

The Failure of Creeds

"But there are so many creeds, all claiming to be right, that I should not know which to take. They were all made by learned men, and if they can not agree on the kind of a creed, how am I to decide which is right?" says one. It is a matter of great moment and of much relief that, aside from all these conflicting, clashing, and erring creeds, there is one book that all parties concede is right. They all agree that the Bible is right — that it came from God. They all further agree that it contains the law of God — that the law of the Lord is perfect. The only wonder is, that man ever attempted to make any other creed or law for the Church. Such an undertaking could not have commenced without two wicked assumptions:

1. That the law of God, as set forth in the Bible, is not sufficient — is a failure.
2. That the insufficiency or failure can be remedied by weak, erring, and uninspired men.

No man of intelligence will affirm, in plain terms, that the Bible is not sufficient for the government of the saints; or that man — uninspired man — can make a creed that will serve a better purpose than the Bible. Still such affirmations are implied in every attempt made by uninspired men to make a creed. If you admit, as all are bound to do, that the law of God is in the Bi-

ble; that nothing may be added to it, nothing taken from it, and that no part of it may be changed, there is not an excuse in the world for making another law. The law of God in the Bible is the law, the divine law, the supreme law, in the kingdom of God; and it is a treasonable movement to attempt to get up another constitution, law, name, body, or officers, apart from the constitution, law, name, body, and officers as found in the Bible.

But the matter now in hand is to find a safe course to pursue. Can this be done? All admit the Bible is right. All admit that the law of God in the Bible is right. All admit that those who follow the Bible honestly and faithfully, in faith and practice, will be saved. All admit that wherever any creed differs from the Bible is wrong. Then it is infallibly safe to take the Bible and follow it. When men undertake to prove that a human creed is a good one, they argue that it is like the Bible. If a creed like the Bible is a good one, why will not the Bible itself do? If the Bible will not serve the purpose — is insufficient and a failure — a creed like it would be equally insufficient. When men make a creed to do what the Bible would not do, they should certainly make it different from the Bible, or it would serve no better purpose than the Bible itself.



2 Cor 4:13-14 - And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.

Sick

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Fran Snyder (Mother of Carla Humphrey) | Lori Holloway | Chick Wade |
| Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters) | Rubye Johnson (Erica Seymore's Grandmother) | Jared Nixon |
| Ross Folmar | Dave and Betty Bradford | Johnny Adrian (Friend of Sullivan's) |
| Ed Mort (Friend of Sharon Bailey) | "Grandmama" Odessa Wyatt (Dyle's grandmother) | Erlene Davis (Walker Davis' mother) |
| Gerald White (Christopher's and Wesley's Father) | Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's) | Bill Rhodes (Toni Herd's Uncle) |
| Marty and Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephews) | Carrie Chavers (Friend of Sharon Bailey) | Joe Perry (Anna Miller's Relative) |

News and Notes

- Let's remember our expectant mothers: Laura Weldon, Anna Miller, Nicole Pender, Joy Liu and Amanda Stephens.
- Pam Dial, Laura Weldon's mother, died last week and was buried on Friday. She was a great example as a Christian and will be missed.
- Updated address for Jared and Sharon Ramsey : 355 Milano Lane #303, Melbourne, FL 32940
- Congratulations to the Lanier's on the birth of a new granddaughter, Madeline Claire Morton!
- Our next teaching quarter will begin next Sunday.
- Volunteers are needed to sign up to prepare communion and to lock the building and host the 1st-8th grade class.
- The men's business meeting and group meetings will be held today.

The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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TOO BRAINWASHED TO READ THE BIBLE?



Thought to Ponder

Beware of worshipping Jesus as the Son of God, and professing your faith in Him as the Savior of the world, while you blaspheme Him by the complete evidence in your daily life that He is powerless to do anything in and through you.

Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or E-mail: LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

Catechismal Christianity

By Jonathan Perz

Having faith and understanding your faith are two entirely different matters in modern Christianity. Many profess to have faith, and even show signs of that faith in various aspects of their lives, but have little or no understanding of the faith they cling to so tenaciously. What is the explanation for this phenomenon?

Is it possible that the faith of many is not based in God's word, but in catechisms? A catechism is defined as an *oral instruction; a manual for catechizing; specifically a summary of religious doctrine often in the form of questions and answers; a set of formal questions as put as a test; something resembling a catechism especially in being a rote response or formulaic statement* (Merriam Webster's Dictionary).

