

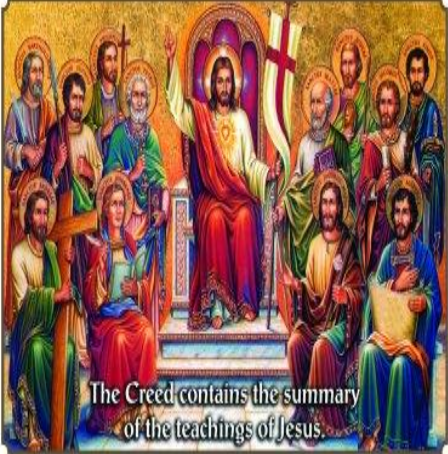
TWO ERRORS OF TWO CREEDS

By David Lee Burris

The Apostles' Creed	The Nicene Creed
1) I believe in God, the FATHER almighty, Creator of heaven and earth,	I believe in one God, the FATHER almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.
2) and in Jesus Christ, his only SON , our Lord,	I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten SON of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.
3) who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,	For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man,
4) suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried;	For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried,
5) he descended into Hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead;	and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.
6) he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;	He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
7) from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.	He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

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The Apostles' Creed	The Nicene Creed
8) I believe in the HOLY SPIRIT ,	I believe in the HOLY SPIRIT , the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father <i>and the Son</i> , who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.
9) the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints,	I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.
10) the forgiveness of sins,	I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
11) the resurrection of the body,	and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
12) and life everlasting. Amen.	and the life of the world to come. Amen.



The Creed contains the summary of the teachings of Jesus.

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EARLY CREED-FORMS AND THEORIES ABOUT THEIR ORIGIN

At the present stage of investigation into the history of the Apostles' Creed it is important to keep an open mind, free to consider the bearings of any new evidence which may be forthcoming. But the uncertainty which is attached to the theories about their origin does not belong to the early creed-forms themselves, and for practical purposes one theory is as good as another. It is agreed, for example, that the Old Roman Creed goes back to the first years of the second century. Whether we can trace a sister or parent creed of Antioch thirty years further back or not, or even if the parent of both is to be found in Asia Minor, the common tradition which they hand down represents a summary of Apostolic teaching in the generation following the Apostles, preserved from a date preceding the formation of the New Testament Canon. The Creed and the New Testament are supplementary. We may prove the truth of the witness of the Church as expressed in the Creed out of the Bible records, but even if the records had perished the witness of the Creed would have remained permanent, irrefragable.

1. THE OLD ROMAN CREED

The history of the Old Roman Creed is best studied backwards. During the ages of persecution when the Church became of necessity a secret society, hiding jealously its books and its holy mysteries, the Creed was used as a 'password' by which a Christian could make himself known in a community to which he was a stranger. And the custom grew up which lasted on even to the fifth century, when Christianity had for many years been a permitted religion, of warning candidates for baptism that they should never write down the articles of their belief but treasure them written in their heart. This fact explains the difficulty of tracing back creed-forms in early times when Christian writers shrank from open quotation of that which they treasured as a mystery, according to one meaning of the old Latin *sacramentum*, a sacrament.

Thus in the fourth century the Old Roman Creed comes to light in the writings of Marcellus of Ancyra and of Rufinus of Aquileia. In the year A.D. 340 Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra, was exiled from his diocese by Arian intrigues, and came to stay with Bishop Julius of Rome. Before his return home in the following year he left with his host a profession of his faith, which might be used by his friends in his defence, and has been preserved by the historian Epiphanius. This was the Old Roman Creed which Marcellus accepted and made his own,² using the Greek text which in all probability comes down from the days when the earliest Roman Church was a Greek-speaking community to which S. Paul naturally wrote his epistle in Greek. Of course the Roman Christians must always have been bilingual, and the Old Latin text is probably as ancient as the Greek.

Sixty years later (A.D. 400) Rufinus, a priest of Aquileia, wrote a commentary on the creed of his native city, comparing it with the Old Roman Creed. He was a man who had travelled much and was well read. He believed that the Roman Creed was the actual Apostles' Creed which the Twelve had composed in solemn conclave before they left Jerusalem. He explained that while other Churches added clauses to meet different heresies the Roman Church had remained free from heresy, and had kept up the custom that those who are going to be baptized should rehearse the Creed publicly, that is in the audience of the people, 'the consequence of which is that the ears of those who are already believers will not admit the addition of a single word.'

We need not accept the legend of Apostolic authorship, of which earlier writers, men of more acumen than Rufinus, do not seem to have heard. It was afterwards transferred to the later creed-form which has become our Received Text of the Creed, and in many old MSS. the different clauses are distributed among the Apostles sometimes in one order of the names and sometimes in another! Though it was true that the Roman Church was comparatively free from the attacks of heresy in Arian times, this was not the case in the second century when, though Rufinus did not know it, Rome as the capital of the Empire was the meeting-ground of every conceivable heresy and superstition, pagan as well as Christian. Rufinus is quite correct, however, in his statement about the solemn ceremony of the Repetition of the Creed by Candidates for Baptism. Though not peculiar to Rome it was specially observed there. There is an interesting passage in Augustine's *Confessions* in which he describes the sensation made when Victorinus, who had been a famous teacher of Neo-Platonism, rose to make his profession of faith.

THE OLD ROMAN CREED.

- I. 1. I believe in God (the) Father almighty;

- II. 2. And in Christ Jesus His only Son our Lord,
 3. Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
 4. crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried,
 5. the third day He rose from the dead,
 6. He ascended into heaven,
 7. sitteth at the right hand of the Father,
 8. thence He shall come to judge living and dead.

- III. 9. And in the Holy Ghost,
 10. (the) holy Church,
 11. (the) remission of sins,
 12. (the) resurrection of the flesh.

We can trace back this Old Roman Creed in the writings of Felix, Bishop A.D. 269–274, and of Dionysius, Bishop c. A.D. 259. There is also an interesting quotation in the writing of Novatian, a priest of the Roman Church, *On the Trinity*:

'The Rule of Truth demands that first of all we should believe in God the Father and Lord Almighty; to believe also in the Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord God, but Son of God ... of Mary ... about to rise from the dead ... about to sit at the right hand of the Father judge of all; to believe also in the Holy Spirit ... who guards the Church in holiness of truth ... who brings forth our bodies for resurrection of immortality.'

At the end of the second century Tertullian, a Carthaginian lawyer, who had been ordained priest in Rome, and afterwards lapsed into the heresy known as Montanism, expresses the agreement of the African Church with the Church of Rome in matters of faith. His heresy, which was mainly an unbalanced opinion on the measure of inspiration accorded by the Holy Spirit to Montanus and other Christian prophets, does not render his statements on the Creed suspicious. **He calls the creed the watchword which the African Church shares with the Roman**, also the Rule of Faith, and the oath of allegiance (*Sacramentum*) imposed on the Christian soldier at the font. In the following passage he appears to give to sacrament the meaning of an outward sign of an inward grace. The Creed is the sign; faith enlarged by knowledge of the whole scheme of redemption is the grace which clothes the soul. The Baptismal Formula supplies the framework, and the Birth, Passion, and Resurrection of the Lord are included in it.

De Bapt. 13: 'Grant that, in days gone by, there was salvation by means of bare faith, before the passion and resurrection of the Lord. But now that faith has been enlarged, and is become a faith which believes in his nativity, passion, and resurrection, there has been an amplification added to the sacrament, [namely], the sealing act of baptism; the clothing, in some sense, of the faith which before was bare, and which cannot exist now without its proper law. For the law of baptizing has been imposed, and the formula prescribed: "Go," saith He, "teach the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."'

This corresponds to another passage, in which Tertullian speaks of threefold immersion, while reciting rather more than the Lord appointed in the Gospel. Taken together with the following two parallels, these statements leave little or no doubt in one's mind as to the form of creed which Tertullian used.

De uirg. uel. 1: 'The rule of faith indeed is one altogether ... of believing in one God almighty, maker of the world, and in His Son Jesus Christ, born of Mary the Virgin, crucified under Pontius Pilate; the third day raised from the dead, received in the heavens, sitting now at the right hand of the Father, about to come to judge quick and dead, through the resurrection also of the flesh.'

De Praescr. 36: 'What the (Roman) Church has made a common token with the African Churches: has recognised one God, creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus, of the Virgin Mary, Son of God the creator, and the resurrection of the flesh.'

From Tertullian we learn much about the famous Gnostic Marcion. What made opposition to Marcion most difficult was the fact that he still held to the Roman Creed interpreted in his own way. Tertullian felt this with regard to Valentinus, and it embittered his opposition to Marcion. He writes that Marcion had not so much innovated upon the rule of faith by the separation of the law and the gospel, as he had taken trouble for its adulteration, and that 'after the Apostles' times truth suffered adultery concerning the Rule of God.'²

In one passage of Marcion's revised New Testament he writes about the two covenants, combining Gal. 4:24 with Eph. 1:21: 'The one from Mount Sinai, which is the synagogue of the Jews after the law, begotten into bondage; the other, which is exalted above all might, majesty, and power, and over every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; which (covenant) is the mother of us all, which begets us in the holy Church, which we have acknowledged (or to which we have vowed allegiance).'

Dr. Zahn points out that Marcion does not say, or rather does not allow the Apostle to say, 'which we acknowledge,' but he looks back to the confession and the oath taken once for all at baptism with reference to the holy Church. The same word had been used by Ignatius of the oath taken on the confession of the Christian faith. It follows that the words 'holy Church' were contained in the Roman Creed before Marcion's breach with the Church in A.D. 145.

Thus we trace the Old Roman Creed up to the earliest years of the second century, and ask the question whether Rufinus was right after all in saying that it had remained unchanged? **The evidence of Tertullian, and of Irenæus also, seems to point to the addition of the word 'one' in the first Article, which is found in all Eastern forms of the Creed.** If the word once stood there, can we explain its omission from the time of Novatian?

From Tertullian we learn that certain leaders of thought in the Roman Church had been strongly influenced by a strain of teaching which confused the Persons of the Godhead. Zephyrinus is reported to have said: 'I believe in one God, Jesus Christ.' His successor, Callistus, attempted to make a compromise, distinguishing Christ the Divine from Jesus the human. He was at once denounced by the teacher Sabellius, from whom the heresy derived the name Sabellianism. Sabellius asserted that the Trinity represented successive aspects of the one Godhead, God having been manifested first as Father, then as Son, then as Holy Spirit. Under these circumstances it would not be surprising if the word 'one' were omitted from the first Article of the Creed to counteract such teaching. In the history of Eusebius the heretics of this period are said to have accused the Roman Church of recoining the truth like forgers. Dr. Zahn suggests that this is a reference to the alteration of the Creed.

The internal evidence of the Creed points to the early years of the century, ± 100 A.D., as the date of its composition. The simplicity and terseness of the style point to the sub-Apostolic age. **There is no mention of God's work in creation which was generally included in outlines of Christian doctrine after the rise of Gnosticism.** Its authorship remains unknown, but it seems to have become a rule of faith without dispute. 'From Tertullian's description we are led to call it simply "the Faith," a short and intelligible summary of the teaching which Christianity offered.

2. THE OLD CREED OF JERUSALEM

We turn next to the Old Creed of Jerusalem which we find imbedded in the catechetical lectures of Cyril, who was Bishop of Jerusalem in the fourth century. Cyril quotes two forms. The first, which is very short, was used apparently at the moment of Baptism. He reminds the newly baptized how they renounced Satan and all his works, turning to the West as the land of darkness. Then turning to the East, as the land of light, they said: 'I believe in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, and in one baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.' We might almost imagine that this form takes us back to the days when S. Peter preached his first sermon in Jerusalem. The longer form, like a geological map of the different strata on the earth's surface,

records the history of its gradual formation. The titles 'Only-begotten' and 'Paraclete,' given to the Son and the Holy Spirit, point to the teaching of S. John; the word 'catholic' to the times of Ignatius; the words 'whose kingdom shall have no end' look like a recent addition to counteract the teaching of Marcellus of Ancyra. But the relation of the longer form to the shorter is shown by the order of Articles 11 and 10, in which the words 'one baptism for the remission of sins' precede the words 'and in one holy Catholic Church,' the rest of this division of the Creed having been built up, so to speak, round the earlier form.

THE OLD CREED OF JERUSALEM (c. A.D. 345).

Cyril, *Cat.* vi.–xviii.

- I. 1. We believe in one God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.**

- II. 2. And in one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God the only begotten, begotten of the Father, true God, before all the ages, through whom all things were made;**

- 3. incarnate and living as man among men;**

- 4. crucified and buried,**

- 5. And rose again the third day,**

- 6. And ascended into heaven,**

- 7. And sat on the right hand of the Father,**

- 8. And shall come in glory to judge the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.**

- III. 9. And in one Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, who spake by the Prophets,**

- 10. And in one baptism of repentance for remission of sins,**

- 11. And in one holy Catholic Church,**

- 12. And in resurrection of the flesh, And in life eternal.**

The point which I have singled out, the order of clauses 10 and 11, in which 'remission of sins' precedes 'holy Catholic Church,' leaves no doubt in my mind that we have to do with a case of development on independent lines. If this longer form had been dependent on the Roman Creed, mention of Pilate would have been included. The fact that it appears in the Revised Creed of Jerusalem (*i.e.* our Nicene Creed) does not prove that it belonged to the earlier form. Cyril, if we may credit him with the authorship, was in that respect conforming to the Western type, as in **changing 'resurrection of the flesh' into 'resurrection of the dead'** he followed current Eastern mode of thought.

Such questions lead to abstruse lines of argument in which the ordinary reader cannot be expected to take much interest. The specialists have by no means said the last word on the subject. The two conflicting theories may be briefly described as follows.

Dr. Kattenbusch, with whom Dr. Harnack is in general agreement, takes as his working hypothesis the proposition that the Old Roman Creed lies at the base of all like-constructed creeds. His critics agree that this is true of all Western forms, but maintain that there is evidence as to the existence of an Eastern type of creed of equal antiquity, but distinguished from the Roman Creed by such phrases as 'one (God),' 'Maker of heaven and earth,' 'suffered,' 'shall come again in glory.' Dr. Kattenbusch traces all the Eastern creeds of the fourth century to one archetype in the Creed of Antioch which, according to his view, is dependent on the Roman Creed. He conjectures that the Roman Creed was introduced at Antioch after the deposition of the heretic Paul of Samosata (*c. A.D. 272*), that it was altered to meet the dogmatic necessities of the time, that it then became the parent of the creeds of Palestine and Asia Minor and Egypt in the following century. In the case of Egypt, for example, there is evidence of the existence of a shorter form based on the Baptismal Formula like the short form quoted by Cyril, which seems to prove the wide extension of such usage in Eastern Churches.

