

“On the broad shoulders of William Perkins, epoch-making pioneer, stood the entire school of seventeenth-century Puritan pastors and divines, yet the Puritan reprint industry has steadily bypassed him. Now, however, he begins to reappear, admirably edited, and at last this yawning gap is being filled. Profound thanks to the publisher and heartfelt praise to God have become due.”

—J. I. Packer, Board of Governors’ Professor of Theology,  
Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia

“Without a doubt, the Puritans were theological titans. The Puritan theological tradition did not emerge out of a vacuum. It was shaped by leaders and theologians who set the trajectory of the movement and shaped its commitments. William Perkins was one of those men. Perkins’s contribution to Puritan theology is inestimable, and this new reprint of his collected works is a much-awaited addition to all who are still shaped and influenced by the Puritans and their commitment to the centrality of the grace of God found only in Jesus Christ. Even now, every true gospel minister stands in debt to Perkins, and in his shadow.”

—R. Albert Mohler Jr., president, The Southern  
Baptist Theological Seminary

“The list of those influenced by the ministry of William Perkins reads like a veritable Who’s Who of the Puritan Brotherhood and far beyond. This reprinting of his works, so long unobtainable except by a few, is therefore a publishing event of the first magnitude.”

—Sinclair B. Ferguson, professor of systematic theology,  
Redeemer Theological Seminary, Dallas

“The father of Elizabethan Puritanism, Perkins presided over a dynasty of faith. The scope of his work is wide, yet on every topic he treats one discovers erudition and deep reflection. He was the first in an amazing line of ministers at Cambridge University’s main church. A pastor to pastors, he wrote a best-seller on counseling, was a formative figure in the development of Reformed orthodoxy, and a judicious reformer within the Church of England. I am delighted to see Perkins’s works made available again for a wide audience.”

—Michael Horton, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Theology  
and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California

“William Perkins was a most remarkable Christian. In his relatively short life he was a great preacher, pastor, and theologian. His prolific writings were foundational to the whole English Puritan enterprise and a profound influence beyond his own time and borders. His works have become rare, and their

republishing must be a source of real joy and blessing to all serious Christians. Perkins is the first Puritan we should read.”

—W. Robert Godfrey, president, Westminster Seminary California

“This is a welcome collection of the gospel-saturated writings of William Perkins. A faithful pastor, Puritan leader, prolific author, and lecturer, Perkins defended the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation throughout his life. Giving particular emphasis to *solus Christus* and *sola Scriptura*, these Reformed doctrines drove him as a pastor to preach the unsearchable riches of God’s truth with confidence and assurance. Sadly, Perkins is unknown to the modern Christian. However, throughout the centuries, the writings, meditations, and treatises of this Puritan luminary have influenced Christians around the world. It is my hope that many will be introduced and reintroduced to the writings of this Reformed stalwart. May his zeal for gospel advance awaken a new generation of biblical preachers and teachers to herald the glory of our sovereign God in this present day.”

—Steven J. Lawson, president, OnePassion Ministries, and professor of preaching at The Master’s Seminary

“Relatively few in the church’s history have left a written legacy of enduring value beyond their own time. Perkins is surely among that select group. Reformation Heritage Books is to be commended for its commitment to making his *Works* available in this projected series, beginning with this volume.”

—Richard B. Gaffin Jr., professor of biblical and systematic theology emeritus, Westminster Theological Seminary

“Christians have heard about William Perkins, especially that he was an extraordinary preacher whose sermons made a deep impression on Cambridge and that they were still impacting the town in the decades that followed Perkins’s death at a mere forty-four years of age in 1602. He was at the heart of the revival of truth and holy living that made the Reformation a glorious work of God. He was the outstanding Puritan theologian of his time, but most of us have not had the opportunity to study his works because of their rarity. After more than three hundred years, this ignorance is going to be ended with the remarkable appearance during the next decade of the complete works of this man of God. We are looking forward to their appearance very much. There will be sufficient gaps between their publication to ensure a sincere attempt at imbibing the truths of each volume, and then we face the challenge of translating Perkins’s teaching into flesh-and-blood living.”

—Geoff Thomas, pastor, Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth, Wales

The Works of  
WILLIAM PERKINS



# The Works of WILLIAM PERKINS

—♦♦♦—  
VOLUME 5

*Exposition of the Symbol or Creed of the Apostles*  
*Exposition of the Lord's Prayer*  
*Foundation of Christian Religion Gathered into Six Principles*

EDITED BY RYAN HURD

General editors:  
Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas



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## General Preface



William Perkins (1558–1602), often called “the father of Puritanism,” was a master preacher and teacher of Reformed, experiential theology. He left an indelible mark upon the English Puritan movement, and his writings were translated into Dutch, German, French, Hungarian, and other European languages. Today he is best known for his writings on predestination, but he also wrote prolifically on many doctrinal and practical subjects, including extended expositions of Scripture. The 1631 edition of his English *Works* filled over two thousand large pages of small print in three folio volumes.