Catechisms exist in every denomination. They are sometimes called statements of faith, creeds, tenets of faith, and even testimonies. Some have written catechisms, which are occasionally modified and updated, as need requires. Others rely upon oral catechisms, handed down from generation to generation, teacher to student, preacher to convert. Catechisms even exist among those who are "non-denominational."

Why are these catechisms so dangerous? Why must we be concerned with them? How can we avoid catechisms' slippery slope?

Catechisms Become Creeds

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teaching of God's word and often undermine the very word they are supposed to uphold. For example, many believe that salvation is by *faith alone*, but after careful consideration are forced to acknowledge that this teaching is not founded in Scripture, but in the creed books of men. Because this catechism is so deeply engrained, those who will not acknowledge the truth believe the lie (**2 Thess. 2:11**). Therefore, their faith is in their creed, not in God's word (**Rom. 10:17**).

Students of God's word are not solely to blame, as teachers of God's word often reinforce the catechism by not speaking as the oracles of God (**1 Pet. 4:11**). Instead of emphasizing Scripture, they emphasize their synopses of Scripture. Instead of quoting the passage and then expounding upon it, they quote their catechism and

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then buttress it with proof texts. There is a world of difference between the two.

Catechisms Breed Spiritual Weakness

Spiritual strength starts with a depth of knowledge and ends with the application of that knowledge. Consider the *babe in Christ* (**1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14**). When watered down summaries consistently replace solid, meaty, deep and principled teaching, depth of understanding among the general populace of Christianity is nonexistent. This renders false teachers more influential, as there are less vanguards for them to overcome (Eph. 4:14). False doctrines are then easily assimilated into the mainstream thinking. Besides this, the bar that measures faithfulness (**Rom. 10:17**) is consequently lowered by the mean knowledge of God's people. Those with the most knowledge become the leaders, though their knowledge is often catechismal.

Catechisms Create the Wrong Impression About Christianity

When catechisms are emphasized, some of the most critical aspects of salvation are overlooked and deemphasized. Trying to uphold a statement of faith often results in neglect in areas Jesus said were important. For example, in an effort to be open and affirming, many neglect clear Biblical teaching to repudiate sinful conduct (**Eph. 5:11-12; 2 Cor 6:14-18**). This leaves people to believe that Christians are so loving, that they are not opposed to anything (e.g., homosexuality, adultery, fornication, etc.). In an effort to be kind and trusting, many neglect clear Biblical teaching to be wise and watchful (**Matt. 10:16; Acts 20:29-31**). This often results in Christians being stereotyped as naive and gullible, rendering us easy prey in a dark and malicious world. Space fails to record the damage done by the emphasis of one doctrinal point over another. Christians must be careful not to strain out the gnats only to swallow a camel (**Matt. 23:23-24**).

Catechisms Eliminate the Struggle of Learning

There are altogether too many lazy students of God's word today (**cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; Phil. 2:12; Acts 17:10-11**). Many want to stand on the shoulders of giants without first learning to stand on their own two feet. Christians want to gain knowledge by inspiration, not perspiration (**1 Tim. 4:13, 15-16**). There is far too much reliance upon preachers and teachers and far too little reliance upon God's word. Most memorize catechisms, not the underlying Scriptures which often disprove their catechisms. This is folly and building on the sand (**Matt. 7:24-29**).

The struggle of learning goes beyond the textbook ...

beyond the catechism. While principles and expectations are clearly set forth in Scripture, the lessons God teaches can only be learned by practice and experience. Consider patience (**Jas. 1:2-4**). The caterpillar, if deprived of the struggle of breaking free of its cocoon will soon die, for its wings will not have the strength to fly.

Catechisms Stifle Healthy, Beneficial Study and Discussion

A spiritual stifling and overbearing environment will inevitably cultivate stagnation and error. When one is apathetic and indifferent to all but their pet catechisms, they will stagnate in other key areas required for growth as a Christian (**cf. 2 Pet. 1:5-11; 3:18**). Catechisms are often insulated from honest investigation, making them perfect harbors for error and false doctrine. Since they are never questioned and examined, they are never seen for what they truly are—erroneous creeds that lead astray.

Furthermore, those who hold dear to catechisms either do not appreciate the benefits of healthy debate or improperly engage in the defense of their catechisms by resorting to unscrupulous tactics and hiding behind debating chicanery. No position or conviction should ever be withheld from honest evaluation. Such criticisms are not only good, they are commanded (**cf. Acts 15; 1 John 4:1; Rom. 12:9**).