On the other hand, Dr. Kunze and Dr. Loofs in Germany, Dr. Sanday in England, head an opposition to this theory. Dr. Kunze reconstructs the Antiochian Creed of the third century as follows:

CREED OF ANTIOCH.

- I. 1. I believe in one and an only true God, Father Almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible.

- II. 2. And in our Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, the only-begotten and first-born of all creation, begotten of Him before all the ages, through whom also the ages were established, and all things came into existence;

3. Who, for our sakes, came down, and was born of Mary the Virgin,

4. And crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried,

5. And the third day rose according to the scriptures,
6. And ascended into heaven.
- 7.
8. And is coming again to judge quick and dead.
9. [The beginning of the third article has not been recorded.]
- 10.
11. Remission of sins,
12. Resurrection of the dead, life everlasting.

Again Dr. Loofs selects the following phrases as typical of creeds which go back to a date preceding the Nicene Council. The creeds which he selects are: the Creed which Eusebius presented to the Nicene Council; the revised Creed of Cyril of Jerusalem; the Creed of Antioch quoted by Cassian, a Gallican writer of the latter part of the fourth century; the Creed of the Apostolic Constitutions, a Syrian compilation written in Antioch c. A.D. 375; the Creed of Lucian the Martyr, generally called the second Creed of Antioch; the Creed of Arius, which he presented to Constantine in A.D. 330. Arranging these in tabular form we notice the grouping.

- A Eusebius (Cæsarea).
- B Cyril (Jerusalem).
- C Antioch (Cassian).
- D Apostolic Constitutions (Antioch).
- E Lucian the Martyr (Antioch).
- F Arius.

1. **One (God)**, A, B, C, D, E, F.

Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible (or a like phrase), A, B, C, D, E.

2. **Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, the only-begotten** (or a like phrase), A, B, C, D, E, F.

3. **Crucified under Pontius Pilate**, B, C, D. (A, E, F omit because they are theological creeds. Dr. Loofs thinks that it does not follow that the words were omitted by the Baptismal Creeds on which they were based.)
5. **Rose the third day**, A, B, D, E. (F omits 'the third day,' being a theological creed; the translation of C is uncertain.)
6. **Went up**, A, B, D, E, F.
+and ... and ... and, A, B, C, D, E, F.
8. **And is coming**, B, C, D, E, F; and is about to come, A; + again, A, C, D, E, F (B?); +in glory, A, B; with glory, D, E.
10. +catholic, B, D, F (A, C, E?).
12. +life eternal, B, C; +life of the age to come, D, F.

I think that this is a fair way of putting the case on this side without encumbering my pages with a number of creed-forms. The real battle-ground of the future between the opposing theories lies in the testimony of Irenæus. He has most of the characteristic expressions of the Eastern creeds. He inserts 'one' in clauses 1 and 2. He has the phrase 'maker of heaven and earth,' adding 'and the sea and all things that are in them.' He has 'suffered' and 'crucified' with 'under Pontius Pilate' after instead of before it. Probably also he had 'in glory' in clause 8. The only characteristic of the oldest form of the Western Creed in Irenæus is Christ Jesus (for Jesus Christ). These forms tended to crystallise everywhere, and we find S. Paul quoting from such a form in 1 Cor. 15:3–7.

The practical question, however, for the ordinary reader is not affected by his doubts concerning either or both of these theories. The plain fact remains that the old Roman Creed was taught in Rome, and that the same facts were taught in Palestine (Antioch), Asia Minor, and Egypt, whether they were gathered up in a parallel creed-form or not.

We have now traced the history of the Old Roman Creed from the beginning of the second century to the end of the fourth, and have observed how very slight are the variations which appear to have taken place in its form. Side by side, however, with the almost immutable Creed of Rome there existed in other Western Churches many daughter forms, so to speak, which were enlarged, or in some cases enriched, by additional clauses. Thus the Creed of Aquileia, the native city of Rufinus, had in the first clause the epithets *invisible* and *impassible*. Again, in clause 4 the words *descended into hell* were added to *buried*. This is still the earliest known Baptismal Creed in which the words occur, though they are found in a recently discovered creed of S. Jerome and in manifestoes issued by three Arian Synods of the years 359 and 360. Rufinus himself regarded the words as an extension of the idea *buried*. They may have been added to emphasise the truth that the Lord really died in opposition to Docetic denials, which would imply that His Body was a mere phantom. But it is more probably that they were intended to teach what reverent Christian imagination has always held, that the Lord by sharing sanctified the condition of departed souls.¹

¹ Burn, A. E. (1914). [*The Apostles' Creed*](#) (Third Edition, pp. 23–38). London: Rivingtons.

In its present form (A) our Apostles' Creed has had a continuous history of some twelve hundred years. In the use of the Gallican Church, with omission of the words '*maker of heaven and earth,*' it can be traced back for two hundred and eighty years further. But in the fifth century there were many other forms extant which, together with our form, seem to have been derived from a common archetype or parent. Of these the Old Roman Creed which comes to light in the fourth century was certainly the archetype of all Western forms. But the critics are not agreed that the Roman type was also the parent of Eastern forms, which some of them trace back to a common ancestor in Antioch or Asia Minor. These statements will become more intelligible as we proceed to deal—first, with the earliest history of Christian thought on the subject of belief, and then with selected types.

§ 1. THE EVIDENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

There is abundant evidence in the New Testament that the Apostles were agreed on an outline of teaching (Rom. 6:17). The summaries of sermons of S. Peter and S. Paul in the Acts provide close parallels to the teaching of the Creed on the doctrine of God, the life and work of Christ, and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. But there is no suggestion of any fixed form of words in which the teaching might be summarised and committed to memory. S. Paul preaching to a cultured congregation at Athens seems free to alter the form of his discourse spontaneously, and uses a strain of thought quite different from that which he had used to the barbarian villagers at Lystra. Yet in both cases he began with the doctrine of the one true God, the Creator, in opposition to belief in numberless heathen deities. Only upon that foundation could he build safely the doctrine of the Son of God, in opposition to the hero-worship which had such a fascination for the pagan mind.

When the Apostles preached to Jews they had a common foundation of faith in the God of their fathers, and their message was at once of Jesus as the Messiah, crucified and risen from the dead, of repentance, of baptism for the remission of sins, of faith in His name as the motive power of moral conduct, of confession of that faith as the condition of spiritual health. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation* (Rom. 10:10).

The only trace of a form of creed is the simple confession of Jesus as the Lord, or the Son of God. In the words, *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord save in the Holy Ghost* (1 Cor. 12:3), S. Paul traces faith to its source. Again he writes: *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved* (Rom. 10:9). He quotes the prophet Joel (2:32) as predicting *this word of faith*, and teaches that the Lord Jesus is one with the Lord Jehovah on whose name Joel bade his hearers call.

An attempt has been made to prove that the evidence of S. Paul's Epistles to Timothy points to a longer form. S. Paul reminds Timothy (1 Tim. 6:13) of the confession before many witnesses which he had made, presumably at his baptism. He calls it *the beautiful confession* to which Christ Jesus has borne witness before Pontius Pilate, and charges him before God, who quickeneth all things, to keep the commandment. The simplest explanation of the confession which the Lord witnessed is this, that He avowed that He was a King (John 18:36).

It does not seem possible to extract more from the words than the exhortation that Timothy should make a similar confession of Christ as King and Lord. Mention of Pilate was included in S. Paul's teaching, but not necessarily in his creed. The pattern of sound (Gr. healthful) words which he bids Timothy hold (2 Tim. 1:13) *in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*, seems to refer to the general content of the gospel which he preached. *Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel* (2 Tim. 2:8). He bids him pass on the teaching heard from him *among many witnesses* to faithful men whom he in his turn is to put in remembrance. *I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the quick and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word* (2 Tim. 4:1, 2).

Some writers, piecing together these texts, have tried to reconstruct a primitive Apostles' Creed which they connect with the missionary Church of Antioch, by whom S. Paul was sent forth on his journeys. Dr. Zahn argues: 'If this is not all deceptive appearance, it must be taken as proved that the confession which Timothy made at his baptism before many witnesses referred first to God the Author of all life; secondly, to Jesus Christ; and that it described Him as "descended from David's seed," who stood "before Pontius Pilate," "was raised from the dead," who will some day appear again "to judge the quick and the dead."'

It is admitted that nothing can be said about a third article of the Creed, though there is a reference to the Holy Ghost in the context of 2 Tim. 1:14. This is the weak point in the argument to prove that the Apostles had such a form, which became the parent of both Eastern and Western forms, and was reconstructed either in Rome or Asia Minor, chiefly by omission of any mention of the Davidic descent of Christ. We have to consider the possibility that the Apostolic Creed was a simple confession of Jesus as the Lord.

Important testimony is forthcoming from an unexpected quarter, the eunuch's confession in Acts 8:37: 'I believe that Jesus is the Son of God.' It is true that it is found only in what is known as the Western text (Codex Bezae), and has been thrust into the margin of the Revised Version. But some think that this text represents S. Luke's original draft. And in any case it was known to Irenæus in this form, and may represent the form of Baptismal Confession in the Church of Asia Minor from which Irenæus drew his tradition.

The suggestion is confirmed by the evidence of the Johannine Epistles: *Whosoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God* (1 John 4:15). The aorist tense used in the Greek text points to a single definite act, the confession from which the divine indwelling is dated.

In another passage the context is important, as showing the drift of thought. Jesus has been proved to be the Christ historically by water and blood, His baptism and His crucifixion. He now works in the Church, not only in the water of baptism, but also by cleansing in His blood. Thus S. John leads up to the thought of the Baptismal Confession: *This is the victory that overcame the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* (1 John 5:5). Similar evidence may be gathered from the Epistle to the Hebrews: *Having therefore a great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession* (Heb. 4:14). I regard these texts as proving conclusively that the earliest creed of the Church was this simple statement: 'I believe that Jesus is the Lord (or the Son of God).' Belief in the Person of Christ leads on to belief in the words of Christ. The later creed has been made by expansion of this form in combination with the Baptismal Formula: *In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. 28:19).

Some writers maintain that the original form of the Baptismal Formula also was Christological and not Trinitarian, *in the name of Jesus (or the Lord Jesus)*. They appeal to the following passages: Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5; Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27. On the other hand, all these references to baptism in (or into) the name of the Lord Jesus may refer, not to the Baptismal Formula, but either to the confession made by the baptized, or to the new relationship into which they were brought on becoming 'members of Christ.'

§ 2. THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Equally disappointing is the *Didache*, a Jewish manual edited by a Christian writer, which, however, quotes (c. 7) the Baptismal Formula, and side by side with it (c. 9) the phrase 'those baptized into the name of the Lord,' where the reference seems clearly to be not to a formula of baptism but to a form of confession, or to the new relationship to the Lord into which the baptized are brought.

Our conclusion is that the Apostles' Creed did not exist in Apostolic times, though the substance of its teaching was primitive. The Ignatian epistles prove that instruction was given in Antioch on many points characteristic of the teaching of the developed creed, the miraculous birth, the crucifixion, the resurrection. We also find mention of *the Catholic Church*, in the primitive sense of the word *catholic* = *universal*, as of the forgiveness of sins and of the hope of resurrection, but the teaching on these points is not connected with faith in the Holy Ghost nor joined in any way with the Christological teaching so as to suggest the existence of a developed creed-form.²

² Burn, A. E. (1914). [*The Apostles' Creed*](#) (Third Edition, pp. 1–22). London: Rivingtons.

The Apostles' Creed

History:

The Apostles' Creed is the profession of the Christian faith handed down from the Apostles via the Holy Spirit to the Church. Praying the Apostles' Creed is in itself an act of faith; it also increases and strengthens it.

The Creed

I believe
in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
He descended into hell;
on 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.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.

Amen.

God the Father

The first divine Person
and the wonderful work
of creation.

God the Son

The second divine Person
and the mystery of His
redemption of men.

God the Holy Spirit

The third divine Person,
the origin and source of
our sanctification.



I BELIEVE

in **GOD** the **FATHER**
ALMIGHTY

{ Maker of heaven and earth And in **JESUS CHRIST**, His only Son, our **LORD** who was conceived by 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.

The third day He rose again from the dead He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I BELIEVE

in the **HOLY SPIRIT**, the
HOLY CHRISTIAN
CHURCH,

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS, THE
FORGIVENESS OF SINS, THE
RESURRECTION OF THE BODY,
AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING.

AMEN



THE APOSTLES' CREED

I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY,
CREATOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,
AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD,
WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT,
BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY, SUFFERED
UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED,
DIED AND WAS BURIED; HE DESCENDED INTO HELL;
ON 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.

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT,
THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH,
THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS,
THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS,
THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY,
AND LIFE EVERLASTING.
AMEN.



ON
CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO HELL,
AND
THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.
A
SERMON
ON
1 PETER 3:18, 19, 20
BY SAMUEL LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

1 PETER, 3:18, 19, 20

—Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the Spirits in Prison, Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited, in the days of Noah.—

In the first rudiments of our Christian Faith, comprised in the Apostles' Creed, which we are made to get by heart in our earliest infancy, we are taught to believe that "our Lord Jesus Christ descended into Hell:" and this belief is solemnly professed, by every member of the congregation, when that creed is repeated in the daily service of the church. And it seemed of so much importance, that it should be distinctly acknowledged by the Church of England, when we separated from the Roman communion; that our Reformers thought proper to make it by itself the subject of one of the Articles of Religion. They were aware, that upon the fact of our Lord's descent into hell, the church of Rome pretended to build her doctrine of purgatory; which they justly esteemed one of her worst corruptions. But, apprehensive that the zeal of reformation might, in this as in some other instances, carry men too far, and induce them to reject a most important truth, on which a dangerous error had been once ingrafted; to prevent this intemperance of reform, they assert in the 3d article of the 39, "That as Christ died for us and was buried, so it is to be believed, "that he went down into Hell."

The terms, in which they state the proposition, imply, that Christ's going down into Hell is a matter of no less importance, to be believed, than that he died upon the cross for men; is no less a plain matter of fact, in the history of our Lord's life and death, than the burial of his dead body. It should seem, that what is thus taught, among the first things which children learn, should be among the plainest. That what is thus laid down, as a matter of the same necessity to be believed as our Lord's passion and atonement, should be among the least disputed. That what every christian is required to acknowledge, as his own belief, in the daily assemblies of the faithful, should little need either explanation or proof, to any that have been instructed in the very first principles only of the doctrine of Christ. But so it is, that what the sagacity of our reformers foresaw, the precaution, which they used, has not prevented. The truth itself has been brought into discredit by the errors, with which it has been adulterated. And such has been the industry of modern refinement, and unfortunately so great has been its success; that doubts have been raised about the sense of this plain article of our creed by some, and by others about the truth and authenticity of it. It will therefore be no unprofitable undertaking, to shew, that the assertion in the Apostles' creed, that "our Lord descended into Hell," is to be taken as a plain matter of fact in the literal meaning of the words—to shew, what proof of this fact we have in holy writ—and lastly to shew, the great use and importance of the fact, as a point of christian doctrine.