It is puzzling why his full *Works* have not been in print since the early seventeenth century, especially given the flood of Puritan works reprinted in the mid-nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. Ian Breward did much to promote the study of Perkins, but Breward’s now rare, single-volume compilation of the *Work of William Perkins* (1970) could only present samplings of Perkins’s writings. We are extremely pleased that this lacuna is being filled, as it has been a dream of many years to see the writings of this Reformed theologian made accessible again to the public, including laymen, pastors, and scholars.

Reformation Heritage Books is publishing Perkins’s *Works* in a newly typeset format with spelling and capitalization conformed to modern American standards. The old forms (“thou dost”) are changed to the modern equivalent (“you do”), except in Scripture quotations and references to deity. Punctuation has also been modernized. However, the original words are left intact, not changed into modern synonyms, and the original word order retained even when it differs from modern syntax. Pronouns are capitalized when referring to God. Some archaic terms and obscure references are explained in the editor’s footnotes.

As was common in his day, Perkins did not use quotation marks to distinguish a direct quotation from an indirect quotation, summary, or paraphrase, but simply put all citations in italics (as he also did with proper names). We have removed such italics and followed the general principle of placing citations in quotation marks even if they may not be direct and exact quotations. Perkins generally quoted the Geneva Bible, but rather than conforming his quotations to any particular translation of Scripture, we have left them in

his words. Scripture references in the margins are brought into the text and enclosed in square brackets. Parenthetical Scripture references in general are abbreviated and punctuated according to the modern custom (as in Rom. 8:1), sometimes corrected, and sometimes moved to the end of the clause instead of its beginning. Other notes from the margins are placed in footnotes and labeled, "In the margin." Where multiple sets of parentheses were nested within each other, the inward parentheses have been changed to square brackets. Otherwise, square brackets indicate words added by the editor. An introduction to each volume by its editor orients the reader to its contents.

The projected *Works of William Perkins* will include ten volumes, including four volumes of biblical exposition, three volumes of doctrinal and polemical treatises, and three volumes of ethical and practical writings. A breakdown of each volume's contents may be found inside the cover of this book.

If it be asked what the center of Perkins's theology was, then we hesitate to answer, for students of historical theology know that this is a perilous question to ask regarding any person. However, we may do well to end this preface by repeating what Perkins said at the conclusion of his influential manual on preaching, "The sum of the sum: preach one Christ by Christ to the praise of Christ."

—Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas

## Preface to Volume 5 of William Perkins's Works



As is indicated by the title frequently given him, “father of Puritanism,” William Perkins (1558–1602) exercised intense influence on the rise of the Post-Reformation Puritan movement in England, an influence some have considered superlative, at least during the Elizabethan period.<sup>1</sup> The later Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676), in his own right a significant figurehead in the Continental further reform across the sea, placed Perkins on par with such theologians as Beza, Vermigli, Daneau, Ames, Ursinus, Zanchius, and Rivet.<sup>2</sup>

As an important progenitor in the English Puritan movement, Perkins, we might say, wore several different hats, one of which was that of an apologist or defender of the faith “once delivered to the saints.” The works included in this volume, the fifth of a projected ten, are examples of such contribution: an *Exposition of the Apostles' Creed*; an *Exposition of the Lord's Prayer*; and the catechism *Foundation of Christian Religion*. In this short introduction I want to give a sketch of each, with priority on Perkins's more substantial work on the Creed.

### ***Exposition of the Apostles' Creed***

The 1595 *Exposition of the Symbole or Creed of the Apostles* is the latest and largest of the three works included in this volume.<sup>3</sup> Arguably the closest Perkins ever came to writing a systematics proper—at least according to modern sensibilities—Perkins summarizes basic Christian teachings following the redemptive-historical order of the Apostles' Creed. Perkins's own succinct summary of this work would be stated later in his *Cloud of Faithful Witnesses*,

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1. Raymond A. Blacketer, “William Perkins (1558–1602),” in *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to the Theology of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 41.

2. Gisbert Voetius, *Disputationes*, in *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John W. Beardslee (Oxford: OUP, 1965), 289–90.

