

Our World; the Creed

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Date: 12 September 2010

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[0 : 00] a preface before an introduction of an introduction plan, but I just want to lament the passing of summer. I don't know. Do you feel that? Here we are. This makes it official. The summer is now over, and we're back in the court case next week, too, so summer is really over, but it is good to be back. It's good to see you. I was pleased to be briefly introduced to a new student at Regent College this morning by one of our usual members here, a frequent attender, and he reminded me that I said to him, I'd once been to Regent College years ago, and I'd forgotten everything that I learned there. We need to be reminded of things, and that's what we're going to look at today, just to, perhaps presumptuously, a framework for everything we're going to do in this new season at Learner's Exchange. We're going to be thinking as Christians about the mystery of our faith, and the creeds were written as reminders of the essential framework of Christian believing. The prayer book says, Article 8, you've all memorized Article 8, haven't you, so I don't have to probably read it. I could ask you to now repeat Article 8 for me, because you've studied them with Dr. Packer, I know, in this very room. But in case you've forgotten Article 8, it says, it's one of the shorter ones, it's one of the short articles of the three creeds, it's entitled, and it says to us, the three creeds, it's a very Anglican thing there, three. Some traditions would go with seven, but the Anglicans have said the three creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius' Creed, the Creed of St. Athanasius, it's called, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought, and I want you to remember this today as I look with you at the Apostles' Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed. For they, these creeds, they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture, period. Nice short article, Article 8 about the creeds. That's where we stand as Anglicans on the creeds. We see these three as showing us by certain warrant of Holy Scripture that what they assert is true. There you go. So I just wanted to start with that as a little warning to you that if you disagree with me, I can't say that. The prayer book says good things about the creeds. When we gather at Learners' Exchange, as we're going to do in this new season, I want to start off by pointing out very obvious things. It all happens because words are possible. The creeds come to us as words. Scripture are words. Humans live by words. We speak them all the time. Words. Just as you were sitting around this morning drinking coffee, you met one another through the medium of, through the loveliness, hopefully at times. They can be very lovely things. Words. Words. You met one another through words. That they work words is really quite astonishing. We take them for granted, but they work. We have words in our minds. Think of it. We have words in our minds and then we commit them to sound. It's amazing. They become sound. I just did it again, even as I speak about it. Words become sound. That's true enough, but although they become sound, you'll notice they manifest, they also remain word or words, or hopefully they become meaning. We take this for granted all the time, but it's part of the mystery of being a human. We do it all the time. That's why we use them, by the way, because they do leave us and come to us as bearers of meaning. That's what words do.

Augustine, the great bishop in North Africa, thought about this obvious and strange fact about our humanity very much.

[4 : 48] He thought about it, I think, in a very clever way. I'm going to share that with you. Words, again, become sound. Now watch where this is going, and you'll pick up on it right away. I know you will.

This genius of a bishop in North Africa, he says, we can do better than that. No, he says, words don't become sound. Rather, we should think of it like this. He says, words assume sound. There's a big difference there. Words assume sound. That's why they are able, these words, to be both sound nature and word nature at the same time.

Inextricably, they're one, but they're quite separable. They're sound nature and word nature. That's amazing. And I think you'll agree, that's progress in an attempt to be intelligible in pondering our speech.

Words, sound, meaning. I call that a complex. A words, sound, meaning, complex. Augustine, of course, is thinking about his belief. I know you know that. He's not saying this idly.

[6 : 07] He would call it his Catholic belief. He would not object to calling it his Catholic evangelical belief. That the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

John's Gospel, the prologue, of course. Or as creedal Christianity says, and again we're going to be looking at creedal things today. The word, again, we use them all the time, making them assume sound.

The word is the person Jesus in two natures. Very God and very man. As they said at Nicaea. Very wonderfully. God's word, Jesus, assumed flesh. He didn't become flesh just precisely. He assumed flesh.

Therefore, his status as two natures. See, Augustine is a good teacher, it seems to me. His status as two natures, as Nicaea unfolds it, is not unintelligible.

[7 : 18] Word and sound exist together inexplicably. Two things in one mystery. You cannot separate them, nor can you confuse them.

The Creed of St. Athanasius makes that point. If you've ever recently read the Creed of St. Athanasius, that Article 8 commends to us. You see, our Lord's incarnation is at some level as obvious as your own speech.

God can do this kind of thing. The two natures of Jesus are not to be thought of as separate, nor are they intermingled or confused.

No. That's, again, a thing that credo-Christianity wants us to believe. I'll put words in the bishop's mouth and say that we cannot, I think what Augustine is trying to say, he says here brilliantly, we cannot understand the incarnation.

No, of course not. But we cannot, but we can, we cannot understand it, but we may recognize its intelligibility. It's quite intelligible.

[8 : 28] God can do this. God can approach us in this way, with real intelligibility. We don't understand it, just as we don't understand how it is that we commit words to sound.

And they work. It's amazing. It's a miracle that happens every time you speak. It's amazing. There it is. It's, this mystery is, again, as close as your own speech, in a sense.

Words assume sound. The word for us and for our salvation assumed flesh.

It's credo-Christianity. The language of credo-Christianity gives us. I found this Augustinian teaching this past summer in a wonderful book of theology.

I'll be, I'll be a bit vain and tell you it's 800 pages. This summer in Thomas Oden's, O-D-E-N is the chap's name.

[9 : 27] His book called Classic Christianity. Jim, Jim Packer knows Thomas Oden. He's a wonderful Christian gentleman. Learned it as they come. Oden's project is to rehearse the thought of the church's first seven centuries.

