



Creeds & Confessions

Every now and again some new school of thought arises suggesting that the church has not quite got it right, and if only the new understanding would be adopted, then the Kingdom of God would begin to flourish. How should we react when this happens?

First, we must remember, that one of the effects of sin on the human race is spiritual 'blindness'. We are spiritually blind by nature. We need God to open our eyes and see things through 'Spirit-anointed' eyes. This is never more true than when spiritual and eternal matters are being discussed.

The Bible tells us in Isaiah 45:15 and Psalm 10:1 that God sometimes hides Himself, and His ways are not known, and His Word is deep. Therefore we should always be wary of new interpretations of Scripture that suddenly arise and contradict long-held understandings of the truth.

That, of course, does not mean that the true Church of Jesus Christ, has already cracked all there is to know from Holy Scripture or that we have articulated every doctrine perfectly. Jesus Himself told us that the Spirit would (future tense) guide us into all truth and teach us all things. God through His Holy Spirit will continue to teach His Church about Himself and about all truth. We can only know the truth through the Word and Spirit.

Secondly, we need to remember, that as God Himself is unchangeable, so also is His Truth, His Law and His Gospel. Therefore let Christians be always steadfast holding the time-honoured tenets of the faith unless there are good solid grounds agreed by a large consensus of the true Church on a change of view on the Word of God.

Possibly the greatest contemporary problem Christianity has to contend with today, is the postmodern worldview which maintains that 'truth' is variable and subjective rather than absolute and objective.

The effect of this philosophy is that nothing is taken as absolute, final or fixed. Everything is fluid and changeable. How gullible are those who believe that there can be several truths!

Because of the uncertainty regarding 'What is truth?', the Church throughout its history, has had to produce Creeds and Confessions. Creeds and Confessions articulate what the Church understands the Bible to teach.

It is all very well to say that 'all we need is the Bible', but we must also ask: 'What do we understand the Bible to teach?' The cults profess to use the Bible as the basis of their faith. Creeds and Confessions are not 'inspired' or 'infallible' like the Bible, but they do help us in times of controversy. When new theories arise which perplex Christians, we can turn to them to see how the Church from the beginning, thought about such issues.

Problems and dangers of course can also arise from Creeds and Confessions. Mankind is prone to go to one extreme or the other, and some Christians, possibly without fully realising it, concentrate on Confessions rather than the Bible itself and therefore read the Bible through the spectacles of the Confession rather than the other way round, ignoring that only the Bible has ultimate authority.

One effect of this mentality is that many people appeal instantly to articles of faith, to church leaders or to their favourite evangelicals instead of appealing directly to the Bible. Confessions and Catechisms are vitally important in their proper role, but only Scripture has the "power of God".

The danger is that "orthodoxy" is then sometimes measured by how one slots ideas into certain pigeonholes created by our ecclesiastical culture, resulting in divisive debates over bible versions, church denominations, terms of membership, and all the things that split churches.

Confessions and creeds there must be, church leaders there must be, versions of Scripture there must be, denominations there must be, but these things must sit in subjection to Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Word.