus was perfectly obedient. He *kept the Law* (active obedience) and paid the law’s penalty (passive obedience). He was the spotless lamb, making substitutionary atonement for us. He solved the most pressing problem confronting all of humanity: the wrath of the Holy God. This stanza ends by declaring the doctrine of imputation. Our sins were imputed, or counted, to Christ, while His righteousness was imputed to us. We have peace with God solely and exclusively because of what Christ did for us. We are clothed in His righteousness.

The threefold office (*munus triplex*) of Christ is a helpful theological construct that succinctly expresses Christ’s work. The three offices of prophet, priest, and king were separate mediatorial roles in the Old Testament. Jesus combines all three in His one person, and He exercises all of them perfectly. Here we reflect not only on Christ’s mediatorial work in the past on the cross, but also on His current work as our intercessor at the Father’s right hand.

The concluding stanza affirms the singular, concise confession: *Jesus Christ is Lord*. All true theology leads to doxology, or worship. Consequently, the statement ends with the key verb *praise*. By worshipping Christ now, we are preparing for our eternal work.

THE TWENTY-SIX ARTICLES OF AFFIRMATION & DENIAL

The phrases of this statement are gateways into a study of Christology, inviting exploration of the richness of the biblical teaching on the person and work of Christ. To further guide us, twenty-six articles of affirmation and denial have been added, each with accompanying Scripture proofs. One main text has been written out in full for each, with other supporting texts supplied. These articles are crucial. They lay out the boundaries of the biblical teaching on the person and work of Christ.

Article 1 serves as the preface, affirming the incarnation.

Article 2 asserts Christ’s true deity, while articles 3–5 lay out the Bible’s one-person, two-nature Christology. Articles 6–9 unfold the true humanity of Christ. Articles 10–26 turn from the person of Christ to the work of Christ. These begin with affirming the doctrines of salvation and end with delineations of the threefold office of Christ.

The denials are of extreme importance. It is rather unfashionable in our age of tolerance to presume to deny a belief, but these articles of affirmation and denial are not an exercise in prideful presumption. Instead, they are offered in the hopes of helping the church stay within the safe and verdant confines of biblical teaching. Second John 9 declares, “Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God.” This refers to going ahead of the biblical teaching of Christ, or extending beyond the prescribed boundaries of Christology as revealed in God’s Word. As the twenty-six articles expand on the various lines of the statement, so the articles themselves can lead into deeper biblical teaching on Christ.

Some may rightly ask why a new statement is even necessary. That is a good question. To that end, we offer three reasons for this statement. We trust it will serve the church’s worship and teaching today by addressing both ancient and current challenges. We also trust that it will provide those in the service of the gospel with a means of recognizing others who truly are partners in ministry. Finally, we sense that challenging times for the church are on the horizon, and we trust that this statement will remind us all of the essence of the gospel—its beauty, its necessity, and its urgency. Consider each of these reasons:

FOR WORSHIP AND EDIFICATION

Ligonier humbly offers this statement for the church. From the early centuries, Christians have used creeds in the church’s liturgy. It is hoped that this statement might serve the same purpose. Creeds can be helpful teaching tools to explore the vast horizons of biblical teaching. It is also hoped that this statement and the twenty-six articles can be used in the church as a guide for further

biblical exploration and reflection. The doctrines of the person and work of Christ are essential to the church's identity and health. Every generation of the church needs to study and affirm anew the orthodox understanding of the person and work of Christ. We trust that this statement could be of help.

FOR COMMON CAUSE IN THE GOSPEL

There are a growing number of nondenominational churches, organizations, and movements around the world—many serving to advance the gospel. Sometimes it is difficult to discern where there may be healthy partnerships and associations. Perhaps this statement could serve to identify fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and to solidify common endeavors for the gospel.

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

In the university town of Oxford stands the Martyrs' Monument, commemorating the sacrifice made by a number of Britain's Reformers such as Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, and Hugh Latimer. It speaks of them as having yielded their bodies to be burned, bearing witness to the sacred truths which they affirmed and maintained against the errors of the church of Rome, and rejoicing that to them it was given not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for His sake.

They believed, affirmed, and maintained the sacred truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In bearing witness to these truths, they proclaimed, defended, and even suffered for them. Many through the centuries have joined these Reformers. Much of the church in the modern Western world has enjoyed religious freedom. How long that lasts might be in question. This generation or the generations to come might very well be called to suffer for believing in Christ. It is rather unwise to be unprepared, and it is also unwise to leave the next generation unprepared.

Indeed, these truths regarding the person and work of Christ are worthy of believing, affirming, maintaining, and suffering for. In Christ is life.

There was a moment in the earthly life of Christ when the crowds

had all abandoned Him, and He was left with His band of disciples. He asked them if they were going to leave too. Peter spoke up for the group: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68–69). Sometime later, one of the Twelve had his doubts. Jesus had been crucified and buried. There was testimony of His resurrection, but Thomas doubted. Then Jesus appeared to Thomas. He touched the wounds of Christ, the wounds He endured for our sins. Thomas confessed, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

So we believe. So we confess.