What he rightly calls, I'm sure he rightly calls it, the classic consensus years. In which the beliefs say of Rome, of the orthodox world, and the world of Geneva, as it's usually called sometimes. The world of Protestantism. Canterbury is an offshoot of Geneva, you know. Jim would love that. I wish he was here to hear me. He'd say amen to them. I mention this here, of course, because it's in this time frame, as you know, that these creeds, which are mentioned in Article 8, they were established for us in these early consensus sentences.

This consensus is, of course, presupposed as true by all subsequent Christians. The Reformers never doubted this consensus. Nor did the medieval church.

Nor did the Puritans. Nor did 19th century evangelicals. Late modern Christians like ourselves don't doubt it. We receive it. We say them every Sunday.

[10 : 54] I hope, therefore, that you will be encouraged by this kind of background and this bit of knowledge about this wonderful creedal heritage that we inherit.

Hope this encourages us all to look again on this, the first gathering again of Learners' Exchange, at this most basic summarizing statement of our faith.

We're going to look today specifically at the Apostles' Creed with reference on occasion to the other creeds as well. Again, so today, that's by way of introduction, just going to have a look at the

Apostles' Creed together.

The Apostles' Creed, of course, was shaped in a church which sometimes was under horrible persecution. It was learning how to read scripture together. It was learning how to form churches. Learning how to govern churches. And none of that would have been possible without a life of constant prayer. Prayer and worship was the living context in which the creeds were formed.

[12:00] So, before we look at it, of course, let's just very briefly say a word of prayer. Our Lord, we thank you that you've given us so many gifts in the gospel. So many ways to enter into its great riches.

Help us today to understand more of these things as we look at the Apostles' Creed. And to your glory and to our benefit. Amen. Amen. I'm going to put the Apostles' Creed up here in just a moment.

But just a little bit of background concretely about the Creed. Some further stuff. About the year 190. 190. A fellow, a famous early Christian named Irenaeus.

He lived in France. He's usually thought of as named Irenaeus of Lyon. Wrote this. It's in a great book he wrote called Against Heresies. He says this.

The Church. The Church. The Church. Though dispersed throughout the whole world. Even to the ends of the earth.

[13:06] Has received from the Apostles. And their disciples. This faith. She believes. Oh my God. He calls the Church.

She. She believes in one God. The Father Almighty. Maker of heaven and earth. And in the sea and all things that are in them. And. In one Christ Jesus.

The Son of God. Who became incarnate for our salvation. And. In the Holy Spirit. The Son of. And in the Holy Spirit.

Who proclaimed through the prophets. The dispensation of God. There is. If you will. The Apostles' Creed. Taking shape.

Around the year 190. It reads very much as if Irenaeus isn't inventing those words. This is already. The kind of words. That are summarizing words for the faith.

[14:05] How far back they actually end up going. No one really knows for sure. But. The early church. Very early church. Quickly. If you will. Found herself.

Summarizing the faith in words like that. We believe in one God. The Father Almighty. One Christ Jesus. And in the Holy Spirit. There it is.

Little historical note. You've probably heard this before. I always find it very moving. Irenaeus. As a young man. Heard an older man. Named Polycarp. Preach the gospel.

Polycarp. Undoubtedly knew. A man named John. Who was either John. Of Zebedee. The disciple of Jesus.

Or he was a man. Named John the Elder. Who moved in apostolic circles. Irenaeus. Lived within living memory. Of Jesus.

[15:03] He knew people. Who had known people. Who knew. The apostolic band. He's very close. If you will. To the real thing. Irenaeus.

Of course. Would have been a man. Who grew up speaking Greek. That was his native tongue. Imagine that. When he read the New Testament. He read it like. We read a newspaper. That was just his language.

The insights. All the nuance of it. Would just be automatic for him. He's a great figure. In the early church. The creeds. As you.

As we. Heard that lovely quote. From Irenaeus. The creeds. Always have. A three part. You could call it. A trinity form.

It's always. I believe in. Father. I believe in. Son. I believe in. The Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit. Very early on. The creed. Is associated.

[15:59] With baptism. Apparently. Very early on. At baptism. Of course. We die. And we rise. Again. Into a new. Mystery. A new world.

Really. And the creed. Is meant. To describe. The new world. That the baptized person. Is now. Entering into. In a sense. They got this. From scripture. This understanding.

Of. Baptism. In the creed. How this works. Go into all the world. Says Jesus. Preach the good news. Baptizing them. You know. The famous words. At the end of Matthew. In the name of the Father.

Son. In spirit. So the creed. Was meant. To protect. The baptized person. From error. The early church. Calls the creed.

The rule. Of faith. The rule. Of faith. Faith. If you will. Read scripture. And finds there. This creed. Fellow like Irenaeus.

[16:56] Spent much. Of his life. Making intellectual. War. With Gnosticism. The Gnostics. By and large. More large.

Than by. They hated creeds. They wanted. To read scripture. As a kind of. Mystical. Mystical. Esoteric. Spirituality. That you make it up.

For yourself. As you go along. It's been known. To happen. Even in our time. Creeds. Are unpopular. In the more. Waning. Church circles.

Even in our own city. They don't like. The creeds. They state. Too much. Concrete. Real stuff. The creeds. Are unpopular. In the unbelieving.

Churches. There. You have. A bit. Of background. About creeds. Enough. Of that. Though. There's a lot. Of. Historical. And theological. Literature.

[17:50] About the. About the historical. And theological. Formation. Of the creeds. And it's out there. For your. For your. Perusal. If you. If you want to know more. About the.

The background. Historical. Development. Of the creeds. So. What we're going to do today. Again. Is just run through the creed. One line at a time. And see what we find there. You'll find more there. Than I have found there. I think it's a. A storehouse. Of gospel. Treasure. Really. The creed. But just. There we are. I believe. Famously. It begins.