First, then, for the sense of the proposition, "He descended into Hell," if we consider the words as they stand in the creed itself, and in connection with what immediately precedes and follows them; they appear evidently to contain a declaration of something, which our Lord performed, some going of our Lord to a place called "Hell," in the interval of time between the burial of his dead body, and his rising to life again on the third day after that interment. For thus speaks the creed of Jesus Christ. "Was crucified, dead, and buried, He "descended into Hell, the third day he rose again from the Dead." It is evident, that the descending into hell is spoken of as an action of our Lord; but as an action performed by him, after he was dead and buried, and before he rose again. In the body our dead Lord, more than any other dead man, could perform no action; for the very notion of death is, that all sensation, and activity, and power of motion of the body, is, in that state of the man, extinguished. This therefore was an act of that part of the man, which continues active after death; that is of the soul separated by death from the body; as the interment must be understood of the body apart from the soul. The dead body could no more go into hell, than the living soul could be laid in the grave. Considering the words therefore, as they stand in the creed as the church now receives it, they seem as little capable of any variety of meaning, and almost as little to require explanation, as the word "buried." That word describes not more plainly, to the apprehensions of all men, what was done with the inanimate body of our crucified Lord; than **these words declare what was done by his rational soul, in its intermediate state.**

The only question, that can possibly arise to a plain man's understanding, is, Where or What the place may be, which is here called Hell, to which, it is said, our Lord, in the state of death, descended? It is evident, that this must be some place below the surface of the earth. For it is said that he "descended," that is, he went down to it. Our Lord's death took place upon the surface of the earth, where the human race inhabit. That therefore, and none higher, is the place from which he descended: of consequence the place, to which he went by descent, was below it.

And it is with relation to these parts below the surface, that his rising to life, on the third day, must be understood. This was only a return from the nether regions to the realms of life and day, from which he had descended: not his ascension into Heaven, which was a subsequent event, and makes a distinct article in the Creed.

But although the Hell, to which our Lord descended, was indeed below, as the word descent implies; it is by no means to be understood of the place of Torment. This is a point which requires elucidation, to prevent a mistake into which the unlearned easily might fall. The word "Hell" is so often applied in common speech, and in the English translation of the New Testament, to the place of torment, that the genuine meaning of the word, in which however it is used in many passages of the English Bible, is almost forgotten; and the common people never hear of Hell, but their thoughts are carried to that dismal place, "where the fallen angels are kept in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." **But the word, in its natural import, signifies only that invisible place, which is the appointed habitation of departed souls, in the interval between death and the general resurrection.**

That such a place must be, is indisputable. For when man dieth, his soul dieth not; but returneth unto him that gave it, to be disposed of at his will and pleasure; which is clearly implied in that admonition of our Savior, "Fear not them which kill the body, but cannot kill the soul." But the soul, existing after death and separated from the body, though of a nature immaterial, must be in some place. For however metaphysicians may talk of place, as one of the adjuncts of body, as if nothing but gross sensible body could be limited to a place; to exist without relation to place, seems to be one of the incommunicable perfections of the Divine Being; and it is hardly to be conceived, that any created spirit, of however high an order, can be without locality: or without such determination of its existence at any given time to some certain place, that it shall be true to say of it, "Here it is, and not elsewhere." That such at least is the condition of the human soul, were it seasonable to go into so abstruse a disquisition, might be proved, I think, indisputably from Holy Writ. Assuming therefore that every departed soul has its place of residence, it would be reasonable to suppose, if revelation were silent on the subject, that a common mansion is provided for them all, their nature being similar; since we see, throughout all nature, creatures of the same fort placed together in the same element. But revelation is not silent. The sacred writers of the Old Testament speak of such a common mansion in the inner parts of the earth: and we find the same opinion so general among the heathen writers of antiquity; that it is more probable, that it had its rise in the earliest patriarchal revelations, than in the imaginations of man, or in poetical fiction. The notion is confirmed by the language of the writers of the New Testament; with this additional circumstance, that they divide this central mansion of the dead into two distinct regions, for the separate lodging of the souls of the righteous and the reprobate. In this too they have the concurrence of the earliest heathen poets; who placed the good and the bad in separate divisions of the central region. The name which the Hebrew writers gave to this mansion of departed souls (without regard to any such division) expresses only that it is a place unknown, about which all are curious and inquisitive. The writers of the New Testament adopted the name, which the earliest Greek writers had given it, which describes it by the single property of invisibility. But for the place of torment by itself they had quite another appellation.

The English word “hell,” in its primary and natural meaning, signifies nothing more than “the unseen and covered place;” and is properly used, both in the Old and the New Testament, to render the Hebrew word in the one, and the Greek word in the other, which denote the invisible mansion of disembodied souls, without any reference to suffering. But being used also in the translation of the New Testament for that other word, which properly denotes the place of torment; the good sense of the word, if we may so call it, is unfortunately forgotten, and the common people know of no other hell but that of the burning lake.

This certainly was *not* the hell to which the soul of Christ descended. He descended to hell properly so called, to the invisible mansion of departed spirits, and to that part of it, where the souls of the faithful, when they are delivered from the burthen of the flesh, are in joy and felicity. That he should go to this place was a necessary branch of the general scheme and project of redemption; which required, that the Divine Word should take our nature upon him, and fulfil the entire condition of humanity, in every period and stage of man’s existence; from the commencement of life, in the mother’s womb, to the extinction and the renovation of it. The same wonderful scheme of humiliation, which required that the Son should be conceived, and born, and put to death; made it equally necessary, that his soul, in its intermediate state, should be gathered to the souls of the departed saints.

That the invisible place of their residence is the Hell, to which our Lord descended, is evident from the terms of his own promise to the repentant thief upon the cross: **“Verily I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in “paradise.” Paradise was certainly some place, where our Lord was to be on the very day, on which he suffered; and where the companion of his sufferings was to be with him.** It was not Heaven—for to Heaven our Lord after his death ascended not, till after his resurrection; as appears from his own words to Mary Magdalen. He was not therefore in heaven on the day of the crucifixion; and where *be* was not, the thief could not be with him. **It was no place of torment; for to any such place the name of paradise never was applied.** It could be no other, than that region of repose and rest, where the souls of the righteous abide in joyful hope of the consummation of their bliss. And upon this single text we might safely rest the proof of this article of our Creed, in the sense in which we explain it; a sense so plain and prominent in the bare words, to everyone who is not misled by the popular misapplication of the word Hell; that it never would have been set aside, to make room for expositions of more refinement, much less would the authenticity of the article ever even have been questioned, but for the countenance which it was supposed to give to the doctrine of purgatory, as taught in the Church of Rome; with which however it has not even a remote connection. Time will not permit me to enter into a particular examination of the different interpretations of this article, which have been attempted by those, who have not gone the length of proposing to expunge it from the Creed; because they were well aware, that although it is not to be found in any copy of the Creed, now extant, of an earlier date than the latter end of the fourth century; **yet that Christ, in some sense or other, descended into Hell, was the unanimous belief of the Christian Church from the earliest ages.**

Unless we would admit the extravagant assertion, as to me it seems, of the venerable Calvin, that our blessed Lord actually went down to the place of torment, and there sustained, horrible to think or mention, the pains of a reprobate soul in punishment. A notion evidently confuted by our Lord's own description of the place, where the companion of his sufferings on the cross was to be with him, on the very day of the crucifixion. This sense being thus confuted, I say the personal descent of our Lord to that region, where the souls of the righteous rest in hope, is the only literal interpretation, which the words of the article will bear; and that any figurative interpretation of the words of a Creed, or formulary of faith, are inadmissible.

This proof rests, I think, principally upon three texts of scripture, in addition to that which I have already mentioned, as affording by itself ample confirmation of the truth of the proposition; namely, our Lord's promise to the penitent thief upon the cross. But there are three other texts, which conspire with this to put the matter out of doubt. The first is that text of the Psalmist, which was alledged by St. Peter in his first sermon on the day of Pentecost, as a prophecy concerning Christ, verified in his resurrection from the dead, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." The apostle having recited these words of the Psalmist, says, they were not spoken by David of himself, but that David, being a prophet, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that *his* soul was not left in hell, neither did *his* flesh see corruption. From this text, if there were no other, the article, in the sense in which we have explained it, is clearly and infallibly deduced. For if the soul of Christ were not left in hell *at* his resurrection; then, it *was* in hell *before* his resurrection. But it was not there either before his death, or after his resurrection; for that never was imagined. Therefore it descended into hell after his death, and before his resurrection. For as his flesh, by virtue of the Divine promise, saw no corruption, although it was in the grave, the place of corruption, where it remained until his resurrection; so his soul, which, by virtue of the like promise, was not left in hell, was *in* that hell, where it was not *left*, until the time came for its re-union to the body for the accomplishment of the resurrection. Hence it is so clearly evinced, that the soul of Christ was in the place called hell, "that none but an infidel," faith St. Augustine, "can deny it."

A third scripture, which goes to the proof of the same fact, is, that very remarkable passage in the third chapter of St. Peter's first epistle, which I have chosen for my text. I might mention as a fourth, another passage in the following chapter of the same epistle, which alludes to the same event; but not, I think, with equal certainty: for the sense of that following passage is indeed dependant upon this; insomuch that any figurative interpretation, which would invalidate the argument we shall deduce from this first passage, would in equal degree affect the second: and no proof can be drawn from that of Christ's descent into Hell, if none can be previously found in the words of my text.

But in them, taken in their most literal and obvious meaning, we find not only a distinct assertion of the fact, that "Christ descended into Hell" in his disembodied spirit, but moreover a declaration of the business, upon which he went thither; or in which, at least, his soul was employed while it was there: "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient." The interpretation of this whole passage turns upon the expression "Spirits in prison;" the sense of which I shall first, therefore, endeavour to ascertain, as the key to the meaning of the whole.

It is hardly necessary to mention, that “Spirits” here can signify no other spirits than the souls of men. For we read not of any preaching of Christ to any other race of beings than mankind. The apostle’s assertion, therefore, is this; that Christ “went and preached to souls of men in prison.” The invisible mansion of departed spirits, though certainly not a place of penal confinement to the good, is nevertheless, in some respects, a prison. It is a place of seclusion from the external world; a place of unfinished happiness, consisting in rest, security, and hope, more than enjoyment. It is a place, which the souls of men never would have entered, had not sin introduced death; and from which there is no exit by any natural means, for those who once have entered. The deliverance of the Saints from it is to be effected by our Lord’s power. It is described in the old Latin language, as a place enclosed within an impassable sense; and, in the poetical parts of scripture, it is represented as secured by gates of brass, which our Lord is to batter down; and barricaded with huge massive iron bars, which he is to cut in sunder. As a place of consinement, therefore, though not of punishment, it may well be called a prison. The original word, however, in this text of the apostle, imports not of necessity so much as this; but merely a place of safe-keeping: for so **this passage might be rendered with great exactness. “He went and preached to the spirits in safe-keeping.”** And the invisible mansion of departed souls is to the righteous a place of safe-keeping, where they are preserved under the shadow of God’s right hand, as their condition sometimes is described in scripture, till the season shall arrive for their advancement to their future glory; as the souls of the wicked, on the other hand, are reserved, in the other division of the same place, unto the judgement of the great day. Now if Christ went and preached to souls of men thus in prison, or in safe-keeping; surely, he went to the prison of those souls, or to the place of their custody. And what place that should be, but the Hell of the Apostles’ Creed to which our Lord descended, I have not yet met with the critic that could explain. So clearly does this text affirm the fact of Christ’s descent into Hell.

But this is not all: it agrees with the Apostle’s Creed in the time of this event; that it was in the interval between our Lord’s death and resurrection... For the apostle affirms, that it was in his spirit, *i.e.* in his disembodied soul, that Christ went and preached to those souls in safe custody. If the word “flesh” denote, as it most evidently does, the part in which death took effect upon him; “spirit” must, denote the part in which life was preserved in him, *i.e.* his own soul. And the word “quicken” is often applied to signify, not the resuscitation of life extinguished, but the preservation and continuance of life subsisting. The exact rendering, therefore, of the apostle’s words would be, “being put to death in the flesh, but quick in the spirit;” *i.e.* surviving in his soul the stroke of death, which his body had sustained, “by which,” rather in “which,” that is, in which surviving soul, he went and preached to the souls of men in prison, or in safe-keeping.

Those, in later times, who have improved upon the hint of figurating this passage, have succeeded no better than they, who have made the like attempt upon the article of our Lord’s descent in the Creed. They tell us, that, by the souls in prison, are to be understood the gentile world in bondage and captivity to sin and satan, and held in the chains of their own lusts. And for confirmation of this, they refer to those passages of the prophet Isaiah in which it is predicted of Christ, “that he is to bring the prisoners out of prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house—That he is to say to the prisoners, go forth—That he is to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that are bound.”

The souls in custody, to whom our Savior went, in his disembodied soul, and preached, were those “which sometime were disobedient.” The expression “sometime were,” or “one while had been” disobedient, implies that they were recovered however from that disobedience, and before their death had been brought to repentance and saith in the Redeemer to come. To such souls he went and preached. But what did he preach to departed souls, and what could be the end of his preaching? Certainly, he preached neither repentance nor faith; for the preaching of either comes too late to the departed soul. These souls had believed and repented, or they had not been in that part of the nether regions, which the soul of the Redeemer visited. Nor was the end of his preaching any liberation of them from we know not what purgatorial pains, of which the Scriptures give not the slightest intimation. But if he went to proclaim to them (and to proclaim or publish is the true sense of the word, to preach) the glad tidings, that he had actually offered the sacrifice of their redemption, and was about to appear before the Father as their intercessor, in the merit of his own blood; this was a preaching fit to be addressed to departed souls, and would give new animation and assurance to their hope of the consummation, in due season, of their bliss; and this, it may be presumed, was the end of his preaching.