Catechisms Produce an Unhealthy Reliance Upon Traditions

Not all traditions are bad, but neither are all good (**cf. 2 Thess. 2:15 and 1 Cor. 11:2 with Matt. 15:6**). Many of the things practiced by Christians are founded in tradition, not in faith. Each and every denomination has those dearly held traditions that are given preeminence, even when their continued exaltation is detrimental to genuine faith. Many abhor lawful practices on principle, simply because they would undermine some long held tradition, regardless if the lawful practice would prove more fruitful and expedient than the long held tradition. The status quo becomes the catechism and anyone who would question the catechism is a change-agent, heretic, and troublemaker. It is not a question of what is authorized, it is a question of what we have always done.

Conclusion

Catechismal Christianity is not conducive to growth, it instead festers decay (**2 Pet. 3:18**). It is not indicative of work, but typical of laziness (**Phil. 2:12**). It does not represent diligence, but it characteristic of indigence (**2 Tim. 2:15—NKJV**). Strict adherence to catechisms is tantamount to wearing a pair of glasses prescribed by Satan himself, they will blind you to the truth, they will never help you to be a disciple of Christ indeed and will never lead you to salvation. Let us determine to know the truth and truly be His disciples (**John 8:31-32**).



Deceit

By Ed Harrell

The majestic truth can be thus stated: if you deceive yourself and pretend that He does not know - He knows. If you humble yourself and pray forgiveness for what He knows - He no longer knows.

Upon his return from the Scopes trial in 1925, H. L. Mencken told a story of one of the leading citizens of Dayton who was a staunch prohibitionist but also spent much of his time halfstewed.

This citizen went home one evening after drinking a bit too much and told his wife he was sick and that she would have to do the evening praying alone. He went to bed but he could hear his wife on her knees in the next room. She began: "Oh, Lord, throw the mantle of Thy mercy around my drunken husband." He bolted up in bed and shouted to his wife, "Gracious, woman, don't tell Him I'm drunk; say I'm sick."

No one believes such nonsense. But millions act like they do.

The recent public spectacle of a famous television preacher trapped by immorality is not new, nor is the use of deceit to try to escape the consequences of sin. It is difficult for the mighty to humble themselves and say, "I have sinned."

But it is not only difficult for the mighty; it is onerous for all of us. Fortunate is the man who has never been entangled in the treacherous descent from immorality, to lying, to a life of deceit, fleeing the public price of sin.

One pays a terrible cost for hypocrisy. We sacrifice the cleansing grace of a penitent heart, brought low by the chastisement of conscience (**2 Cor 7:10**). We lose our ability to identify with others, to comfort and instruct those who carry such burdens in their own lives (**Gal 6:1-5**). And, above all, we forfeit our honor and self-respect (**2 Pt 1:9**). Somewhere, deep in my heart, I know that I lie to myself as well as to others.

So it is that one sin unacknowledged leads me deeper and deeper into the throes of deceit. Without self-respect, without the answer of a good conscience, the will to do right has perished.

Public wrong can rarely be hidden successfully; its public acknowledgement is the road to God's forgiveness and our own reformation. But even more dangerous is

the private deceit which threatens the integrity of my conscience.

There is much about me that you do not know, and you will never know. But I know, and God knows. It is between me and Him that deceit becomes most deceitful. I have never believed that public recitals of private sins served either God or man. But the soul-searching, closet prayer of a penitent heart is the biblical road to forgiveness and personal reconstruction.

The most curious facet of the story of the Tennessee drunk is the image of God that it presents. Can we hide from God? Such thinking, callously pursued, denigrates God; it obscures His eternal presence and majesty; it contributes to the frivolous modern concept of powerless divinity.

I confess that I guard my behavior for many different reasons. I value my family and loved ones; I am humbled by the esteem of others; I would not want to risk my job and the stability of my life. But, for all of that, I know that I can, if I will, run and hide. It may be risky, but I can sin and deceive.

The gyroscope of my life must be a God--consciousness. I live in His presence. He is with me everywhere I go--for good or evil. He watches, along with heavenly hosts, the adulterer and the liar. Will you do such dark and repulsive things in His presence? It is chilling to think such thoughts.

Of course, I do sin in His presence. And when I do, as I should, I fall remorsefully on my face and pray that He will do what I cannot do - remember it no more. It is a grand and awesome truth that I cannot forget my sins; they are painfully etched on my conscience for a lifetime. But He who knows all, has chosen to know no more.

The majestic truth can be thus stated: if you deceive yourself and pretend that He does not know - He knows. If you humble yourself and pray forgiveness for what He knows - He no longer knows.