I hope. If you can't see it. Most of you have this. Memorized anyway. The creed. Begins. The apostles creed. I believe in God. The father. Almighty. Maker.

Of heaven. And earth. There it is. That's how it begins. I think. I take. These words. In the creed. Most for granted. And I've tried.

[18:45] To wake myself up. Recently. And say. Stop. Don't do that anymore. With words. We started out. Talking about words. With words. We say the creed.

This is possible. Because. God. Is intelligible. And God. Has created. An intelligible. World. This. Should fill us. With wonder. The sciences. I'm speaking in the presence. Of some. Learned. Scientist. Today.

The sciences. Are possible. Because. This is believed. Either explicitly. Or implicitly. The world out there.

Is intelligible. This should again. Fill us. With a sense of. Take this. Never take this. For granted. This is what God. Has given us.

[19:39] I believe in God. The father almighty. Maker of heaven. And earth. I can say this. With words. That are intelligible. He. This God. The father almighty.

About who we're going to. Learn more. In a moment. In the creed. Is the maker. Of heaven. And earth. It's amazing. The crisis. Of modernity.

According to George Steiner. And surely. Right about this. Is that. There has been a break. A chasm. Has opened up. Between words. And world. Modern people.

Do not have a faith. That there's any connection. Between ourselves. And the world. Out there. We've been progressively. Going into a deeper. And deeper. Hole. Of our own subjectivity.

That's all. Modern people. Really believe in. Themselves. In their little minds. They're not. In an intelligible. Creation. As a gift. From an intelligible.

[20:33] Creator. They've forgotten. The truth. Of the creed. We. In the summer. We were looking. At Ecclesiastes. And I. I. You know. The Ecclesiastes. He famously says.

Remember. Remember.

This has. Knowledge. Consequences. Amongst. Other things. It has. The use. The fancy.

Language. Before. 10 o'clock. On a Sunday morning. Epistemic. Consequences. You won't.

Understand. Knowledge. Really. You won't have. A healthy. Understanding. Of knowledge. Unless you believe.

You're in. A created universe. And we're in it. And the world is knowable. And we're supposed to know it. Not only do we.

Should we remember this. But we must remember to remember it. And that's why we say these creeds so frequently. God guarantees that words.

[21 : 27] In principle. Will have real. Meaningful reference. We're not just making noise at one another. Our words are assuming sound.

They're not just becoming sound. It's a world of difference. Between the two. A lot of modern people are beginning to think that words are just noise. It's a tragic nihilism that seeps into our culture. No. No. God is behind the world. He makes it intelligible. Our words have meaning. God guarantees this wonderful meaningfulness.

God and the world. Says T. A. T. F. Torrance. Great theologian. These are the great. He calls them. These are the great objectivities. They fill.

Torrance. Beautifully says. They fill him with wonder at all times. God in the world. Intelligible. This the creed gives us.

[22 : 29] We confess these things. In the creed. Gnosticism. That thing. That horrible heresy. That keeps repeating itself in history. Gnosticism.

In a certain sense. Hides whatever wretched God it believes in from the world. Not our God. Our God loves. This is why the creed was written. Our God loves the world.

He loves the creation. It's his. He honors it. It's beautiful. God is not the prisoner of some wretched transcendence.

No. The word assumed flesh and came and told us these great truths. God is intelligible and has given us an intelligible world to believe in.

I believe in God. The Father Almighty. Maker of heaven and earth. That's a wonderful confession. To be honored and treasured.

[23 : 29] It's. It becomes increasingly controversial. That's what we believe in. And then of course famously in this creed it gets right down to business. Doesn't it?

In between I believe in God the Father Almighty. Maker of heaven and earth. And then we hear and in Jesus Christ. Something of course has happened.

John's gospel says that Jesus he was in the world. It says he made the world. And then it says that the world knew him not. How could that be?

Between part one and part two of the creed. The moral catastrophe of sin intrudes. Why isn't the creed just that first top line?

God created the world. Here we are. Well something's gone wrong with God's creation. This we know. The world is a catastrophically alienated place from God.

[24 : 31] So the creed continues. And in Jesus Christ his only son our Lord. Those consensus builders wondered if this male language amounted to a privileging of maleness.

This specifically I learned from Ode in the summer. And it filled me with wonder. There is nothing new under the sun. Ecclesiastes tells us.

It's the truth. They thought about this because they thought that if there was a privileging of maleness in the gospel that would be a problem.

They couldn't understand that. But when the incarnation was thought about in concrete realness they simply noted the facts. Have you noticed this about the creed?

Joseph is just graciously set aside as the word assumes flesh. I'm just anticipating a bit here. Mary was not set aside.

[25 : 35] I'm going to talk about Mary in a moment. Mary is the vessel, the vehicle, the place where human flesh is assumed by the second person, the son. And we believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord.

God is called father in the first part of the creed because he has as a father a son. It anticipates the second part, obviously.

Mary is the vessel in which the word assumes flesh. It's interesting to note that in the creed there are, may I call them this, you know what I mean, there are two regular folks.

Pilate and Mary. I think women come out winners on that score. We men are represented by Pilate really. Filing fellow.

The incarnation, Paul thought about this, didn't he? The incarnation gives us the son born of woman. Very important, Paul. No, Joseph just isn't part of this.

[26 : 44] We men are set aside in this mystery. Born of woman. When I read this in Owen, I can't believe how, again, nothing new.

The church fathers thought about this and it seems to me they got it just right. And in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost.