But the great difficulty in the description of the souls, to whom this preaching for this purpose was addressed, is this; that they were souls of some of the antediluvian race. Not that it at all startles me, to find antediluvian souls in safe-keeping for final salvation. On the contrary, I should find it very difficult to believe (unless I were to read it somewhere in the Bible), that of the millions that perished in the general deluge, all died hardened in impenitence and unbelief; insomuch that not one of that race could be an object of future mercy, beside the eight persons who were miraculously saved in the ark, for the purpose of repopling the depopulated earth. Nothing in the general plan of God’s dealings with mankind, as revealed in Scripture, makes it necessary to suppose, that, of the antediluvian race, who might repent upon Noah’s preaching, more would be saved from the temporal judgement, than the purpose of a gradual repopulation of the world demanded; or to suppose, on the other hand, that all, who perished in the flood, are to perish everlastingly in the lake of fire. To this I can only answer, that I think I have observed, in some parts of Scripture, an anxiety, if the expression may be allowed, of the sacred writers to convey distinct intimations, that the antediluvian race is not uninterested in the redemption, and the final retribution. It is for this purpose, as I conceive, that, in the description of the general resurrection, in the visions of the Apocalypse, it is mentioned, with a particular emphasis, that the “SEA gave up the dead that were in it;” which I cannot be content to understand of the few persons, few in comparison of the total of mankind, lost at different times by shipwreck; a poor circumstance to find a place in the midst of the magnificent images, which surround it; but of the myriads who perished in the general deluge, and found their tomb in the waters of that raging ocean.³

³ Roffens, S. (1804). [*Hosea Translated from the Hebrew with Notes Explanatory and Critical and a Sermon on Christ’s Descent into Hell*](#) (Second Edition, pp. 1–18). London: J. Hatchard; J. Robson; F. C. and J. Rivington; T. Becket; Nichols and Son.

Preaching to the Spirits in Prison

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

•

Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water (1 Peter 3:18-20).

This difficult passage begins by affirming that Christ died in order to provide the benefits of salvation to unrighteous people. The apostle states that the Lord was put to death in the flesh (his crucifixion), but that he was made alive in the spirit.

What is the meaning of this latter expression? It could mean that his spirit continued to be vitalized with life—even after the death of his body; or else it may indicate that Jesus was made alive again when his spirit re-entered his body at the time of his resurrection from the dead (cf. Romans 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:16).

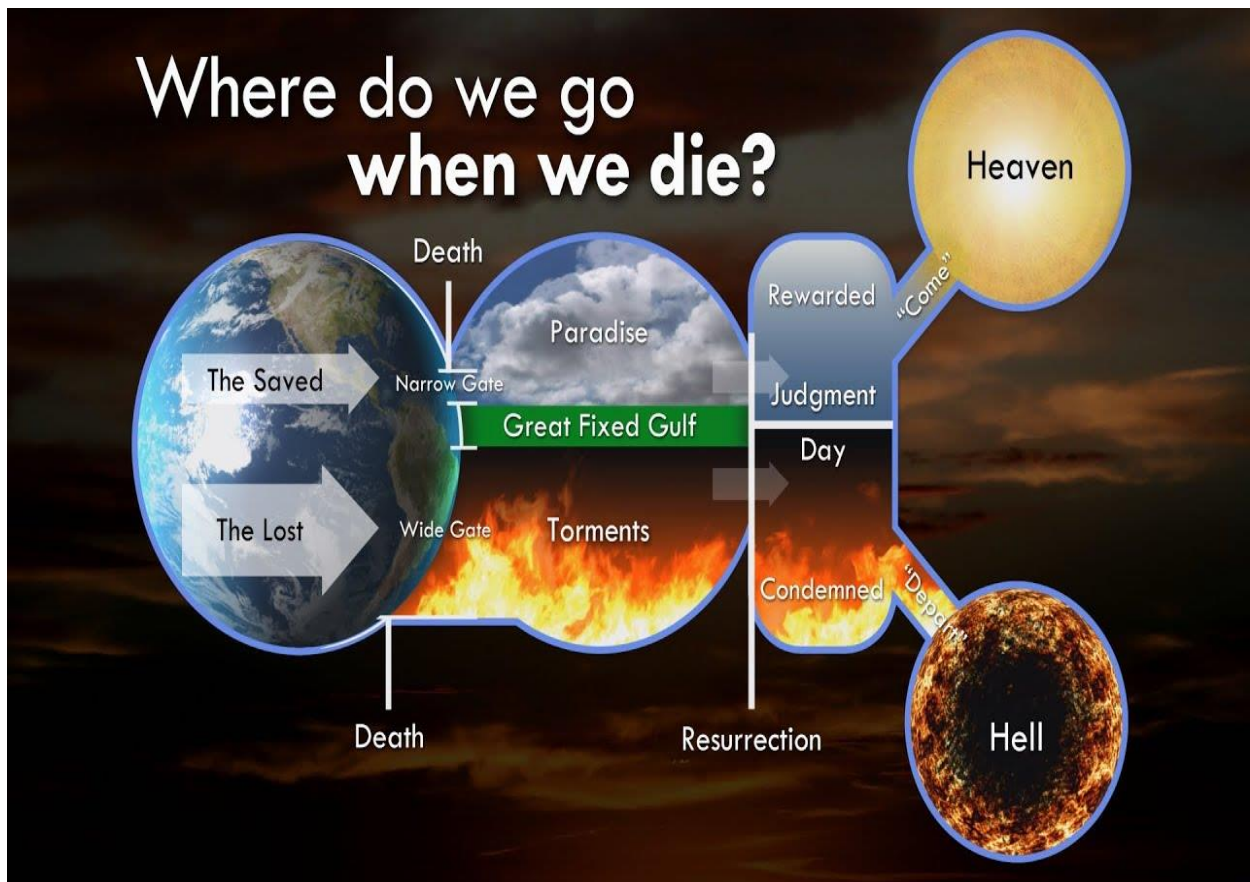
The apostle then says, “in which” (i.e., in his spirit), Christ went and preached unto the “spirits in prison” that were disobedient in the days of Noah.

Some people believe this passage teaches that during the three days his body was in the tomb, Jesus went into the spirit-world of the imprisoned lost. At that time, according to this theory, the Lord preached the gospel to those who died lost during the time of Noah’s flood.

The passage simply cannot mean this—and for the following reasons:

The Bible clearly teaches that following death, there comes judgment (Hebrews 9:27). After one leaves this earth, there is no plan of salvation for him. The spiritual condition in which a person dies (prepared or unprepared) is that which he will possess at the time of the general resurrection (cf. Matthew 25:1-12). There is absolutely no evidence that there is a second chance for redemption following death.

According to Christ's instruction in the narrative regarding the rich man and Lazarus, within the spirit-world (called Hades in the American Standard Version) there is a great gulf "fixed" between the place where evil people abide and the state where good people exist (see Luke 16:26).



The verb “fixed,” in the Greek Testament, is a perfect tense form, suggesting that the gulf is forever fixed. There can never be any crossing. A. T. Robertson called it a “permanent chasm” (1931, 223). A. B. Bruce said the “location is fixed and final” (1956, 589). It thus would hardly have accomplished anything for the Lord to have preached to those in a state of punishment, tantalizing them with the hope of salvation, when they had no chance of entering Paradise.

What, then, does 1 Peter 3:18 teach?

The passage affirms that Jesus Christ, “in the [his] spirit” (not in the flesh), during the days of Noah, proclaimed God’s truth to the evil, pre-flood generation. How did the Lord do that? He was operating **through Noah**, a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5).

Observe that in this same letter Peter stated that the “Spirit of Christ” was in the Old Testament prophets as they declared Heaven’s message (1:11). This is a key verse in explaining 1 Peter 3:18. When Christ, through Noah, preached to those evil people, they were alive and on the earth. But at the time Peter wrote his letter, they had long been dead, and their spirits were suffering in the prison of hell (known as Tartarus – see 2 Peter 2:4, ASV fn).

In order to help clarify the meaning of this difficult verse, we might suggest the following paraphrase:

Christ was made alive in the spirit; in which, during the days of Noah, he preached to evil people, whose spirits are now in the prison of Tartarus (punishment).

This type of language reflects a common figure of speech found in the Bible. It is known as **prolepsis**. It involves bringing two time-frames together into one expression. Here is a more current example. If one were to say, “President Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky,” he would be combining two time eras into a single sentence. When he was born, Lincoln was not president, but he later became such. However, by this common mode of expression, one associates a current fact with an antecedent event.

So, it is with reference to 1 Peter 3:18. The preaching was done by Christ through Noah in ancient times; the spirits are currently in a place of confinement.

This is a very reasonable interpretation of this verse, and it conforms to what we know of the state of the dead as elsewhere described in the Holy Bible. No meaning can be imposed upon a difficult text which makes it conflict with other clear passages.

Do Men Have A Second Chance?

1 Peter 3:18–21; 4:6

Clinton D. Hamilton

WHETHER MEN HAVE A SECOND CHANCE seems to hold a fascination for some religious people. Likewise, the condition of men after death in relation to a supposed second chance receives attention. Passages such as 1 Peter 3:18–21 and 4:6 are cited as evidence for a second chance after death.

These passages have been variously interpreted. Meanings attributed to them are diverse. Some are evidently contradictory. Some also are contradictory to plain statements of other Scriptures. Obviously, some interpretations are dictated by theological dogmas and denominational doctrines concerning the state of the departed spirits and the mission of Jesus Christ. When and why did Christ go and preach to spirits in prison? Will some men have a second chance?

The point at issue in this article is when and where did Christ preach. Did He preach after His death and prior to His resurrection? Did He preach the gospel to people? Were they given a second chance? Did He go to purgatory? If He went to purgatory, what did He accomplish? Did He preach during the life of the departed men who are at the time of Peter's writing in prison? If in prison, what is their state? These questions put before our minds the quandary of the passages.

Explanations of the passages fall into three major thrusts: (1) after His death and in His disembodied state, Christ preached the gospel to disembodied men who were disobedient in the days of Noah; (2) Christ after His death and before His resurrection went to purgatory to assist men in shortening their time in purgatory; (3) Christ preached to men in Noah's day by the spirit by which He was made alive but these men at the time Peter wrote are disembodied and in prison.

My view is according to the third thrust. Christ preached to men during their lives in the days of Noah. These men were then disobedient but are at the time Peter writes disembodied and watched or kept in prison (1 Peter 3:18–21). Men now dead had the gospel preached to them while they lived and were judged by men as unfit; but now (at Peter's writing) they are dead (1 Peter 4:6). Why do I hold this view?

Any passage must be understood in its context, by the language which expresses it, and in harmony with plain statements of other passages relevant to the same issue. Peter's first letter deals with suffering. The passages under discussion are in this context. Christ, the righteous, died for sinners, the unrighteous (1 Peter 3:18). We should suffer for doing right, rather than wrong (verse 17). Christ was put to death in the flesh but was made alive in the spirit (verse 18). This is the same spirit by which He went and preached to spirits in prison (verse 19). These were disobedient when God's patience waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark (verse 20). Christ will judge both the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:5). Because of this, the gospel was preached to men while alive but who are now dead (disembodied) that they might be judged by men in the flesh just as Christ was, but that they might live in the spirit according to God (4:6).

The above contextual paraphrase appears accurate for a number of reasons. The language is consistent with this view. *Preached* is from *kerusso*, to declare, herald, proclaim, or publish. What is declared or proclaimed is not in the word itself. That must be determined by the context. Jesus in the spirit preached to “spirits in prison,” *en phulake pneumasin*. These are disembodied for so is the meaning of *pneumasin*. These same persons were disobedient when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark.

To argue that Jesus preached the gospel to men in hades after His death is to read into the passage (eisigesis, not exegesis), not exegete it. Made alive by the spirit after His death, Jesus by the same spirit preached. But when? Other passages help us to understand this.

Euangelizo means to preach the good news but *kerusso* only means to proclaim or declare. God said His Spirit would not always strive with men but his days upon the earth would be 120 years (Genesis 6:3). Noah was a preacher (*keruka*) of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). Holy men of old spoke, being moved or borne by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). Thus preaching to men who disobeyed his message, Noah continued to prepare the ark that would save him and his family from the flood. This was over a period of 120 years (Genesis 6:3).

At the time Peter wrote his epistle, these people were in prison. *Phulake*, prison, means to be watched or guarded, kept in ward, or caged. Those lost are kept in chains of darkness in hades in which condition they are reserved to the judgment of the great day (see 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The ones under consideration in 1 Peter 3:19 were in such a condition because they were disobedient to Noah’s preaching prior to the flood.

In 1 Peter 4:6, men now dead had the gospel preached to them while alive that in life they might be judged according to men in the flesh but made alive according to God in the spirit. All is not lost. As they suffer, they are to remember the example of Christ and take heart. Ultimately they will triumph as He did. The preaching could not be to them after death, for they would not have been judged by men according to the flesh.

Men have no second chance. It is appointed once to die, then comes judgment (Hebrews 9:27). But one appears before Christ in judgment to receive the things done in the body (2 Corinthians 5:10). Since it is according to that done in the body, there is no second chance.

Purgatory, according to Catholic doctrine, is where those go who have a hindrance to full fellowship with God and who need to be purged or purified from those hindrances prior to going to heaven. Those in purgatory may have been forgiven of mortal (breaks fellowship with God) or venial (hinders or impedes but does not break fellowship with God) sins but have not yet paid their temporal (time) payments for these sins, or they may have died guilty of venial sins. Disobedience or incredulity (unbelief) in the Catholic Douay-Rheims version (1 Peter 3:19) is a mortal sin. Consequently, 1 Peter 3:19 cannot refer to purgatory even according to Catholic doctrine because these individuals would be in hell and not purgatory.

It is my conviction that the interpretation defended in this article is consistent with the text, the context, and other passages relevant to the points at issue.

7220 N.W. 5th Court, Plantation, FL 33317⁴

⁴ Hamilton, C. D. (1985). [Do Men Have a Second Chance?: 1 Peter 3:18–21; 4:6](#). (B. Lewis, Ed.) *Christianity Magazine*, 2(4), 20.

THE HELL HARROWING

- “The descent motif common to most mythologies about hell also usually contains an element of “harrowing,” or distressing, of hell. This is where a hero or savior has to go to hell and shut it down, or defeat its ruler or bring somebody back... This is what the line in the Apostle’s Creed is about ‘He descended into Hell, the third day he arose again from the dead.’ ...After Jesus had been crucified he went to hell – not to suffer, but to battle with the Devil, whom he defeated. He chained up Satan and cast him into a fiery pit where he was to stay for a thousand years. As well as closing down hell, Jesus rescued Adam & other ancient souls...” Craze, Hell

THE HELL HARROWING

- According to tradition, Jesus closed hell for a thousand years. However, this caused problems for theologians and for believers. If hell is closed what happens to the souls of the wicked? - “The early Christians were obligated to introduce the concept of a sort of waiting room, where souls would stay for the thousand years until hell was open again. They found a ready-made idea – limbo – that they freely borrowed from the Romans, who had borrowed it from the Greeks. This was all fine until the year 1000 AD, when Satan’s banishment was supposed to end... But nothing happened. The theologians set to work and said that Satan was now out and about in the world – tempting and tormenting – and that hell was still closed but that there was another place where sinners would be punished. This was purgatory. It was a cross between limbo and hell. But if Satan was absent, who was to run it? Jesus’ mother, the Virgin Mary, was called back from heaven, where she had been asleep (the Dormition). She was given the keys of to look after, & the running of purgatory. She does not administer any punishments – in fact, her main job seems to be protecting the souls of the sinners from the wrath of her son.”