3. William Perkins, *An Exposition of the Symbole or Creed of the Apostles, According to the Tenour of the Scriptures and the Consent of Orthodoxe Fathers of the Church* (Cambridge: John Legatt, Printer to the University of Cambridge, 1595).

where he points out that the *Exposition of the Creed* presents the whole “doctrine of faith,” while his exposition of Hebrews 11 in the *Cloud* is its “practice.”<sup>4</sup> This pigeon-holing is not unhelpful, as it is clear that doctrine is a point of critical concern for Perkins in this present work. This is further evident in that he argues that of the “two heads,” that is, faith and love, of Paul’s exhortation (2 Tim. 1:13), only that of faith is presented in the Creed. However, and rather predictably, Perkins also treats the Creed as serving an important practical function, as we will see below.

The text as a document that received Perkins’s particular attention, that of the Apostles’ Creed, is complex and difficult to trace as to its own origin, though its theology is clear as faithful to the earliest of the church’s teaching.<sup>5</sup> Though the first fully developed version of the Creed appeared in the eighth century in Saint Priminus’s *De Singulis Libris Canonicis Scarapsus*,<sup>6</sup> its Latin formulation, used yet today, has been taken from the writings of Melchior Hittorp in 1568.<sup>7</sup> This text was viewed as authoritative in the Western church in the late Medieval period and would have been adopted by the Reformers, including Perkins.<sup>8</sup>

As a tool for the church, the Creed was in its earliest codifications deployed in baptismal preparation for new converts, who, upon being queried, would respond with the positive *credo*. The use of the Creed quickly extended beyond preparation for baptism into a more broadly catechetical function, and this England enjoyed long prior to the Reformation and beyond Perkins’s own day. Its presence was felt especially from the 1215 Fourth Lateran Council onward, with the 1271 Council of Lambeth providing a further impetus for its presence and use in the English church. The latter council, in outlining its *De Informatione Simplicium*, contains the well-known *ignorantia sacerdotum*, the council’s ninth canon. Therein, the council required that every priest provide a quarterly exposition of the Articles of Faith (in which the Creed would be included), and that in the vernacular (though precisely *what* vernacular

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4. William Perkins, *A Cloud of Faithful Witnesses* (1607; London: John Legatt, 1618), 1.

5. For a helpful summary of the history of the Creed, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Ferdinand Kattenbusch, *Das apostolische Symbol; seine Entstehung, sein Geschichtlicher Sinn, seine ursprüngliche Stellung im Kultus und in der Theologie der Kirche; ein Beitrag zur Symbolik und Dogmengeschichte* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1894–1900); and John Norman Davidson Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longmans, 1950).

6. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 398–99.

7. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 369.

8. For a helpful survey of the use of Apostles’ Creed in the period, see Joseph de Ghellinck, *Patristique et Moyen-Age* (Paris: Desclé de Brower, 1949–1961), 1:18–28.

is difficult to determine).<sup>9</sup> From these two councils, the groundwork was laid for English catechesis through the end of the Medievals, of which the Reformation would have been heir, and was built up especially through the efforts of the Franciscan, Dominican, and Augustinian canons of the Roman Catholic church.<sup>10</sup>

Perkins, also, deploys the Creed in a catechetical way and presents it early in his exposition as the way one may know to whom he belongs and from what he is distinguished, like a soldier who wears a “badge” that proclaims his allegiance. The doctrinal allegiance of the Christian is to Christ and the foundation of the apostles, the “truth faith” expressed in abbreviated form in the aptly named Apostles’ Creed. As Perkins writes, the Christian must “hold, believe, and maintain, and preach the true faith, that is, the ancient doctrine of salvation by Christ, taught and published by the prophets and apostles, as the book of the articles of faith agreed upon in open Parliament do fully show”—the “book of the articles of faith” being a reference to the 1571 Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.

Perkins’s exposition of the Creed begins with him handling an objection, one that is not unheard of in our own day of the creedal antipathy extant in broad evangelicalism:<sup>11</sup> whether it is proper to “treat of the doctrine of faith without a text,” or, to phrase it in common parlance, what value is there in handling a creed over the positive theology of the Word of God? Perkins’s response is simple and clear: the use of the Apostles’ Creed as a way of systematically expositing Christian teaching was the practice of the early church, and therefore is lawful—an answer that purportedly targets a (misguided) biblicism. Perkins will later note that this was also the practice of “teachers both in the New and Old Testament” as well, thus there is scriptural basis for his present work.

Having dealt with the objection and established that the minister “has his liberty to follow or not...a certain text of Scripture,” and, after recognizing that the Creed itself commences with a statement of belief in God, Perkins starts with, first, *belief*, that is the “nature, properties, and kinds of faith,” and then proceeds to *God*.