We have to move right along here. Conceived by the Holy Spirit and then born of the Virgin Mary. Sometimes, have you heard these? Sometimes, just briefly, sometimes attempts are made to explain away the virgin birth as a mistaken translation of a Hebrew word.

We've heard that one, apparently, oh, in Isaiah it says young woman, but the one that was translated by the Septuagint chaps, they got that mixed up and they called her a virgin. So, there you go.

The church, these arguments never work. The church sees the Gospels clearly, especially in Luke, telling us that Jesus of Nazareth enters history through a mysterious divine work.

[27 : 51] In this, for me, this is the importance of this. Of course, there's a lot more in this doctrine. But in this, I see that my Lord Jesus is simply other than I am.

He draws near. He assumes the flesh that I have. Becomes fully human. But he remains other. In a very quiet, gentle way here.

By setting aside Joseph. He's conceived by the Holy Spirit. Our Lord is wondrous. His birth is uniquely unique.

Isn't that, do you love that? We should not just confess this, we should love this confession. I love the virgin birth now. Yes, I love it. Our Lord is so mysterious.

He's so wonderful. Scholarship is giving its attention to women in the Gospels and in the New Testament as a whole now. In a way which is long overdue.

[28 : 55] And it's wonderful just to think about this fact. Mary is in the Creed. Joseph is not in the Creed. We men should be deeply offended and get our placards out.

Why aren't we protesting, we men? What's wrong with us? It's outrageous. There you go. It's wonderful. Mary's there. Singing of Mary, the hymn says.

I think we should, more than we do. Joseph is set aside. Mary's there. But again, it's wonderful to see, in a sense, as the Creed now continues, suffered under Pontius Pilate.

Right away we go to this. Suffered under Pontius Pilate. This is quoted all the time, very frequently, but I'm sure it should be.

Again, especially in our sort of loose, Gnostic religious environment. Dorothy Sayers wonderfully talked about, didn't she, the scandal of particularity.

[29 : 56] That's something that the Christian must rejoice in. This is the scandal we love. You know. The scandal that Christians rejoice in couldn't be simpler.

More simple than it is. When this man, Pontius Pilate, the most famous Roman of them all. When he ruled Judea, that's when we were saved.

That should move us. When that sleazy Roman bureaucrat ran Judea for the Romans, I was saved.

That's when you were saved. When Pontius Pilate was running Judea, we were saved. That's wonderful. The Creed earths us in this regard.

We couldn't save ourselves. I wasn't even alive when I was saved. It's such a work of grace. God was, he saw me in the future, he saved me back there.

[30 : 58] He decided to do it when Pontius Pilate was running the show in Judea. There you go. And then the Creed famously says, was crucified.

Dead and buried. A caricature of, it's usually called, I think not unfairly, a caricature of liberal Protestantism runs like this.

There once was a Jesus who went about Galilee teaching that everyone should be nice. And there were bad people, Roman authorities and Jewish authorities, who couldn't endure having someone teach people to be nice, and so they killed them.

Archbishop William Temple famously said, why anybody would crucify the Christ of liberal Protestantism is a great mystery. He was a nerd. I wouldn't bother crucifying.

No. Jesus was perceived as a real threat to Roman and temple power. He was. Power defends itself. This is old ground. You know it well.

[32 : 02] The gospel offends power. It doesn't go out of its way to do it. It just does. It sounds revolutionary. Can we ever really forget that our blessed Mary used to say things?

I wonder if she whispered this on occasion around Roman centurions. He puts down the mighty from their seats and exalts the humble and meek. That could get you in trouble in Rome.

In Rome and Judea, it gets you in big trouble. He puts down mighty ones, exalts the humble and meek. Jesus did say on occasion, my kingdom's not of this world.

But he drew suspiciously large crowds, didn't he? He lived as well in an expectation culture. And our Lord fed expectation on Palm Sunday famously.

He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey fulfilling a prophecy that said, your king comes to you riding on a donkey. All looks very suspicious.

[32 : 59] The Romans had in their own minds very good reasons for killing Jesus. And this happened to the word of God from heaven, says the creed.

He was crucified. He was crucified. And then, of course, it says dead and buried. I wonder why. In a short creed, you may wonder, why did they bother saying that?

Okay, he was crucified, dead and buried. Well, why this creedal moment, again, dead and buried?

Richard Bauckham, a wonderful New Testament scholar, reminds the Christian, and I hope he reminds others, that eyewitness testimony is at or very near the heart of how we understand knowledge and history and theology.

Eyewitness testimony. The Gospels are eyewitness testimony. If you want a high scholarly experience that will bless your heart, read Richard Bauckham, Jesus and the Eyewitnesses.

Wonderful book. They witnessed the Gospels that Jesus of Nazareth died and was buried. And that's why the rule of faith says so.

[34 : 18] Because somebody saw this. He was crucified. He was dead. And they buried him. Eyewitnesses saw it.

And the creed says, witnesses to scripture faithfully. Sure warrant of scripture is behind the creed here. As article 8 puts it.

He assumed our humanity. And so he assumes our death. And even our putting away after death.

This is, this is a quote from Bauckham, which I appreciate very much. This is insider knowledge from involved participants.

That's why the Gospels say these things. And the creed faithfully tells us, you better remember it.

Eyewitnesses saw the stuff that you read about in the Gospels.

[35 : 18] This is insider knowledge from involved participants. You cannot get behind testimony. Jesus died. Then he was buried.

So says the Gospels. And so says the creed. We hurry right along here. He descended into hell. Well, there you go.

For many, this is the creed's most perplexing statement. It has been for me for a long time. I'm sure it is for you. It has been glossed, I think, probably helpfully as, he went to the place of the departed dead.