- Richard Craze, Hell, pages 44, 45

- **EARLY ERROR BUILT ON THREE FALSE ASSUMPTIONS**

- #1 Assumption: Paul Convert Clement Received As Apostle

- #2 Assumption: Origen Explains Trinity Concept Sequential

- **#3 Assumption: Irenaeus Portrays Jesus Mother @Anti-Eve**

READ – Romans 5: 12 – 21 & 1st Corinthians 15: 20 -24, 45 - 48

OVERVIEW: APOSTLE TO APOSTATE PATTERN

- **EARLY ERROR BUILT ON THREE FALSE ASSUMPTIONS**

- #1 Assumption: Paul Convert Clement Received As Apostle

- **#2 Assumption: Origen Explains Trinity Concept Sequential**

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NICENE CREED

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
The only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:*

*by the power of the Holy Spirit
he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man.*

*For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered, died, and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in fulfillment of the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

*He will come again in glory to judge the living
and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.. Amen*

Nicene Creed (Scriptural reference edition)

We believe in one God, (Mark 12:29, 12:32, Ephesians 4:6) **the Father, the almighty**, (2 Corinthians 6:18)
maker of heaven and earth, (Genesis 1:1, Revelation 4:11) **of all that is seen and unseen**. (Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 11:3)

We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 4:5) **the only Son of God**, (John 3:16)
eternally begotten of the Father. (Colossians 1:15, 1:17)

God from God (John 1:1-2), **Light from Light**, (John 1:4, 1:9, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Hebrews 1:3)

true God from true God, (1 John 5:20) **begotten, not made** (John 1:18), **of one being with the Father** (cf. 1 John 1:5 & John 1:4, 1:9).

Through him all things were made (John 1:3, 1:10, Colossians 1:16, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Romans 11:36, Hebrews 1:10).

For us and for our salvation (Matthew 1:21, 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Colossians 1:13-14) **he came down from heaven**, (John 3:13, 3:31, 6:38)
by the power of the Holy Spirit became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, (Luke 1:34-35), **and was made man** (John 1:14, Heb 2:14).

For our sake he was crucified (1 Peter 2:24) **under Pontius Pilate** (Mark 15:15),

he suffered death (Matthew 27:50) **and was buried**. (Matthew 27:59-60)

He rose again on the third day (Mark 9:31, 16:9, Acts 10:40)

in accordance with the Scriptures (Luke 24:45-46, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9)

and is seated at the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19, Luke 22:69).

He will come again in glory (Mark 13:26, John 14:3, 1 Thessalonians 4:17)

to judge the living and the dead (Matthew 16:27, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 2 Timothy 4:1, 1 Peter 4:5)

and his kingdom will have no end (Hebrews 1:8, 2 Peter 1:11).

We believe in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), **the Lord, the giver of life**, (John 6:63, 2 Corinthians 3:6)

who proceeds from the Father (John 15:26) **and the Son** (John 16:7),

with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, (2 Corinthians 3:8)

who has spoken through the prophets (1 Peter 1:10-11, Ephesians 3:5).

We believe in one (Eph 4:4), **holy** (Eph 1:4, 5:27), **catholic** (Matt 28:19, Acts 1:8) **and apostolic** (Eph 2:20) **Church** (Matt 16:18, Rom 12:4-5, 1 Cor 10:17).

We acknowledge one baptism (Ephesians 4:5, Galatians 3:27, 1 Corinthians 12:13) **for the forgiveness of sins** (Colossians 2:12-13, Acts 22:16).

We look for the resurrection of the dead (Romans 6:4-5, 1 Thessalonians 4:16)

and the life of the world to come (2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1). **Amen.**

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD THE HOLY GHOST

The Doctrine in the Third and Fourth Centuries

A striking exposition of the doctrine is found in Origen's great work *On first Principles*. He writes: 'The Apostles related that the Holy Spirit was associated in honor and dignity with the Father and the Son. But in His case it is not clearly distinguished whether He is to be regarded as generate or ingenerate, or also as a Son of God or not; for there are points which have to be enquired into out of sacred Scripture according to the best of our ability, and which demand careful investigation. And that this Spirit inspired each one of the saints, whether prophets or apostles; and that there was not one Spirit in the men of the old dispensation and another in those who were inspired at the advent of Christ, is most clearly taught throughout the churches.' And in the following sentence he clearly teaches the coeternity of the Holy Spirit: 'The Holy Spirit would never be reckoned in the unity of the Trinity, *i.e.* along with the unchangeable Father and His Son, unless He had always been the Holy Spirit.'

But some of his expressions led to much misunderstanding, as when he is speaking of the *historical revelation* of God, and teaches as an inference from the Fourth Gospel 'that the Spirit owes His origin to the medium of the Son, and that therefore He is in the order of the divine life inferior to the Son.' He is not here dealing with the *inner being* of the Godhead, on which he teaches: 'Nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less.'

The misadventures of Origen's speculations explain to us the acute fear which S. Cyril of Jerusalem expresses in his Catechetical lectures: 'We would say somewhat concerning the Holy Ghost; not to declare His substance with exactness, for that were impossible.'

It seems as though when the full glory of the truth, revealed and as yet only partially understood, dawned upon these great teachers, their style gained an added glow and warmth, as in the following passage from S. Basil:—

'Who on hearing the titles of the Spirit, does not experience an elevation of soul and rise in thought to the supreme nature? For He is called the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of Truth, who proceedeth from the Father, the Upright Spirit, the Princely Spirit. Holy Spirit is his peculiar and distinguishing appellation, and this is a name pre-eminently adapted to what is incorporeal, purely immaterial, and indivisible. Accordingly, our Lord, when teaching the woman who thought of a local worship of God that the incorporeal was incomprehensible, says, God is a Spirit.'

A crisis was reached with the deposition of Macedonius, Bishop of Constantinople, who denied the Divinity of the Spirit. The Council of Constantinople, in accepting the revised Creed of Jerusalem, gave prominence to the truth that the Spirit should be worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son. The controversy smouldered on. A graphic picture of it is given in the Catechetical lectures of Niceta of Remesiana, who accuses the Macedonians of raising interminable questions: 'Of what sort is the Holy Ghost? Whence and how great is He? Has He been born? or has He been made?' They were not content with the plain words of the Lord 'He proceedeth from the Father.' They persisted in misapplying the text 'All things were made by Him' (John 1:3) as if it included the Spirit.

Niceta argued from their admission that S. John was inspired by the Spirit to write the words, therefore the Spirit could not be included among created beings. He quoted other texts to prove that the Spirit is Lord, that He guides into all truth, sanctifies, absolves, regenerates. His attributes include foreknowledge, goodness and omnipresence. He who is confessed with the Father and the Son at baptism should be worshipped with them, not separately as different gods are worshipped by the heathen, but in the Unity of the Trinity.

The Doctrine of the Procession of the Holy Ghost

When the Divinity of the Holy Ghost had thus been openly challenged by the Arians and championed by Church leaders, the way was opened for a new development of teaching. A new aspect of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost came into view, which stimulated thought and provoked controversy. As so often happens, this controversy has turned more upon accidentals than essentials, upon the way in which one view was brought into prominence rather than the impossibility of combining it with its opposite in one common formula.

It was felt that precisely as the Church had learnt through painful experience to emphasise the Scriptural word ‘only begotten’ in relation to the Son, so to indicate the relationship of the Holy Spirit they must teach that He is ‘not made nor created nor begotten but proceeding.’

Niceta is content to repeat the Scriptural words ‘Proceedeth from the Father’; but the question was certain to come up—What is His relationship in this regard to the Son? The quotation which I have given above (p. 85) from S. Athanasius in which He is called ‘the Son’s own image’ shows that the idea of His proceeding from the Father through the Son is not far off. It is one of the lines of thought in which S. Athanasius reveals his sympathy with the modes of thought current in the West.

The difference which afterwards arose between East and West on this subject was due to the fact that they approached the subject from opposite points of view. The Greek Fathers started from the thought of the Eternal Distinctions (Hypostaseis) and reconciled them as best they could with the idea of Divine Unity. They thought of the doctrine of the Trinity as an explanation of the creation, manifested in the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. On the other hand, Western teachers began with the idea of the Trinity as ‘a necessity of the Divine Life—to use a technical term, as immanent, an abiding reality.’ They began from the thought of the coinherence of the Divine Persons, as the Lord taught; ‘*Thou, Father, art in me and I in thee*’ (John 17:21). This led them to the thought that the Spirit must be regarded as proceeding in a sense from the Son, because He is ‘*the Spirit of Jesus*’ (Acts 16:7). When the words ‘And the Son’ had been added to ‘Proceedeth from the Father’ Eastern theologians thought that this would introduce the idea of two fountains (so to speak) of Deity. But this was far from the imagination of the early writers who led men to the edge of the later controversy. Perhaps even now the wound may be healed by use of the more exact phrase ‘Proceedeth from the Father through the Son,’ which safeguards teaching on each side.

S. Hilary of Poitiers, the great ally of S. Athanasius in the West, is bold to speak of the Father and Son as authors of the Spirit who has His being from the Father and through the Son. In his book *On the Trinity*, he writes:—

‘For my own part I think it wrong to discuss the question of His existence. He does exist inasmuch as He is given, received, retained. He is joined with Father and Son in our confession of faith, and cannot be excluded from a true confession of Father and Son.... If any man demand what meaning we attach to this conclusion, he as well as we have read the word of the Apostle: “Because ye are sons of God, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying Abba, Father,” and “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God in whom ye have been sealed.” ’

Such was his answer to Arians and Macedonians. It is the next step in his thought that fixes our attention at the present moment. S. Hilary had no doubt that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and receives from the Son. ‘And I question,’ he goes on, ‘whether it is the same thing to receive from the Son as to proceed from the Father.’ He was evidently inclined to answer yes, but was not prepared to insist on it. His book ends with a prayer in which he speaks of the Spirit as from the Father through the Only-Begotten.

We find the same idea in the writings of Victorinus Afer, the teacher of rhetoric whose conversion to Christianity made so great a stir in Rome a short time before the Conversion of S. Augustine. ‘The Spirit receives of the Father in receiving of the Son. **He is the bond of union between the Father and the Son.**’

For the full development of this teaching we must turn to **S. Augustine, who did more than anyone to mold later Western teaching. Thus, in his work *On the Trinity* he distinguishes between *mission* and *procession***, and asserts a true procession of the Spirit from the Son, quoting S. John 20:22: ‘*He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*’ ‘That bodily breathing was a demonstration by a suitable illustration that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father but also from the Son. We must admit that the Father and the Son are the Principle of the Spirit.’ He boldly faces the objection that Christ speaks only of a procession from the Father: ‘*When the Paraclete is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall bear witness concerning me*’ (John 15:26). ‘He says, “My doctrine is not mine.” It was the Father’s because He was of the Father. Yet it was His, because He and the Father are One. How much rather then must we understand that the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him also when He saith thus—“proceeds from the Father,” that He does not say “He does not proceed from Me.” ’ He is careful to explain that we must not think of the procession from the Son as following the procession from the Father. The Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Father to the Son and proceed from the Son to sanctify the creation, but He proceeds at the same time from both. As Dr. Swete well says, ‘Augustine never asserts his view in the spirit of a controversialist. He is conscious of no conflict of opinion within the Church, his quarrel is only with the Arian and the Macedonian: the *Filioque* is part of his answer to those who denied the Deity of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.’

Similarly Dr. Milligan wrote,

‘As the Spirit of the exalted and glorified Lord, He is not the Third Person of the Trinity in His absolute and metaphysical existence, but that Person as He is mediated through the Son, who is human as well as Divine. It is on this particular aspect of His being that He diffuses Himself through the members of Christ’s body, and abides in them.’

The possibility of agreement with the Eastern Church is shown by the results of a conference which was held at Bonn in 1875, between Easterns, Anglicans, and Old Catholics, when the following terms of union were agreed on.

We accept the teaching of S. John Damascene on the Holy Ghost, as it is expressed in the following paragraphs, in the sense of the teaching of the ancient undivided Church:—

1. The Holy Ghost issues out of the Father as the beginning, the cause, the source of the Godhead.

2. The Holy Ghost does not issue out of the Son, because there is in the Godhead but one beginning, one cause, through which all that is in the Godhead is produced.

3. The Holy Ghost issues out of the Father through the Son.

4. The Holy Ghost is the Image of the Son who is the Image of the Father, issuing out of the Father and resting in the Son as His revealing power.

5. The Holy Ghost is the personal production out of the Father belonging to the Son, but not out of the Son, because He is the Spirit of the mouth of God declaratory of the Word.

6. The Holy Ghost forms the link between the Father and the Son, and is linked to the Father by the Son.

It will be seen that these statements show that there is a very substantial agreement. And this agreement is still closer in the case of those Easterns who hold that it is lawful to believe that the 'procession' and 'shining forth' of the Spirit *through* the Son is from all eternity.⁵

⁵ Burn, A. E. (1909). [*The Nicene Creed*](#). (L. Pullan, Ed.) (pp. 79–92). London: Rivingtons.

From Origen A False Controversy

Chapter 5

AD 496 - AD 1291

ROSE

Origen believed that God the Father, the Christ logos, and the Holy Spirit represent three aspects of the godhead. He thought of them as having a hierarchical relationship; that is, the Father generates the Son, who generates the Holy Spirit. The image he liked to use was an eternal torch, one lighting the other. That effort [book Timaeus] was to reconcile Christian thought with the three realities of Plato.

The Filioque Controversy

Chapter 5

AD 496 - AD 1291

ROSE

- **Eastern Christians recited,** “The Holy Spirit ... proceeds from the Father.”
- **Western Christians recited,** “The Holy Spirit ... proceeds from the Father *and the Son.*”

THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH IS THAT BOTH CHURCHES WERE VERY WRONG. NEITHER SON NOR SPIRIT WERE LIKE ANGELS OF SPECIAL CREATION, & NEITHER PROCEEDED FROM GOD.

Who proceeds from the Father and the Son ...

