

## Introduction to *The Apostles' Creed*

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
the 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, dead, and buried;  
he descended into hell.  
The third day he arose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from there he shall come to judge the quick 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 the life everlasting. Amen.

### (1) How do we define what is orthodox belief? How do we know what is heresy?

#### **Titus 2:1**

Teach what accords with sound doctrine.

#### **2 Timothy 4:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

#### **Ephesians 4:13**

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

#### **Galatians 1:6**

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

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### Three answers:

**(1) Decide for yourself.** The problem is that this is a highly individualistic approach to theology. Arrogant. Disconnected from Christian community. Hopelessly subjective. Causes enormous conflict.

**(2) Look to contemporary consensus.** This is much better than the first approach. You do take into account the community of believers. But it is still subjective because it depends on you to ascertain what the majority believes. And the contemporary majority is sometimes wrong. For example, the majority of Evangelicals do not believe in the Doctrine of Predestination. And which majority and which community?

And finally, how do you know which doctrines are central and which are peripheral? For example, eschatology.

**(3) Submit to historic creeds and confessions.** This is IGC's position – we are a *confessional church*. This approach draws from the wealth of the Christian community, not just from the present, but throughout all church history. And there is no subjectivity because the doctrines are clearly defined on historic documents.

## **(2) CS Lewis on the value of reading old books:**

This mistaken preference for modern books and this shyness of the old ones is nowhere more rampant than in theology.

Now this seems to me topsy-turvy. Naturally, since I myself am a writer, I do not wish the ordinary reader to read no modern books. But if he must read only the new or only the old, I would advise him to read the old. And I would give him this advice precisely because he is an amateur and therefore much less protected than the expert against the dangers of an exclusive contemporary diet. A new book is still on its trial and the amateur is not in a position to judge it. It has to be tested against the great body of Christian thought down the ages, and all its hidden implications (often unsuspected by the author himself) have to be brought to light. Often it cannot be fully understood without the knowledge of a good many other modern books. If you join at eleven o'clock a conversation which began at eight you will often not see the real bearing of what is said. Remarks which seem to you very ordinary will produce laughter or irritation and you will not see why – the reason, of course, being that the earlier stages of the conversation have given them a special point. In the same way sentences in a modern book which look quite ordinary may be directed *at* some other book; in this way you may be led to accept what you would have indignantly rejected if you knew its real significance. The only safety is to have a standard of plain, central Christianity (“mere Christianity” as Richard Baxter called it) which puts the controversies of the moment in their proper perspective. Such a standard can be acquired only from the old books. It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between. If that is too much for you, you should at least read one old one to every three new ones.

## **(3) Why not just use the Bible only? *No creed but the Bible!***

This sounds pure and noble, but it is actually incredibly arrogant. It is a refusal to learn from the wisdom of Christian community. And it is incredibly naïve about the influence of contemporary culture on your reading of the Bible. You need others to understand the truth of the Bible. Christianity is not a solo effort, but community.

And it is the path which leads to heresy. All heresies are born from an individualistic reading of the Bible detached from historic creeds. This is what is so great about the historic creeds. It forces you to constantly re-evaluate and re-examine your own understanding.

Finally, if the Bible is the whole topographic terrain of the Earth, then you need a map to get around. You see this even in the Bible itself – miniature summations of the gospel.

### **1 Timothy 3:16**

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

### **1 John 4:2-3**

<sup>2</sup> By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.

## **(4) What is *The Apostles' Creed*?**

It is the oldest of the church creeds. It was not written by the twelve apostles but it is a summation of their teaching. (And they devoted themselves to the *apostles' teaching* – Acts 2:42) We're not sure when it was written, but some form of it existed as probably in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and came to its final form in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

All Christians throughout history have accepted it as the summary of orthodox Christian belief. Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and other heretical groups reject the creed.

**(5) What does IGC believe? (from our website)**

*While we are a new church plant, we also see ourselves in the ancient heritage of Christians articulating a common faith. In this sense, we are a confessional church, holding to the historic confessions formulated centuries ago. We hold to what all Christians have believed throughout history since the days of the apostles, expressed in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. We are committed to the doctrinal foundations of the Protestant Reformation, led by Martin Luther and John Calvin. They are articulated in the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt.*