He went to the place of the departed dead. This would be a good time to tell you something that Mr. Old makes very clear. I think very helpfully. In the Christian consensus about last things, there is less consensus than about everything else.

And the more you think about that, I don't think he goes on to make this point, but the more you think about that, I think that's the way it should be. When you start thinking about last things, it is very, we're at the perimeters, really at the perimeters of knowledge.

[36 : 33] It's hard to think about the last things. It's supposed to be, I take it. And this is true as you get to some of the last stuff in the creeds. When Jesus died, his body lay in a grave, but the New Testament says that his history here somehow continued on.

He did some kind of work for the dead. Especially here, the creed consensus people, they're thinking about, say, Peter's witness about Jesus preaching to the dead, 1 Peter 3, 19.

You know that passage. It's exciting and wondrous, but also, you can't really get a real grip on it.

And you're not supposed to. But Peter knew something there about our Lord's, as it's called, his history after death.

The dead, some, I had never seen this connection before, but some, some have seen a connection with the very, again, perplexing and wondrous witness in Matthew's gospel about those Hebrew saints appearing in Jerusalem after the Lord's passion.

So the early church fathers said, okay, the Lord goes to the place of the part of the dead. We don't know all that he did there, but maybe he sent these Hebrew witnesses back to say, the Lord is risen.

[37 : 59] How overwhelming and thorough was heaven's witness to Israel about Jesus? Even sent the dead to witness to it.

There you go. The dead apparently have an interest in the work of Jesus. At the transfiguration, the two people, Moses and Elijah, long dead, those fellows, they spoke with Jesus about his departure, as Luke puts it, didn't they?

They spoke to Jesus about his death. I can only think the pastoral wisdom that's in the creed's words here are at least contained something like this.

You can trust Jesus with your death. Wherever you're going, however cloudy you think it is on this side, and it is, Jesus has been there. He can handle it for you.

It's okay. He's been there. When you die, you're going to someplace that Jesus is the Lord of. You can trust him with that.

[39 : 02] Then the creed famously continues, the third day he rose again from the dead. It's good just to remember something very simple. I always remind myself of this when I read the scriptures.

If this had not been believed, there would be no scriptures. If this had not been believed, there'd be no creed. Everybody who wrote the New Testament documents, they were thorough believers in our Lord's resurrection.

The resurrection starts everything. All the oral remembering of Jesus, all the writing remembering, it all happened because he'd been raised from the dead. If our Lord had just been another interesting rabbi, he might have been remembered for a generation by a few people with eccentric interests, and then he would have been forgotten.

No, because he was raised from the dead, this whole thing happened. Vancouverites believe in Jesus because these people believed in the resurrection. It's all there.

The New Testament was written by people who believe this fact. Just, I hope at Easter you always just think of each gospel and the way it ends. I love them all.

[40 : 11] They're all so distinct and beautiful. Or think of 1 Corinthians 15, a wonderful central place of witness to the resurrection. I would think that we, when I thought about this this past week or two, we must get rid of romantic or optimistic conceptions of the resurrection.

If you will, I think Neil Mancor used to say this kind of thing, didn't he? The learned in Neil. You know, we've got to get rid of a kind of Easter card religious kitsch. That's horrible.

Chocolate's okay, but other stuff is bad. The resurrection says the wondrous, speaking of wondrous things, the resurrection, according to David Bentley Hart, one of my favorites, it sets us free from optimism and teaches us hope.

Get rid of optimism. That's for flakes. Excuse my language. No. We need a living hope and a real event like a resurrection. I don't want to look for reasons to be optimistic.

They're usually defeated by newspapers. That's all it takes. No. The final answer to the famous atheist charge that God should get rid of all the evil in the world and since he hasn't done it, either he can't or he's not a God that you should worship, the answer to that is this, the resurrection understood in all of its fullness.

[41 : 38] All of its fullness. Everyone, the third creed, goes out of its way, I'll say, to make this point. Everyone, believer and unbeliever, will be raised and judged for deeds done in the body, as Paul says.

God has appointed a showdown day, if you will, with evil. Our theodicy, you know what that is, is eschatology. To get you over kind of romantic ideas about, helps me get over any kind of loose, easygoing, silly ideas about the resurrection.

I need someone like David Bentley Hart to talk to me about the terror, he calls, the terror of Easter. God is going to raise you up into an eternal body and then hold you responsible for what you've done in the body.

That's how he'll deal with evil. If you want to call God's challenge, if you're an atheist, you throw accusations of God, God says, here's my answer. It's the resurrection.

When he makes all things new and judges evil. It's properly understood, it's joyful joy, the resurrection, and it's also a big challenge.

[42 : 58] There's no optimism in the resurrection. It's serious hope that God will deal with the world the way the world needs to be dealt with. I believe that he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven. When was the last time you heard anything about the ascension that was at all interesting or relevant or helpful? I found it this summer.

In Douglas Farrell, Canadian scholar at McGill, we need a mature understanding, says Douglas Farrell, and I found this very helpful in the context of the ascension.

We need a mature understanding both of the Lord's presence and of the Lord's absence. I found that good. If this is not in place in the church's life, what happens is that we make weird attempts to make up for the Lord's absence with bad forms of his presence.

This happens in the church. I pondered, for instance, the ascension. You'll be fascinated in the church. I was in the church and there in front of me on Labor Day was an obituary of a Roman Catholic theologian named Raymond Panikar.

[44 : 14] I used to read Panikar when I had too much time on my hands. I used to read these strange theologians. Panikar was one of these fellows. You've run into them.

He thought, oh, it goes like this. Christ equals a universal symbol. Therefore, Christ is everywhere. He's in all the world's religions. You've run across this.