The Latin word *filioque* simply means “and the Son.” It is a very small phrase that has spawned a very big controversy. One author says,

This short statement has generated more controversy among Christians of the past than any other part of the creed and was one of the causes—at least, one of the explicit causes—of the schism between Catholic and Orthodox Christians.... Its ability to create controversy is the more remarkable, since few Christians today have any idea what it means, or why anyone would care about it.

The phrase did not originate at the Council of Nicea in 325 nor at the corresponding Council of Constantinople in 381, which republished the Nicene formulation. This historical footnote is in some ways the nub of the controversy. The *filioque* seems to have been officially added at the Third Council of Toledo in 589. This council was not an ecumenical council, and thus it did not properly represent the interest of the church as a catholic or universal body. Since the creed belongs to the whole church, no single region (in this case the Latin-speaking regions) or no small part of the church has the right to alter it without the consent of the other regions. Consequently, many Orthodox Christians argue that the phrase has no legitimate standing in the Nicene Creed because it does not have binding authority as coming from an ecumenical council.

It doesn't appear that the council in Spain had anything but noble intentions when they added the phrase. They were fighting false teachings that seemed to remain strong among the Visigoths of that region. One author notes, “It was accepted in good faith as an expression of the Nicene faith and did not become an issue until the time of Charlemagne, almost two centuries later.” When it did arise as a controversy, it was cloaked in all the typical trappings of political maneuvering and intrigue. This of course added to the growing tensions surrounding this tiny but increasingly annoying little phrase.

Charlemagne appears to have made this phrase something of a personal cause. Like Constantine before him, Charlemagne wanted a unified church. He did not appreciate the differences he found between the liturgy of the West and that of the East. Other issues such as the use of icons were swirling around the atmosphere, charging it with all the components of a nasty theological/political thunderstorm. Charlemagne attempted to persuade Leo III to insert the *filioque* in the creed, but he was unsuccessful. Ordering councils and urging bishops to issue proclamations, Charlemagne did his best to force the word upon the Latin and Greek church. Still, it appears that the great emperor's interest in this word had less to do with straining at theological gnats as with forcing liturgical and ecclesiastical uniformity.

Charlemagne died before the controversy was settled. The dispute, though, did not die with Charlemagne. Time did not cure this ill. In fact, the division over this niggling little theological phrase only deepened with time.

The rift was widened with the life and work of a man named Photius, the patriarch of Constantinople, in the late ninth century. He defended the historical supremacy of the original formulation and denounced western ministers who used the *filioque* in their liturgy.

One specific fight broke out as Latin missionaries competed with Greek ministers over the allegiance of a Bulgarian king. The fires of controversy were soon stoked and were burning brightly again. In order to emphasize their differences, it appears that the Latin missionaries pointedly used the *filioque* when they cited the creed in their liturgy. Both sides criticized the other over this scene. Soon the Bishop of Rome, Nicholas, was furious with Photius and both men found themselves issuing mutual denunciations of ignorance and error. The West hurled accusations towards the East, and the East hurled denunciations back towards the West. Theological and personal mudslinging became the norm as this little word constantly sneaked its way into the mix. Rome and Constantinople were growing increasingly apart politically and theologically. For historians, it is very hard to untangle the political from the theological dividing lines, but one thing is certain: the *filioque* kept emerging as a clear point of demarcation between both sides. In the days of Benedict VIII, who was bishop of Rome from 1012–1024, the creed was introduced into the liturgy including the use of the *filioque*. The Emperor Henry II pressured all the Latin churches to use the creed with the *filioque* in public worship. Because there was no controversy or interest in the practice during the Reformation, its survival in the western churches explains why many Protestant churches include the *filioque* as part of the creed. The division between the East and West came to something of an official level in the year 1054 when the patriarchate of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius (1043–1058), disputed the role of the Bishop of Rome, Leo IX (1049–1054). Cerularius directly challenged the bishop of Rome's right to alter the words of an ecumenical creed. Thus, the disagreement was perhaps as closely related to ecclesiastical power as it was to the procession of the Holy Spirit. As their dispute reached a boiling point, each man hurled condemnations at the other. Again the West launched denunciations towards the East, and the East fired excommunications towards the West. In July of 1054, a synod for the church of the East officially condemned the Bishop of Rome, which included a clear repudiation of the *filioque*.

But why is this word important theologically? The word is an attempt to explain the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the other two persons of the Trinity. Does the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father or the Son or both? John's gospel became something of a focus for this controversy. Both sides rushed to quote the gospel, which appeared to muster support for their position. John 15:26–27 in particular was a text of contention: "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning. Here we have the text from which the original creed borrows its language: "... who proceeds from the Father." The original creed does, in fact, essentially quote from this verse. The Father is the person of the Trinity who "sends" the Spirit, not the Son. This would appear to be a clear case. However, the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Son is also defined as being conditioned by and through the work of Jesus. This is what seems to be stated in Acts 2:33: "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear."

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, yet this passage tells us that the gift of the Holy Spirit to the people of God would seem to proceed from the Father and the Son. Thus, both sides were able to marshal evidence from the Bible that seemed to support their position.

The difference would seem to be one of ontology versus economy. Ontology deals with the essence of God as the divine being; economy deals with the actual activity of God as the divine being.

The Spirit does in fact proceed from the Father and the Son regarding His economy or activity in redemption. We read clearly that the Spirit's work is intimately and irrevocably conditioned by and related to the redeeming work of Jesus. One author notes, "It is the Father who sends the Spirit, but the Spirit's coming is conditioned by and is in the most intimate connection with the person of Jesus and the completion of his work in his death and resurrection."

It appears that each expression is not mutually exclusive, and therefore we don't find an explicit contradiction. Each one does, however, express a valid difference in emphasis. The original emphasizes the ontological relationship of the Father to the Spirit, while the *filioque* emphasizes the economical relationship of the Father to the Spirit.

Each position offers a helpful perspective on Trinitarian theology. The French theologian Theo de Regnon has stated, "The Latin theologian says: three persons in one God, whereas the Greek says, one God in three persons." The West emphasized the unity of the divine essence, then from there they struggled to explain how the three persons of the Trinity differ among themselves. The Greeks, on the other hand, took as their point of departure the differentiation of the persons and then they struggled to explain how the persons of the Trinity function together in perfect unity. One can see that an added emphasis is not necessarily a contradiction.

There are far deeper theological and philosophical connections to each side's position, but overall they seem to **reflect more of an emphasis than a contradiction.** Though not a tempest in a teapot, the *filioque* or lack of it should also not delineate between orthodoxy and heresy. It appears that this may be a point of difference that both sides could tolerate without any compromise to principled, trinitarian orthodoxy.

The East, however, does have the historical authority of ecumenical councils on their side. If the church's creeds are to be announced and subsequently developed as a work of the whole church, then only properly constituted ecumenical councils would be legitimate for such pronouncements. Since the Nicene/Constantinopolitan Creed was the work of ecumenical councils, its work should not be changed without similar ecumenical consent. Thus, regarding historical or ecclesiastical arguments, it would seem that the East stands on firmer ground. Still, the point of controversy should remain something of a rarified point of theological difference, not a point of condemnation.⁶

⁶ Jackson, L. C. (2007). [*Faith of our fathers: a study of the Nicene Creed*](#) (pp. 91–96). Moscow, ID: Canon Press.

The Trinity

by [Kyle Butt, M.Div.](#)

Article In Brief.. **GOD**

Based upon the many references to Deity in the Bible, one may correctly conclude that the concept of the Trinity is correct, i.e., that the one God of the Bible exists simultaneously in three personalities—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each partaking of the one divine nature.

Throughout the centuries, the nature of God has been at the center of many heated debates. Entire councils have assembled to discuss whether God is composed of three personalities having one nature, whether Jesus is a part of the Godhead, how the Holy Spirit factors into the equation, and a host of similar questions. The answers to these questions can have far reaching theological and practical consequences. It is the purpose of this article to prove the thesis that the Bible teaches that the Godhead is three personalities—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in one nature.



DEFINITIONS

As in all discussions dealing with a proper understanding of truth, an agreed upon and acceptable, sufficiently precise definition of the major terms must be set out in the beginning.

- Godhead or Divinity: A description of the totality, both of nature and personality, of the supernatural Creator of the world (see Lenski, 1961, p. 98).
- Nature: “The inherent character or basic constitution of a person or thing; essence” (“Nature,” 2015).
- Personality: A recognizable, distinct entity that has mind and desire. As described by *Merriam-Webster*: “The complex of characteristics that distinguishes an individual....The totality of an individual’s behavioral and emotional characteristics; a set of distinctive traits and characteristics” (“Personality,” 2015).

While most words that will be discussed concerning the Trinity, such as “personality,” “nature,” and even “divinity” or “Godhead,” are fairly easy to define, that does not mean the aspects of God that they describe are easy to understand. In fact, the Godhead is so complex and beyond human capability to fully understand, that any attempt to discuss God quickly reveals the limitations of the human mind. We can never fully understand the Godhead. As the apostle Paul so eloquently wrote about God’s revelation of the Gospel: “Oh, the depth and the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out” (Romans 11:33). We should not conclude, however, that nothing can be known of God. Were that the case, to have any discussion about Him, say His name, or even to identify the concept of God, would be impossible for us. On the contrary, while we may not be able to understand fully all that the term “nature” of God entails, and while we may not be able to define the concept of a “personality” so that we comprehend everything about it, we can know enough about the terms “Godhead,” “nature,” and “personality” to say that the Godhead is three personalities in one nature.

THE BASIC ARGUMENT FOR THE TRINITY

The basic argument for the Trinity proceeds as follows:

- Premise one: the Bible teaches that the Godhead is one in nature.
- Premise two: the Bible teaches that God the Father is one personality of the Godhead.
- Premise three: the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is one personality of the Godhead.
- Premise four: the Bible teaches that Jesus the Son is one personality of the Godhead.
- Conclusion: Therefore, God is composed of three personalities in one nature.

THE GODHEAD IS ONE IN NATURE

Various Scriptures demonstrate that the Godhead is one in nature. One of the most well-known passages that relates this truth is Deuteronomy 6:4, which states: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!” A similar passage is found in Ephesians 4:4-6, which reads, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” In addition, Malachi 2:10 says, “Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?” The fact that God is one is clearly stated in the Bible.

The clear statements of God's oneness lead some to deny that God is composed of three personalities. They suggest that if God is one, then He cannot be three in any way; so His oneness excludes the possibility that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all God. As M. Davies wrote: "We have seen how that, throughout the Bible God is only described as being one being.... So it is to the Bible we must turn, and when we do, we do not find any evidence to suggest that God is made up of three beings" (2009). Thus, the critics of the doctrine of the Trinity don't differentiate between the concept of nature and of personality. This idea will be expanded upon in the section dealing with common objections. It is included here simply to set up the argument for God's oneness being in nature, and not personality.

The Bible says that "one God" created us (Malachi 2:10). A closer look, however, at the Creation of man shows that some type of multiplicity was involved. Genesis 1:26-27 states, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. So, God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.'" The Hebrew language used in this passage cannot be definitively used to prove a multiplicity, but it is written in such a way that certainly allows for the one God to have some aspect of multiplicity or plurality. A better understanding of this plurality is gained by looking at the verses in the Bible that discuss the Creation. John 1:1 explains, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." Later in the first chapter of John we learn that the Word "became flesh and dwelt among us." Thus, the Word refers to Jesus, who was with God and was God and created all things along with the Father (John 1:14). We can see, then, that the oneness of the Creator must allow for at least some aspect of God to have a multiplicity of something.

In logical form, we could arrange the argument as follows. There is one God who created man. The concept of oneness either means that nothing about God can have any type of plurality, or that some aspect of God is completely unified **but at least one other aspect of God can have multiplicity to it**. It cannot be the case that nothing about God can have any multiplicity since the Bible gives at least one aspect of God (the Father and the Son) that has multiplicity. Therefore, some aspect of God is completely unified, but at least one aspect of God can have, and has, multiplicity.

Once we determine logically that at least one aspect of God has to be "one" and completely unified without multiplicity, we need to identify what that concept is. We see several ideas that are applied to God in His entirety. God is eternal, from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90:2; Deuteronomy 33:27). God's eternity applies to the Father, as well as to God the Son, as is evidenced from the fact that Isaiah 9:6 describes the Messiah (Who is recognized in the New Testament as Jesus) as being called "Everlasting Father."

The concept of eternity equally applies to the Spirit, as the Hebrews writer stated, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through **the eternal Spirit** offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14, emp. added). Since the concept of eternity equally applies to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, then we have successfully determined at least one aspect of God that is completely unified and applies equally to every aspect of God. Such qualities compose the nature or essence of the being of God. And while it is true that we cannot know or understand all of the aspects of God's essence, we can compile a list of ideas or attributes that make-up this unified whole that applies equally to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

- God's essence is immutable, or unchangeable (Psalm 103:17; Hebrews 13:8).
- God's essence is morally perfect (Habakkuk 1:13; 1 Peter 2:22).
- God's essence is founded on justice (Psalm 89:14; Matthew 23:23).
- God's essence is love (1 John 4:8).
- God's essence is eternal (Psalm 90:2; Deuteronomy 33:27; Isaiah 9:6).

The Bible provides a much more exhaustive list of the attributes of God's nature or essence. This short list is provided to make the point that all three personalities of God (i.e., the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), share one unified nature that applies equally to all of them.

THE THREE PERSONALITIES OF GOD

Having established the fact that God is one in essence or nature, we can now deal with the idea that God is three personalities - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

God the Father

The premise that one personality of the Godhead is the Father is one of the least disputed and easily proven concepts in this discussion. In fact, many people and religious groups consider the Father to be the only personality of God (which we will show is not the case), but very few who accept the Bible as the Word of God argue that God the Father is not God. This is the case because there are so many verses in the Bible that identify God in the personality of the Father. Let us examine a few of those. In 2 Peter 1:17, the text states that Jesus "received from God the Father honor and glory." Jude 1 is written to those "who are called, sanctified by God the Father." When Jesus was instructing His disciples to pray, He taught them to say, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9). Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "Now may our God and Father Himself, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you" (1 Thessalonians 3:11). As with other aspects of the argument, a much longer list could be compiled showing that the Bible refers to God the Father as being part of the Godhead. Thus, as our argument proceeds, we've now established that the Godhead has one unified nature, and has at least one personality, namely, God the Father.

