

Orthodoxy - The True Faith

New City Catechism Q. 31: What do we believe by true faith?

Answer: Everything taught to us in the gospel. The Apostles' Creed expresses what we believe in these words: We believe in the God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.
- Jude 3

What has been delivered to the church for over two thousand years through the Bible and the creeds formulated from what the Bible teaches is the true faith. In the Apostles' Creed we have a summary formulation of the doctrine the apostles sent from Jesus taught. It was not written by the apostles but it appeared in the church's use by the second century. It was the early church's confession of the true faith, and it continues to be a true confession of the true church's faith today.

Philip Schaff writes, "The Apostles' Creed is the Creed of creeds. It contains all the fundamental articles of the Christian faith necessary to salvation, in the form of facts, in simple Scripture language, and in the most natural order - the order of revelation - from God and the creation down to the resurrection and life everlasting. It is Trinitarian, and divided into three chief articles, expressing faith - in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth, in his only Son, our Lord and Savior, and in the Holy Spirit (*in Deum Patrem, in Jesum Christum, in Spiritum Sanctum*); the chief stress being laid on the second article, the supernatural birth, death, and resurrection of Christ. The changing the language (*credo in* for *credo* with the simple accusative), the Creed professes to believe 'the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. It is by far the best popular summary of the Christian faith ever made within so brief a space....It is not a logical statement of abstract doctrines, but a profession of living facts and saving truths. It is a liturgical poem and an act of worship.'" - *The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. 1 The History of Creeds*

We do not use this creed in the church as a word of God to men, but as words of men to God in response to his revelation. Therefore, we rightly use it in our public worship services or private times of prayer. On one occasion as an elder I was interviewing a young child who was coming to profess their faith in Christ with a desire of becoming a communing member of the church. As I sat with the child and several other elders, I asked this young child what they were believing? The child then began to profess her faith in God and his salvation through Jesus Christ using the outline of the Apostles' Creed. It was not rehearsed and it was not a verbatim recitation of the Creed. It was a simple profession of the true faith as she had come to understand it through God's word and summarized for her in the Creed. I witnessed a similar situation with a very shy and introverted adult who was afraid about 'coming before the elders of the church' to profess their faith in Christ. I thought I would have to lead them with 'yes' and 'no' questions, or draw their answers out of them. But as we began to talk in the interview I recognized as I asked about their faith in Christ, this person began to give me a profession of faith that followed this same outline - what they believed about God their Creator, Jesus their Savior and Lord, the Holy Spirit who was now living in them, and of the assurance they had of the forgiveness of their sins, and the promise of the Father's everlasting life for them. This creed is useful for young and old. But not merely as information to assent to. These two people had the evidence of a divinely wrought conviction in their hearts that God had reconciled

them through his Son, and had inseparably joined them with him by his sealing Spirit, giving them promise to walk in light of his eternal life for them with confidence through the Son of his love.

This Creed has been taught to the church for the last 2000 years. It is simple and brief in expressing the doctrines of the true faith. As we grow in Christ we should reach beyond it as Christians in discovering the depths of the true faith it expresses. However, we should not try to go beyond it for the fundamental articles of the true faith. Let us continue to use it in our churches and homes as a framework of the true faith delivered to children and adults alike through the ages, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith.

Trusting In God's Sovereignty

Written by Elder, Brad Carnahan

Of late, with the emergence of the COVID-19 virus, many are considering the fragility of life and are tempted to fear in the midst of so much uncertainty. Here, in this quote from John Calvin, we are reminded that our lives appear to be ever at risk, but more importantly, that our fear is conquered through our trust in God's providential care over us. He who carefully considers the smallest bird, will for us, work out all things for our good and His glory.

John Calvin - Uncertainty Without Trust in God's Sovereignty

“Here we are forcibly reminded of the inestimable felicity of a pious mind. Innumerable are the ills which beset human life, and present death in as many different forms. Not to go beyond ourselves, since the body is a receptacle, nay the nurse, of a thousand diseases, a man cannot move without carrying along with him many forms of destruction. His life is in a manner interwoven with death. For what else can be said where heat and cold bring equal danger? Then, in what direction soever you turn, all surrounding objects not only may do harm, but almost openly threaten and seem to present immediate death. Go on board a ship, you are but a plank's breadth from death. Mount a horse, the stumbling of a foot endangers your life. Walk along the streets, every tile upon the roofs is a source of danger. If a sharp instrument is in your own hand, or that of a friend, the possible harm is manifest. All the savage beasts you see are so many beings armed for your destruction. Even within a high walled garden, where everything ministers to delight, a serpent will sometimes lurk. Your house, constantly exposed to fire, threatens you with poverty by day, with destruction by night. Your fields, subject to hail, mildew, drought, and other injuries, denounce barrenness, and thereby famine. I say nothing of poison, treachery, robbery, some of which beset us at home, others follow us abroad. Amid these perils, must not man be very miserable, as one who, more dead than alive, with difficulty draws an anxious and feeble breath, just as if a drawn sword were constantly suspended over his neck? It may be said that these things happen seldom, at least not always, or to all, certainly never all at once. I admit it; but since we are reminded by the example of others, that they may also happen to us, and that our life is not an exception any more than theirs, it is impossible not to fear and dread as if they were to befall us. What can you imagine more grievous than such trepidation? Add that there is something like an insult to God when it is said, that man, the noblest of the creatures, stands exposed to every blind and random stroke of fortune. Here, however, we were only referring to the misery which man should feel, were he placed under the dominion of chance.” - *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