Michael Ingham believes this kind of thing. The problem here is that, to put it bluntly, the apostles don't say that Christ is a universal symbol. Sort of like a Coca-Cola sign for us all.

No, we need Christ as a prophetic promise fulfilled in Galilee and in Jerusalem and on a cross and by his resurrection.

Panikar hasn't understood that we need a doctrine of his absence because we're called now in this time in salvation history to live in hope.

[45 : 12] Again, not to live in religious optimism. No, we must learn to live in hope. There are bad forms of the Lord's presence.

That's something you can work on in your own thinking. You can rebuke me later just as a misapprehension of the doctrine of the ascension. He quotes Calvin on the sacraments in this regard.

This is where Pharaoh gets this idea. I was worried that Jim might be here today and you've got to quote Calvin to make him happy. Calvin said about the sacrament, think about it, how we receive it. Today I received it. Have you? Bread and wine. Calvin says, in a, he talks about our Lord in the sacrament, he says, in a measure present and in a measure absent.

I think that's wisdom. You know, because the Lord said, do this until I return. See, I'm going somewhere. I'm going to be absent from you. So learn to be mature in my appropriate presence, but don't try to force a wrong form of my presence.

[46 : 18] The church gets arrogant and pushy when it thinks it owns Jesus in the sacrament or owns Jesus in some other way. In a measure present in a measure absent.

He ascended to his Father. He ascended, of course, to intercede for us. Intercession, such an important thing. I take it that the most profound ascension word for me is Paul to the Romans. I think the subject of Romans is up at St. John's these days. How shall he not with him freely give us all things? That with him means that the Lord has gone back to his Father and his Father has received him and in receiving him he receives us and will give us all things.

Our Lord had to go back to his Father. His concrete, real, divine body. Not a mystical cloud of nothing. He's really one of us.

He went to be with his Father. What a mystery. That is so glorious a truth in the ascension. He shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

[47 : 28] History is not meaningless, apparently. It is going somewhere. Persons and nations and all will be perfectly addressed in the judgment.

The creed becomes a bit staccato here and so I'm going to match it for time reasons as well. I believe famously the Hire South Creed ends with these little quick statements that this creed I believe in the Holy Ghost.

The best I can do is the creed starts with great objectivities a noble glorious creation minds able to know and enjoy but as the creed heads towards its end we hear that I believe in the Holy Spirit. An Augustinian people always assume that this kind of means that at the very core of your identity is spirit.

I think there's truth to that. Yes, it's fallen, it's sinful, it's not automatically going to be saved, it could be lost, but we are created spirits and we're meant to know spirit.

[48 : 41] Kierkegaard loved to say about that. You are a spirit in the presence of infinite spirit. You're alienated spirit needing a savior. You're spirit. So God gives us his spirit.

Spirit crosses boundaries, someone once said. You can do better with that than me. We are spirits created to know this spirit.

Then, evangelicals have their favorite thing in the creed, I believe, in the Holy Catholic Church. We love that one, don't we? The Holy Catholic Church. If I had to gloss that, especially for our own time, do something like this.

I am not making this stuff up when I say the creed. I believe with the apostles, thinking of Irenaeus here, I believe with the apostles and their disciples, all that the apostles teach, and that the faith, this faith, is confessed in the church by things like this creed.

I believe in the Holy Catholic Church. You can't be much of a Christian, if a Christian at all, if you're away from the Holy Catholic Church. Jesus died to save her.

[49 : 53] You want to be part of the mystery of the faith, of the church. I believe in the communion of saints, another one that I had really to struggle with, but as I get older, this comes to mean more to me.

Across space, across time, on earth, in heaven, my eternal family is one in Christ. You can do better with that than me, but at least that is there in this moment of the creed.

I believe in the communion of saints. Why is the next word there? I believe in the forgiveness of sins.

I don't know why that one's there, just there. But I take it that we are to pray to know this as members of the Catholic Church.

As individual people, we are to pray to know that my sins have been forgiven. The Lord used to say to people, it got them into trouble. Remember, your sins are forgiven you.

[51 : 02] On the cross, he said, Father, forgive them. this at the heart of the gospel, the forgiveness of sins. The church has this treasure to preach.

I'm sure this treasure was preached yesterday in the gym. God has revealed the forgiveness of sins in Jesus. The forgiveness of sins as one of the fathers said, forgiveness has been raised from the dead.

The communion of saints is, if you will, the communion of the forgiven. Racing right to the end, the resurrection of the body. Well, this one appears nice and straightforward, doesn't it?

This is, in a sense, the great, I think this is the great victory, especially of the early church, over its very broadly speaking Greek Platonist world that it inherited.

For the Greeks, the world of change is the world, simply to be overcome. Where there's change, something's gone wrong. That's how the Greeks thought, in common sense terms.

[52 : 11] The body, because it's filled with change, don't you know this is true as you get older? The body is a prison and you've got to escape from it. By their own life, this makes a lot of sense.

I like the Greeks, I like Plato. But against this very strong bias, the creed old church held on to the goodness of the creation, the goodness of the body, and that God's final intention is to give you an eternal body.

Really, we must ask to believe this. I am going to be given by God an eternal body, like the one revealed at the end of each gospel.

And as such, we will be given life everlasting, as the creed ends. Obviously, a lovely, appropriate way to end this creed and to end this too long talk.

Gee, I didn't know what to say about this. I was listening to this. Of all things, the CBC, it made my, all the taxes I paid over the years finally paid off. A rabbi was on the CBC the day and he quoted G.K.

[53 : 21] Chesterton. Chesterton apparently said this. This is so beautifully Chestertonian.

Chesterton said, I know people who pray for everlasting life, but they evidently don't know what to do with themselves on a wet Sunday afternoon.