God the Son

In addition to the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Bible mentions another person Who composes the Godhead—Jesus Christ the Son. In fact, the Bible mentions these three together. Matthew 28:19 quotes Jesus as saying that His followers should baptize disciples in the name of the "Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Peter wrote that Christians were "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus" (1 Peter 1:2). A straightforward reading of these passages seems to put the three on equal footing. Some have contended, however, that even though Jesus is the Son of God (which the Scriptures teach in numerous places; see Matthew 14:33; 16:16; Mark 1:1; Luke 8:28; John 3:16-18; 2 Corinthians 1:19), that does not mean He was equal to God or had/has the same nature as God. Fred Pearce, who denies that Jesus is God, wrote: "But he is God's *Son*, because he has been 'begotten.' The ruler is not God; he is the Son of God; and he began to exist on the day he was 'begotten.' Like all sons, he is preceded by his Father" (n.d.). Some have contended that God created Jesus first, and then Jesus created everything else. Thus, they would argue that Jesus is not God, but only the Son of God, a creation of God, or an elevated angel. Others would argue that Jesus was only a man and never claimed to be God or even an angel. The Bible, however, denies both of these positions.

God the Holy Spirit

Because of the way many people view the term “spirit,” it has often been the case that the Holy Spirit is misidentified. He is often referred to as an “it,” and some do not recognize the fact that He is a personality of the Godhead. The Scriptures, however, are clear that the Holy Spirit is a personality of the Godhead in the same way as the Father and the Son. First, recall that the Bible explains that the Spirit is eternal (Hebrews 9:14). That means that He’s not a created being, but has always existed. In argument form we would say, God is the only being that is eternal. **The Holy Spirit is eternal.** Therefore, the Holy Spirit is God. In addition, we read that just as God knows all things, the Spirit does as well. First Corinthians 2:10-11 states, “But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.... Even so, no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”

The book of Acts contains a memorable story about two early Christians named Ananias and Sapphira. These two sold a piece of property, gave the money to the church, but lied about the price of the land. When the apostle Peter rebuked them for their sin, he said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit.... You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:3-4). Notice that Peter stated that by lying to the Holy Spirit, Ananias had lied to God, equating God and the Holy Spirit. In addition, 1 Peter 1:2 says that the Christians there had participated in the “sanctification of the Spirit.” In 2 Thessalonians 5:23, the Bible says, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely.” Again, we see that the work of sanctifying the Christian is accomplished by God, but is attributed to the Holy Spirit. This line of reasoning can be extended to other aspects of God’s action. In 2 Timothy, Paul states that “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (3:16). Peter explains that the Scriptures were produced when “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). We then can reason that God inspired the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, thus the Holy Spirit is God.

Once we establish that the Holy Spirit is God, we next need to show that He is a person, not simply a nebulous force. We have defined the word “person” as a recognizable, distinct entity that has mind and desire. The Bible paints a consistent picture that the Holy Spirit, like the Father, is a person. First, the Scriptures state that the Holy Spirit can, and has, talked to people using language that those people can understand. In Acts 8:29, we read that “the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot.’” This was not a nebulous, impersonal force, but a recognizable voice used by a person to communicate His desire to a man named Philip. The apostle Paul explained that “the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith” (1 Timothy 4:1). Once again, the Spirit speaks in understandable language. In Revelation, the text says that “the Spirit and the bride say ‘Come!’” (22:17). Only a person with a will and identity could offer such an invitation. Also, consider that the Holy Spirit can be blasphemed (Matthew 12:31-32), lied to (Acts 5:3), insulted or despised (Hebrews 10:29), and grieved (Ephesians 4:30) (Olbright, 1999, p. 25). The Holy Spirit is God, and has all the traits of a person. We therefore conclude that the Father is one personality of God, and the Holy Spirit is another personality of God, proving that the one God has a multiplicity of personalities.

False Ideas about the Holy Spirit

By **Wayne Jackson**

Jesus warned:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves (Matthew 7:15).

False teachers do exist (2 Peter 2:1), and the ideas they advocate are dangerous. In this study, we will direct attention to some false teachings relative to the Holy Spirit.

Holy Spirit Not a Person

One of the most fundamental errors regarding the Holy Spirit is the tendency of some cults to deny his very personality. A Watchtower publication asserts that

the holy spirit is the active force of God. It is not a person but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will (*Reasoning from the Scriptures* 1985, 81).

Mary Baker Eddy, founder of "Christian Science," characterized the third person of the Trinity as "Divine Science" (n.d., 55). Parley Pratt, one of Mormonism's original "apostles," once described the Holy Spirit as a force like "magnetism" or "electricity." He further spoke of the Spirit as "a divine fluid" and "impersonal energy" (see Jackson 1993, 26).

Each of these notions is quite foreign to the truth. The Holy Spirit is a divine person, and this is evidenced by the following factors:

1. The Spirit acts in a personal way. He can speak (Matthew 10:20; 1 Timothy 4:1); teach (John 14:26); bear witness (John 15:26); guide, hear and declare (John 16:13); send (Acts 10:20); forbid (Acts 16:6); search and know (1 Corinthians 2:11); will (1 Corinthians 12:11); help (Romans 8:2); and love (Romans 15:30). Sound biblical interpretation will not allow the view that these references are mere personifications.

2. There are many passages which describe the Holy Spirit as being the recipient of actions which are applicable only of a personal entity. The Spirit can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), lied to (Acts 5:3), spoken against (Matthew 12:32), resisted (Acts 7:50), and insulted (Hebrews 10:29). Can one "lie to" electricity, "grieve" magnetism, or "insult" fluid?
3. The Holy Spirit is frequently mentioned in contexts in which other persons are discussed. Of the Spirit, Jesus said: "He shall glorify me" (John 16:14). If the "me" (Christ) represents a person, why does not the "he" (the Spirit) likewise denote a person? Certain inspired leaders in the early church wrote: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us . . ." (Acts 15:28). The Spirit is as personal as the "us."

Holy Spirit Still Works Miracles

Every devout Bible student is aware of the fact that miracles have been employed by God in the divine scheme of things. By means of miracles, the creation and organization of the universe were effected (Genesis 1; Psalm 33:6-9; Hebrews 11:3). Additionally, when Jehovah commenced his process of progressive revelation, communicating his will to the human family, he documented the authenticity of the message with supernatural phenomena. Miraculous "signs" were designed to validate the written message (cf. Mark 16:17-20). But the fact of the matter is, God is not exhibiting his power today in a miraculous fashion, and that is demonstrated by the following line of argumentation.

1. There is no occurrence in today's world that even remotely resembles the kind of "signs" that are common to the New Testament record. Where is the person with an amputated body-part that has had such instantaneously and perfectly restored (cf. Luke 22:51)? Where is the individual, four days dead, who has come forth from the grave (John 11:44)? Who pays his taxes these days with funds recovered from a fish's mouth (Matthew 17:27)? An examination of so-called modern "miracles" will reveal that they have virtually nothing in common with the type of "signs" described in the Bible (see Jackson 1992, 127-134).

2. The allegation that the Holy Spirit is working miracles today is contrary to the explicit biblical teaching relative to the purpose for which miracles were given. As indicated earlier, signs were designed to validate the revelation of God's will for mankind (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:2-4). When the revelatory process was concluded with the completion of the New Testament record, miracles were no longer needed, hence, passed away (see 1 Corinthians 13:8-13). No one can consistently argue for miracles today without also contending that divine revelation is ongoing, and the New Testament is incomplete.
3. The means for the reception of spiritual gifts in the Christian age are not operative today. Gifts, in the first century, were bestowed by means of Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2,10), and through the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:17,18; 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6). Since there is no Holy Spirit baptism today (Ephesians 4:5; Matthew 28:19,20), and as there are no living apostles, it is obvious that, so far as biblical evidence is concerned, no spiritual gifts are being given to believers today.
4. As suggested earlier, the New Testament explicitly affirms that the early church's endowment with miraculous gifts was to be temporary; when revelation was completed, supernatural signs were to pass away (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13)

Direct Operation in Conversion

Denominationalists frequently contend that the Holy Spirit, in a direct and mysterious fashion, operates upon the sinner in the process of conversion. In his debate with N.B. Hardeman, the celebrated Baptist preacher, Ben M. Bogard, affirmed: "The Bible teaches that in conviction and conversion the Holy Spirit exercises a power or influence in addition to the written or spoken word" (1938, 7). If the Holy Spirit operates upon the soul of the sinner independent of the written Word of God, why is it that not a solitary Christian has ever been discovered in those locales where the gospel has not been proclaimed? Why is it that tribes in primitive regions know nothing regarding the Lord Jesus, apart from the influence of biblical revelation? This circumstance is inexplicable in light of the foregoing theory.

Certainly, it is true that the Holy Spirit is instrumental in the regeneration of those who are lost. But his influence is exerted through his revelation, the Holy Scriptures (Ephesians 6:17), and not apart from these documents. For example, it is by the Spirit that one is led to be immersed into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Correspondingly, it is through the word that this identical result is effected (Ephesians 5:26). In the conversion process, which is symbolically designated as being “born anew” (John 3:3), it is by the agency of the Holy Spirit that the “begetting” is initiated. Yet note this affirmation:

Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God (1 Peter 1:22,23).

James declares: “Of his own will he begat us with the word of truth” (James 1:18). With this fact, Paul agrees. The apostle describes the Corinthians as those who had been washed, sanctified, and justified by the Spirit (First Corinthians 6:11); and yet, he could declare in the same epistle: “I have begotten you through the gospel” (4:15). Clearly, the Holy Spirit, in leading honest people to the Lord, exerts his influence through the gospel message. To affirm that something additional is needed for salvation, is to rob the gospel of its power in the redemptive process (Romans 1:16).

Special Spirit Illumination

It is commonly argued that the Bible is not sufficiently lucid to lead men in the pursuit of the godly life. We should study the Scriptures, it is contended, but in order to understand them, we also need the special illumination of the Spirit of God. Roy Zuck of the Dallas Theological Seminary has written: “The [Bible] interpreter must also depend on the Holy Spirit.” He cites H.C.G. Moule: “The blessed Spirit is not only the true Author of the written Word but also its supreme and true Expositor” (Zuck 1991, 23). If this view is correct, here is an interesting query. Is the Spirit as infallible in his exposition as he was in his initial revelation? If the answer is yes, then all who are illuminated by the Spirit should be flawless in their exegesis of the Bible, and totally united in their understanding of Scripture. But such is not the case. Numerous scholars claiming Spirit illumination are constantly disagreeing in their theological opinions.

Moreover, it is the epitome of inconsistency to argue for “supernatural illumination,” and then produce a textbook setting forth the rules for correct biblical interpretation—as Dr. Zuck has done. The fact is, the Bible clearly teaches that one can read and understand the testimony of the sacred Scriptures (Ephesians 3:4; 5:17).

But we are told that Paul taught that the “natural man” (i.e., one not illuminated by the Spirit) cannot “know” the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). The illumination theory imposes upon this context a notion that simply is not there. In this text Paul is suggesting that the natural man (i.e., one not taught of the Spirit by means of God’s appointed spokesmen—v. 10) receives not the things of God (i.e., spiritual truths). Such things are foolishness to him, and he can’t “know” (ginosko-to know experimentally) them. Such matters must be discerned spiritually (they are communicated by the revelation process—ultimately embodied in the Scriptures). The “natural man” is not privy to spiritual truth intuitively. No one, naturally (i.e., apart from revelation) can know the mind of God.

There is no reference in this context to the Spirit’s “illumination” as a requisite to understanding the Scriptures. Rather, the emphasis is upon the fact that truth is received by divine revelation, not human intuition.

How the Holy Spirit Works Through the Word

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This article will identify and enumerate various aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit and provide evidence to show that each facet of the Spirit's work is accomplished by means of his words.

One may know that there is a Supreme Intelligence - God - by observing the universe (cf. Rom. 1:20; Psa. 19:1). However, all that we know about the work of the Holy Spirit is learned from the Bible by direct statements made by and about the Spirit, by examples of what the Spirit did and by necessarily inferring some things from the facts stated.

1. The Holy Spirit is the Author of the Bible. "No prophecy of scripture (whether found in the Old or New Testament, ldh) is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). Men did not conjure from their own minds the prophecies. They were moved, carried, or borne along as the wind carries a sailing vessel, by the Holy Spirit. The Bible, then, is from the Holy Spirit and not from man and is, therefore, to be revered.

"Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man" (1 Cor. 2:9) have reference not to heaven, but to things which "God revealed . . . through the Spirit which things Paul said he spoke, "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (v. 13). From this we learn that the mind of God was revealed to the Apostle Paul by the Holy Spirit. Yes, the very words were selected by the Spirit. Later, Paul said that "by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit" (Eph . 3:3-5). It was the work of the Spirit to reveal the mind of God to the apostles, who both spake and wrote these things. The written word, the Bible, is authored in this manner by the Holy Spirit.

2. The Holy Spirit testified against unfaithful Israel. God testified against Israel for the purpose of bringing them again to his law (Neh. 9:29). For many years God bore with his unfaithful children and "testified against them by thy Spirit through thy prophets" (Neh. 9:30). This passage helps us to understand not only the work of the Holy Spirit, but also the manner or "how" of his work. The Spirit achieved his purpose by means of words put in the mouths of the prophets.

3. The Holy Spirit guided the work of John, the forerunner of Christ. Before the birth of John, his father, Zacharias, was told that John would "be great in the sight of the Lord . . . and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 1:15). When John was born, Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied that John would "go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways: To give knowledge of salvation unto his people in the remission of their sin" (Lk. 1:76,77).

4. The Holy Spirit provided Christ with unlimited power during his personal ministry. The Holy Spirit said through Isaiah (11.2) that "the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon" Jesus, In a synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1,2 which says, in part, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor" (Lk. 4:18). Jesus thus affirmed that he preached by the power of the Spirit. Peter said that God anointed Jesus "with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts 10:38).

5. The Holy Spirit along with God and Christ, made baptism a prerequisite to discipleship. Read the familiar Matthew 28:18-20. Here the Holy Spirit is shown to be divine, on par with God and Christ. Along with God and Christ, the Holy Spirit is at work when we baptize those who have been taught the word of God. He works through the preached word to make disciples.

6. The Holy Spirit made known to the apostles what they should say. "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you"(John 14:26). When Paul said, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), was he not taught this by words of the Holy Spirit?

7. The Holy Spirit begets spiritual life. Being "born anew" (Jn. 3:4), is one birth composed of two aspects: (1) being born of water, and (2) being born of the spirit (John 3:5) This new birth places one in the kingdom. The water is baptism, which results in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). The Spirit is the Holy Spirit who begets through the word, which is the "seed of the kingdom" (Lk. 8:11). One is "begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth" (1 Pet. 1:23). "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures" (Jas. 1:18). The Colossians were saved or "delivered out of the power of darkness" when they were translated "into the kingdom" (Col. 1:13). They entered the kingdom by the new birth. When the begotten one is born or water, baptized, he is translated into the kingdom. He is born anew.

