

The Catechism...

The Creed

A C A T E C H I S M ;

That is to say, An Instruction to be learned of every Person, before he be brought to be confirmed by the Bishop.

Question.

WHAT is your Name ?

Answer, N. or M.

Quest. Who gave you this Name ?

Answ. My Godfathers and Godmothers in my Baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.

Quest. What did your Godfathers and Godmothers then for you ?

Answ. They did promise and vow three things in my Name : First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; Secondly, that I should believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith; And thirdly, that I should keep God's holy Will and Commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.

Quest. Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe, and to do as they have promised for thee ?

Answ. Yes, verily; and by God's help so I will. And I heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life's end.

Catechist. Rehearse the Articles of thy Belief.

Answer.

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 Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into Hell; The third day he rose again from the

The Anglican Catechism: Basic Elements



First - the word: 'Creed'

Credo (Lt) - 'I believe'

(from Old English - 'leafa')

But what is 'belief'?

- Mental acceptance of an idea: "I believe there is a bear in the woods"
- Trust in the source of an idea: "Jack saw a bear. I trust Jack's judgement. It wasn't a rock"
- An idea which initiates action: "I believe we ought to capture the bear"

The Catechism points us to the 'Apostles Creed'

- A short summary of faith, from the earliest church.
- Used at morning and evening prayer
- The 'Nicene' creed is used at Communion
- (The Nicene came out of the Council of Nicea - year 325 AD/CE)
- There are other 'authorised' creeds too

Let's read the whole thing...then we'll break it down...

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I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholick Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting. Amen.

Question. What dost thou chiefly learn in these Articles of thy Belief?

Answer. First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world.

Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me, and all mankind.

Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.

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Things to notice or question...

- Father - very 'male' picture of God. Why not 'Mother' or 'parent'? (Creed written by men!)
- Almighty - God can do anything 'he' wants. But does he? Why does he not act sometimes?
- Maker - the source of *everything*
- Heaven and earth - *spiritual and physical*

The Jesus section...

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Things to notice or question...

- Jesus Christ - Yeshua (Joshua) Christi - means 'God saves' and 'Saviour' - it is God who saves in/through the person of Jesus.
- Only Son - not strictly accurate. Adam is listed as 'son of God' (in Luke 3). We are all 'sons' (and daughters!) of our 'heavenly parent'. Nicene Creed says 'only *begotten* son' - a clumsy attempt to translate '*monogenes*' (gk) meaning 'one of a kind'.
- Our Lord - we need to consider ancient notions of 'lordship' (not the kinds of neutered Lords in our Parliament). Ancient Lords had absolute power. Their word was LAW.

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Things to notice or question...

- Ancient peoples believed that wombs were mere incubators for a man's seed. They didn't know about eggs, nor the of the 'joint effort' required to make life
- Virginitly was about 'purity' of the womb-space. A guarantee that a baby was that of its Father only
- Many other ancient gods were said to have been 'born of a virgin' or 'conceived through the action of a greater or earlier god' planting a seed. The 'Virgin Issue' is mainly confined to Luke, who sought to convince gentiles of Jesus' divinity. Was he over-egging the pudding? Is a belief in the Virgin birth actually *essential* to faith?

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Things to notice or question...

- The reference to Pontius Pilate roots Jesus' story in history. It's a verifiable claim of 'historicity' - like saying 'in the days of Queen Elizabeth II, Boris Johnson was Prime Minister'.
- Crucified, dead and buried: a summary of events - note there are no theological claims attached - nothing about 'salvation', 'redemption' by the death of Jesus. (Even the Nicene Creed only says that 'for our salvation he came down from heaven'). My point: sometimes we over-focus on the saving *death* of Jesus on the cross. It is *also** his *presence*, and his *teaching* which saves us.

* Some might say '*rather*'...

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Things to notice or question...

- “Hell” - a mistranslation of ‘hades’ or the ‘world of the dead’? (Modern renderings say ‘descended to the dead’)
- However, the ‘harrowing of hell’ is a nice theological idea - the concept that during his time of death, Jesus released from hell the ancient saints and godly people (who, by that theology, could not be saved until the event of the Cross).

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Things to notice or question...

- Final section is a quick summary of the 'end of history'! Resurrection - Ascension - Heavenly reign (i.e. now) - Earthly reign (preceded by judgement).
- Note: 'quick' is old English for 'living'. From old English '*gecwician*' - meaning to 'give life to'. Its deeper meaning is that those who are alive are only alive because they have been given that life (quickened) by God.

The Final section...(of the Creed)

I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholick Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting. Amen.

Overall - a quick gallop through some essential elements of faith - including:

- The presence of God, in Spirit, among us now
- The concept of a universal (catholic) church on earth
- A reminder that we are in continuing fellowship with all believers (saints), living and dead
- A reminder that sin is a condition we all suffer from, and which needs forgiveness
- The belief in a bodily resurrection of all believers
- A promise of life which never ends - despite the 'fake news' of death

The Catechal Summary of belief...

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Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.

Important things to notice/question...

- God is the source of me and of all created things. The divine energy at the heart of creation. The One who 'quickens' us.
- The Son has 'redeemed' me and all humankind...but notice that the Creed leaves the question of *how* unresolved.
- The Spirit *sanctifies me* - that is, he makes me 'holy'. I can't make myself holy.
- Also, note that 'holy' or 'sanctified' means 'set apart for a special purpose' (hence The Sanctuary in church). What is your special purpose?
- 'Elect' people = 'chosen people'. The point is that God chooses us - not the other way round.

Next Time...

Identity and
commitment

Belief and
Faith

Naming and
Promising

The Creed



The Ten
(Commandments)
and
The Two

The Lord's
Prayer

The
Sacraments

Law and
Behaviour

Prayer

Grace and
strength