That's perfect. That's a Christian. Everlasting life is a bit scary. Do you want to live forever?

It's a profound. Maybe we come to them and say, okay, it's a short creed, but I'm happy to get through it. Done it again. No, life after lasting is participation in God's life.

Have you ever had atheists? I remember on one occasion, very clearly an older gentleman who was a very tough minded guy, didn't want anything to do with my religion. And he just, that sneering comment, life forever in heaven, it would get so boring.

And he meant it. I realized he meant that. I hope I said it graciously. I said, no, you know, I believe that God is going to annihilate the possibility of boredom. There will not be fate to intrude.

[54 : 39] Our God is sovereign over anything that might be called fate. If there is fate, our sovereign God is wildly sovereign over it. He can annihilate the possibility of God will not give you

an everlasting life that has the possibility of getting boring.

everlasting life, participation in God's great, wonderful life. God the Father almighty will call your spirit and body into this never-ending exaltation of life.

Again, how can we get a grip on that? It's hard, isn't it? Do you ever have intimations of it sometimes? You can share that in a moment or two in discussion time.

some people speak of intimations of it, don't they? There's a joy that might go on forever. Lewis was high on that being, wasn't he? So are the romantics in their own way, rightly or wrongly.

Creed ends by saying, and the life everlasting. What? Amen. Amen is probably another one of those dole. They're probably thinking of Revelation 3, Jesus is the great amen.

[55 : 47] With Jesus you say amen. Because he is the amen. He's the one who made the creed possible. Or he revealed its fullness. He made it possible.

Amen. See why? Come to Learn is Exchange, take courses at a theology school, just get engaged yourself in Christian understanding of things.

You can go on forever with it. And it's supposed to go on forever because you're called to everlasting life. I desperately want to hear your feedback on this. In conclusion, conclusion, no puns intended, the words of the creed are sound words.

I thought you'd get that in a moment. That's where we started. They're sound words. And you can sound them. And they tell you gospel truths that are everlasting, everlastingly wonderful truths.

There it is. The creed, that's kind of the framework for our whole existence, isn't it? St. John's and Learner's Exchange and everything that the Christian mystery is about. And I hope you can live in that world and that framework.

[56 : 58] There's so much wealth there. Wonderful thing. The creed. Credo. People in the choir must know that they sing the creed. The creed, wonderful, what masses put them to such high music.

The creed is sung. It's wonderful stuff. Let me say a quick word of prayer and then we've got to have some feedback from you. Lord, thank you for the gift of the gospel and it comes to us in this form.

We've learned to treasure it over the years. Help us to learn more and more of these great truths as you've given them to us to know. We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. The creed. I'm sorry that was so long enough. It's going to be short. Thank you.

Thank you. Next time we'll just zip through Athanasius. Me too.

[58 : 05] I never thought of doing it. Maybe Bill would do that for us. Harvey? Yes. I'm glad somebody mentioned Athanasius because I was going to suggest that at some point in the future could you compare those creeds that are in our prayer book because they don't all say exactly the same thing.

And one of the things that's missing from this one is bishops. Praise the Lord. But we do when we say that I do. Sheila, don't be shy.

Sorry, go ahead. I don't mean to interrupt you. But there were bishops in the church at that time. Overseers.

Okay, overseers. they probably participated in putting this together. And they didn't necessarily think that that was that having bishops, that having that kind of ecclesiology was necessary.

Could you comment? I'm not here. one of the great things about Odin's project is he wants us to remember again that their church once had no formal divisions and had all this theological ferment going on and it managed to reach these kinds of consensus forms.

[59 : 39] And therefore the church can go back and look at that and not start again but rejoice in this much wonderful agreement on Trinitarian mystery, on Christology, on sacraments.

And see how the church dealt with it then and find again a basis for growth in the whole church.

So what Odin will do is he'll say oh see this guy in the 7th century named John of Damascus. Look what he's teaching there. And then he'll just jump over and say oh you can find exactly the same in Baxter, the Puritan.

Jim's going to talk about Richard Baxter next week. So he wants or here you'll find this again in Calvin or you'll find this again in Aquinas. You'll find this again in the 19th century Evangelical.

You'll find this again all over the place. And so he wants to emphasize again this wonderful consensus. they made mistakes. They had their major problems.

[60 : 46] They had their own versions of theological catastrophe that's for sure. But it certainly seems good solid to believe that the spirit kept the church moving in a right direction.

Kept it going. Gave it a firmness of confessional stance that kept it going firmly in the gospel. So yes there are issues to be discussed but there's a richness in this consensus that Odin wants to keep alive in the church.

Odin used to be a mainstream sophisticated Yale educated liberal. And one day he just said it's all so vacant and meaningless and shallow I'll have nothing more to do with it.

And we're right over to the camp of total belief. Just believes the whole he called himself an evangelical that's for sure. Just believes he didn't want anything more to do with that dwindling dying tradition.

Sorry. Was there one event specific event? No I know I was asking that again this morning there was I've never heard of it. For Odin there was actually. Please share it with us. He went on sabbatical and when he went to go on sabbatical he had to take some books with him and he didn't take a single book with him that was written I think after the reformation and so the penny dropped and he realized that he needed to go back to the church fathers and that's when he started this consensual work and his idea is that in modernity everyone is interested in innovation something that's new.

[62 : 27] In fact in the publishing world of the university you can only get published and tendered if you do something that's new. He decided what he was going to do was new was do something that wasn't new.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yes I've heard that story. Yeah. That's the context of a conversion.

Yeah. Yeah. After modernity. Yeah. That's a lovely book. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Thank you for a great start to the year. I hope so. It's fascinating coming after the session yesterday on Romans that we're starting the year with these two very basic statements of our faith.