8. According to Romans 8, the Holy Spirit does three things:

a. Leads or guides God's children. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (v. 14). Those who are, "after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit" (v. 5). We mind our parents by obeying them and we mind the things of the Spirit by obeying the words of the Spirit, which are found in the Bible.

b. Bears witness that one is a child of God (v. 16). The witness or testimony of the Spirit is in his Word and his testimony is that one must hear the word, believe that God is, repent of sins, confess Christ to be God's son, and be baptized for the remission of sins. Note that Romans 8:16 says that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit. When our spirit gives the same testimony as that of the Holy Spirit then this is assurance that we are children of God.

c. Intercedes for the children of God (v. 26). It is significant to note that the Spirit speaks to God in this work and does not speak to us. The Spirit speaks to us through his Word, the New Testament.

9. The Holy Spirit serves as an "earnest" of future blessings and as an incentive for holiness of life. Paul said, ". . . ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession" (Eph. 1:13,14).

The Spirit is the earnest or guarantee of future inheritance, contingent, of course, on our fidelity to God (Rev. 2:10). God's children are urged to "flee fornication" and otherwise to keep the body as a living sacrifice. Sufficient motivation for this purity is found in the knowledge that the "body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you" (1 Cor. 6:1). I could not know this except that the Holy Spirit has thus testified by means of the words of the New Testament.

10. The Holy Spirit convicts the world (Jn. 16:8-11). a. Concerning sin. The Holy Spirit exposes, brings to light, or proves to be wrong those who do not believe Christ to be the Son of God. Through the preaching of the gospel, sin is exposed. For example, Peter, through inspiration of the Spirit, exposed the sins of his hearers in Jerusalem (Acts 2). The Spirit uses the Word to prosecute those in sin.

b. **Concerning righteousness.** All of God's commandments are righteousness (Psa. 119:17). The righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16,17). He that doeth righteousness is righteous" (1 Jn. 3:7). Peter used the words of the Holy Spirit at the house of Cornelius to say that "in every nation he that feareth him (God, Idd) and worketh righteousness, is acceptable" to God (Acts 10:35). To do righteousness is to do right. The right ways of God are revealed by the words of the Holy Spirit found in the New Testament.

c. **Concerning judgment.** This should strike godly fear in our hearts. To know that God "hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:31), should cause us to live as the Holy Spirit teaches us in his Word to live.

When Paul stood before Felix he "reasoned of righteousness, self-control, and the judgment" (Acts 24:25). The Spirit works through his word to reason with us on these same vital matters.

Conclusions

My subject is "How The Holy Spirit Works Through the Word." I have shown (1) what the work of the Spirit is, (2) that this work is accomplished through the use of words, and (3) that one must hear and obey the Word in order for the Spirit to accomplish his wonderful work in one's life. The Holy Spirit will not go against the will of man.

TruthMagazine

No Creed, But Christ

What separates the Lord's church from man-made churches?1 There are many factors, but one major factor is the matter of "creeds." There are many denominational creeds. There is the Baptist Church Manual, the Methodist Book of Discipline, the Catholic Church Catechism, the Lutheran Church Catechism, the Catechism of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Presbyterian Book of Church Order, the Episcopalian Church Book of Common Prayer, the Christian Science Church Manual, etc. Many denominational members do not even know they have a creed.2 In contrast, New Testament Christians follow the New Testament only; they follow no man-made creeds. We speak where the Bible speaks, we are silent where the Bible is silent. To better help us learn what is wrong with denominational creeds we will ask and answer four questions in this article. We will close with a fifth question relating to the current issue over so-called "creeds" among brethren today.

What Is A Creed?

When one studies the origin of the word "creed," one finds that it comes from the Latin credo, meaning "I believe;" from credere, meaning "to trust, believe." It is interesting to note that the Latin word credo is actually in the Latin Vulgate Bible. A "creed" is simply a statement of what it is one believes. Webster defines "creed" this way:

“1. A brief statement of religious belief; confession of faith. 2. A specific statement of this kind, accepted as authoritative by a church; especially the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, or the Athanasian Creed. 3. A statement of belief, principles, or opinions on any subject.”³ G.S.R. Cox defines a creed thus: “A concise formal and authorized statement of important basic points of Christian doctrine.”⁴ Scholars writing about creeds recognize the inherent authority in creeds.⁵ Historically, creeds began as statements of belief made by individuals, and moved to statements made by groups. Look at the definitions above again and you will notice that the common thread running through all denominational creeds is their inherent authority. The key to understanding denominational creeds is this: they are an authorized statement composed by a council of men and used as a standard of faith and practice for a religious body.

Many examples of creeds could be given here, but let us briefly examine what scholars call the “three classical creeds”: the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. The Apostles’ Creed, the authorship and date of origin of which is much debated, was used in one of the first attempts in church history to systematize belief. It took on its present form in the 6th or 7th century. It begins with these words: “I believe in God the Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth.” The Nicene Creed was drawn up by the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, completed by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 381 and recognized as an official formula at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451. A revised edition appeared in the Second Council of Constantinople in A.D. 553. A further revision is found in the Council of Toledo in A.D. 589. Years after this creed was formulated, the Greek and Latin Church divided, in part, over how this creed should be understood. In particular, the famous “filioque” clause was much debated. The Nicene Creed begins this way: “I believe in one God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.” The Athanasian Creed, the authorship and date of origin of which is uncertain, emphasizes the doctrine of the Trinity. Pronouncements of damnation are made in this creed for those who do not keep it. The Athanasian Creed begins: “Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith: Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. . . .”

Throughout church history creeds have taken on other forms. In the period of the Protestant Reformation, creeds were called “Confessions.” These statements of belief were usually longer than a creed and more detailed and systematic. They were designed more for reference than for recital. Like creeds, “Confessions” are considered authoritative by those who write them.⁶ Many “Confessions” have been written through the centuries. For example, the Augsburg Confession (1530) is a two-part creed composed by Melancthon with the approval of Martin Luther, and primarily written to defend the orthodoxy of Protestantism. It was later endorsed by John Calvin. It is the creed of the Lutheran Church. There is also the Waldensian Declaration of Faith (1532), the First Helvetic Confession (1536), the Geneva Confession (1537), the Gallican Confession (1559), the Thirty-nine Articles (1571), the Canons of Dort (1619), the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), and so on.⁷ “Symbols” and “Rule of Faith” are terms that were also used for creeds during the Protestant Reformation.

What is the Function of a Creed?

Creeds were used for different purposes beginning c. 4th Century A.D. First, the baptismal function: a candidate for baptism would recite a creed prior to baptism. Second, the instructional function: a creed was used as a syllabus for catechetical (question and answer) instruction in Christian doctrine. Third, the doctrinal function: the content of a creed was used to denounce heresies and serve as a test of orthodoxy. Fourth, the liturgical function: a creed was used in a worship service with a response from the congregation (recited, or put to song). Fifth, the commendatory function: a creed was used as a proof of identity and a test of fellowship.⁸ It is clear that creeds have been used by men throughout the centuries as authoritative standards for religious practices, in addition to God’s word and apart from God’s word.

What's Wrong With Denominational Creeds?

All denominational creeds are wrong because they violate the word of God. First, they are not authorized by the New Testament (Col. 3:17). The following examples are not Bible examples of “rudimentary creedal forms” as some scholars suggest: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 26:5-9; John 1:41; Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9.9 Any statement in Scripture is Scripture; not a creedal statement about Scripture. Ironically, it is admitted by scholars that no formal creedal statements are found in the Bible; and yet, they use the Bible to justify their creeds! Second, creeds are wrong because they are written by men, not by God; hence, they are fallible, imperfect, and uninspired by God (Matt.15:1ff; Mark 7:1ff). Third, they impeach the wisdom and word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). God’s word is all-sufficient. Creeds, however, contain more or less than God’s word. If they are the same as God’s word, why then do we need them? They are unnecessary. Fourth, they focus on the authority and standard of man’s word, not on the authority and standard of God’s word. They set aside God’s word for man’s word (Matt. 15:1ff; Mark 7:1ff; Col. 2:8, 18-19, 20-23). Creeds are recognized by scholars as an “authoritative statement,” as “standards” and “divisive.”¹⁰ Fifth, they teach things, at times, contrary to plain Scripture (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Sixth, they must be revised from year to year. For example, the Nicene Creed, written in A.D. 325 was revised in the 6th, 8th, and 11th centuries. Seventh, they keep the religious world divided (John 17:20). A Baptist Church Manual produces a Baptist, nothing else; a Methodist Book of Discipline produces a Methodist, nothing else; and so on. Lastly, creeds will not be used as the standard of judgment in the last day (John 12:48; Rev. 20:11-15).

What Is Our Standard of Authority?

The standard of authority in the Lord’s church has always been God’s word. We are under the New Testament Scriptures today; nothing more, nothing less. Read and study carefully the following passages which show that the New Testament is our standard of authority today: Matthew 17:5; 28:19-20; John 12:48; 14:6, 26; 15:26-27; 16:12-15; 17:20; Acts 2:42; 3:22-26; 6:7; 13:8; Romans 6:17; 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 11:23; 14:37; 15:1-2; Galatians 1:6-9, 23; 3:23;

Ephesians 1:10; 2:19-20; 3:1-11; 4:5; Philippians 2:16; Colossians 2:2-3, 7-10, 18-19; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Timothy 4:6; 5:8; 6:3-4, 10, 21; 2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2; 3:14-17; 4:3-4; Titus 1:9, 13; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:3-4; 8:6-13; 9:9-16; 2 Peter 1:3-4; 2 John 9-11; 3 John 3-4; Jude 3; and Revelation 20:11-14.

One Bible passage is enough to show that the New Testament is our final authority for all that we believe and practice. But consider the large number of passages listed above which demonstrate this point. The evidence is overwhelming and clear. The New Testament, and the New Testament alone, is our standard of authority. All denominational creeds are wrong!

What Is the Current Issue Over “Creeds”?

Before closing this article it would be good to briefly examine the current issue over so-called “creeds” among brethren today. Is it true that recently some brethren have been guilty of writing “creeds” similar to those found in the denominations? There are two reasons why we are hearing about “creeds” among us.

First, some brethren mistakenly say that we have “creeds” among us. They do this because they misunderstand that certain types of Bible teaching are authorized and expedient. We must distinguish between a classical, denominational creed that is an authoritative standard, and our expedient practices of teaching the word of God. Are authorized teaching expediencies to be thrown out simply because to someone they have the appearance of a creed? No.

What if a document that a brother writes contains less than the entire New Testament, is that a creed? No. Any teaching on God’s word that focuses on something less than the whole of truth may have a purpose in mind. We should allow brethren to focus on certain issues and discuss them in writing. We should not require brethren to teach all of God’s word (from Genesis to Revelation) every time they speak or write. The brethren who are concerned that others are writing “creeds,” have themselves taught and focused on doctrines that are only part of God’s word.

Is a document a brother writes intended to be used as a standard of orthodoxy? No. A classical, denominational creed is authoritative and is used as a standard of faith and practice (refer to the definitions above again).¹¹ However, the New Testament is our final authority, not anything that we might say or write about it. Our teaching methods (spoken or written words) alone have no inherent authority and they should be rejected if they become authoritative or do not conform to New Testament teaching. The documents we write do not determine the boundaries of fellowship or the soundness of brethren, the New Testament does. Our documents simply teach the truth that is found in the Bible.

A second reason why we are hearing about “creeds” among brethren is because some brethren do not want error exposed. If some brethren do not like a document that exposes a particular error, it is easy for them to call the document a “creed” in order to detract from its usefulness. They know that brethren generally reject “creeds” (those of the denominations), and so, if they call a particular document a “creed,” then brethren will reject it. Apparently, if one labels a particular document a “creed” long enough and loud enough, some will believe it. This is similar to how some prejudicially use the word “tradition” or “judge.” Some “tradition” (e.g. Catholic tradition) is wrong, but not all tradition is wrong (2 Thess. 2:15). Some “judging” is wrong (e.g. hypocritical judging), but not all judging is wrong (Matt. 7:1-5; John 7:24). Yes, some writings are creedal and are wrong, but not all writings of brethren are creeds. Think about this for a minute. When a brother writes about “creeds” today,¹² is he writing a creed about “creeds”? If not, why not? Why is his writing not a creed, but the document he is writing about is a “creed”? Using the reasoning of some today, the very article you are reading which denounces creeds would be a “creed”! Dear reader, if you disagree with what another brother writes, do not call his document a “creed,” but simply answer what he writes with the word of God. Calling a document a “creed,” does not make it so. Do not be deceived into thinking a document written by a brother is “creed” just because it has been called such.

No, brethren, we do not have “creeds” among us today like the denominations have. We have no creed, but Christ. We all recognize the wrong of denominational creeds, and we all deplore and denounce denominational creeds. They are man-made, authoritative standards and they are all contrary to the word of God. Our one and only standard of authority is the New Testament. May God help us to hold fast solely to the New Testament.

Notes

- 1 The basic contents of this article can be found in outline form in the Sermon Outline section of truthmagazine.com.
- 2 The author of this article has collected several creed books over the years and uses them in personal work studies. Many prospects are surprised when shown the creed book that identifies the church they attend.
- 3 Webster’s New World Dictionary 346.
- 4 “Creeds,” The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, J.D. Douglas, Editor, 270.
- 5 “Symbolics,” The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Samuel Macauley Jackson, Editor, 11:199.
- 6 “Confessions of Faith,” Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Walter A. Elwell, Editor, 262-266.
- 7 “Creeds and Confessions,” The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, G.W. Bromiley, Editor, 1:810-812.
- 8 “Creeds and Confessions,” The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, G.W. Bromiley, Editor, 1:807; “Creed, Creeds,” The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, M.C. Tenney, Editor, 1:1025-1026.
- 9 “Creed, Creeds,” Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Walter A. Elwell, Editor, 283.
- 10 “Creed, Creeds,” The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, M.C. Tenney, Editor, 1025-1026.
- 11 The Presbyterian-Reformed position on creeds is very interesting and puzzling. They believe that their creeds are authoritative, but they also believe that Bible is authoritative. To alleviate the tension between the two, it is said that Reformed Christians are “relatively bound” to follow their creeds and “relatively free” to reject them. Their position here is confusing at best. But of course, this is the problem one finds himself in when he assigns authority to creeds. See Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, 20-31.
- 12 Ed Harrell recently wrote about “clumsy efforts to creedalize.” The entire content of his manuscript can be viewed on truthmagazine.com.
- 13 Years ago there were some brethren who would not use Bible class literature because they thought it to be uninspired literature and the “creeds” of men.