And I just want to say how much I appreciate that and I warm to this statement of the creed. Just a couple of felicity questions I when I look at the Ascension and knock on the door of this church on Ascension Day there's very little going on I wonder if you have any thoughts on this seems like an important event seems like enormous theological implications my thought is to echo your comment if there's some great truth here the church's life will not note it you wouldn't think it's noting it by the way that day comes and goes without comment Douglas Farrell's book on Ascension and the church it's got a fancier title than that very difficult volume to read but sees the whole mess that the church gets into as relatable to this disastrous misunderstanding that occurs about where Jesus is in some pietist circles he's only in people's hearts in some liberal circles he's everywhere the New Testament says he's at his father's right hand in a body interceding for us he's not with us in some sense get it straight church the apostles are saying and from that again

[65 : 00] I'm repeating myself you can start maybe forcing the forcing the Lord's hand by creating false forms of presence if you want to go over the top maybe we maybe a wrong understanding of the Ascension caused the Crusades for all I know we'll go and find the Lord in Jerusalem that's not fair to our medieval Christian brothers and sisters but the church goes wrong when it forgets basic doctrine and so thank you I agree with your point completely what do we do about the Ascension it's just something to think about it's in the Creed he ascended into heaven he went away from us it's part of the mystery of salvation that he went away another question yes yes sorry what do you make in fact there's nothing about Jesus like he's birth and well yeah it's a good point one answer is it's a short creed and it wants it's the fact this is this is a this is the history of Jesus as our savior as our teacher he's not in this creed at least not directly but he they know he's a teacher but it's it's really important you'll agree it's really important to know if you're learning from a teacher who oh by the way he rose from the dead you know the teaching is remembered because of this mystery yes

I wonder if it may be deeply implicit in I believe in the Holy Ghost who brings to the church's remembrance what the Lord taught us who brings to the church's attention Holy Scripture so that's implicit in there but it has been commented on yes you go right from a born of the Virgin Mary then he went right over into the auspices of Pontius Pilate an unfortunate turn of events but that's the way the creed wants to get us the big story in a sense I think it's just a distinct history of God the Father God the Son and the Holy Spirit yes ending up with us it's our story too beautifully put yes the communion of saints yes thank you you do think that between say this creeds formation and say

Nicaea and Nicaea is 325 roughly then another form of it later in that century when they go I believe in God the Father Almighty maker of heaven and of all things visible and invisible other issues had intruded that needed to be addressed and that's why these other things come into creeds there's a reason somebody had challenged somebody was mixed up is it possible to argue that the word suffering under Pontius Pilate gives us the whole of his teaching yes yes it's sort of implicit here and there you're right yes our Lord's ministry was a form of suffering I guess in a sense yes yes yes and the gospels are usually sometimes called passion narratives without an introduction there's a sorry a reverend and a professor who gets am I in trouble okay professor no geography questions please no no there's going to be a plug for even song oh oh you talked briefly about mary and even song gives us a very strong opportunity to reflect on mary yeah most of the rest of the time in our church we don't pay much attention to her no no so it's another aspect of this balance of the creeds is different than our daily that's right that's right that's right did you mention yesterday and I've been reading about women recently in the gospels I'm up on this kind of thing Paul Paul Paul Paul says hello to many people at the church in Rome and 25 of them actually 16 men 9 women women everywhere in this book and they've been sort of dodgily left out in many ways the creed gets that nice balance there Robert at the back and then we have Robert I enjoy from your in your closing comments your reference to life everlasting and the fact that many of us don't know what you said I remember years ago I don't know where I read it I read the principle that in life everlasting there is joy which is everything so it never ever becomes still boring is not part of the mission anyway I just appreciate that that's good thank you

Mr. Wagner please I'm I comment about suffering got me thinking what language was the two questions what language was the creed written in originally and then that another question which has to do with the punctuation and because I've heard an instructor out of the region talk about the creed and the language and meaning around suffered under Pontius Pilate it was Martha Dahl and she wondered if the punctuation shouldn't be suffered comma under Pontius Pilate no comma was crucified so I don't know what was so the first question language yeah I think it's Greek and quickly Latin yeah if it was the other way around I'd be shocked but but but I stand corrected I I'm surprised to find out how many apparently

[71 : 35] Hebrew folks including women migrated from Palestine to Rome and Latinized their Hebrew names and so they're kind of hidden from us in the New Testament but clever chaps like Richard Bauckham clear away the the covering here find women very significant women leadership with Latinized Hebrew names that have been Latinized so I bet it went Greek Latin very quickly but they were they were quick with language transition weren't they in the ancient world much more than we are so there's the good question I take it Greek and then certainly in the East they would have been Greek Greekers right and then Latin would have shown up pretty quickly in the West I guess Augustine must have known the Creed in Latin and about punctuation and

Pontius Pilate I've got a clue did someone else have a that's not Greek punctuation that's not Greek punctuation only you would know that well no I don't know about punctuation it isn't actually correct because punctuation has changed drastically since the 1700 oh sure you're going to give us a talk on punctuation not this turn not this turn the difference that would make though yes there's clearly by being crucified by a Pontius Pilate he certainly suffered but that wasn't the only time he suffered no yeah yeah yes there's lots of fullness waiting in the Creed isn't there you get the sense but the church has found this article 8 is a good word about these things they're warrants of scripture validate these creeds yes

I'm sorry let me see Philipians 3 18 I want to know Christ and the power of resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering becoming like human is death and somehow would change the resurrection from the dead amen oh sure you can you can gloss it they wanted us to be expanded yes thank you thank you thank you for putting up with me that was a bit longer than I expected to be today thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you