It is important to note that the Creed summarizes the flow of redemptive history, and thus Perkins’s exposition is historically rooted and oriented. This

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9. See *Councils and Synods, with other Documents Relating to the English Church, II: Ad 1205–1313*, eds. F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 2:900.

10. See Andrew B. Reeves, “Teaching the Creed and Articles of Faith in England: Lateran IV to *Ignorantia Sacerdotum*,” PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2009.

11. See for a useful introductory critique, Carl R. Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2012).

is particularly crucial in that some have pitted Perkins's work here against, e.g., his *Golden Chaine*, that follows a different ordering of topics.<sup>12</sup> It is clear there are differences at least to the degree that, for instance, the *Golden Chaine* treatment of the covenant follows Christology, while in the *Exposition* it precedes it. However, this is not an example of two competing systems of theology, but differences in the *ordo docendi*, and thus differences that are not substantial. Perkins's departure from what may be a more creed-based ordering (as, e.g., the *Golden Chaine*) is due to his commitment to how the Creed itself progresses (recall the work is an *exposition*). As Richard Muller has noted, Perkins here "move[s] from the statement of principia, through creation, fall, and redemption, to the last things with an emphasis on the covenant as the historical or economic form of the divine work of salvation."<sup>13</sup> Thus, the *Golden Chaine* follows Pauline soteriology while the *Exposition*, following the Creed, the history of redemption. Hence the "peculiar" (from one perspective) ordering of, e.g., discussing faith at the beginning before his doctrine of God. The Creed itself reveals "peculiarities," introducing, say, eschatology at the end of the Christology section ("to judge the quick and the dead") and then returning again to it in the Creed's closing.

But the question of faith, introduced at the start, is Perkins's nod to the issue of the *duplex cognitio Dei*.<sup>14</sup> While it is not here necessary to trace out Perkins's definition(s) of faith in all their nuances, it is at least important to note that the phrase *credo in Deum*,<sup>15</sup> as in the Creed, indicates not simply the belief that a God (or even this God) exists, so much as it indicates a trust in Him. Or at least it should; that is to say, the Creed intends you to confess by affirming *credo*. Perkins capitalizes on this issue of faith and, after outlining the "three sorts of common [non-saving] faith," defines the "faith of the elect" thus: "a supernatural gift of God in the mind, apprehending the saving promise with all the promises that depend on it," and further, faith's "place and seat" is located in the mind, not will.

After defining and distributing faith, Perkins turns to *an sit Deus*, which he passes over with an affirmation but no explanation, proofs or otherwise. Then, *quid sit Deus*, and notes properly that we cannot define God, but "by His

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12. On the other hand, some have argued that the *Golden Chaine* is a "truncated version" of Perkins's work on the Creed. David M. Barbee, "A Reformed Catholicism: William Perkins' Use of the Church Fathers," PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2013, 137.

13. Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 1:447.

14. See Richard A. Muller, "'Duplex Cognitio Dei' in the Theology of Early Reformed Orthodoxy," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 10 (1979): 51–62.

15. At times the Latin phrase was used to distinguish to what type of faith one referred, e.g., a distinction between *credere deum*, *credere deo*, and *credere in Deum*.

effects and properties” we may describe Him, that is He is an “essence spiritual, simple, infinite, most holy.” Finally, *quantus sit*, to which he naturally answers in the singular.

The remainder of the *Exposition* proceeds in similar fashion. A couple of things to note. Union with Christ, some have pointed out, plays an important role in the *Exposition*,<sup>16</sup> a union by which a person derives “virtue” that “warms our benumbed hearts dead in sin and revives us to newness of life,” like the sunlight of spring brings to life the worms and flies that lie dead through the winter months. Expectedly, Perkins also handles the descent clause; and, after presenting four views—a literal local descent; a synonym for “buried”; a metaphor for suffering; a way of speaking of His continuance under death’s curse—Perkins allows for either of the two last as possible interpretations, with his personal preference being for the final option.<sup>17</sup> And the *Exposition of the Apostles’ Creed* also provides a healthy development of Perkins’s pneumatology, one of the most extensive in his works.

But as we noted earlier, the Creed does not only serve a doctrinal function. For Perkins, it is also to be used practically. From the start, introducing the first article on God, Perkins noted his method or “order” of handling each article of the Creed: first its meaning, then the duties, and last the consolations. And he follows this throughout. But he also closes the entire work with a lengthy paragraph outlining how the Creed is a “storehouse of remedies against all troubles and temptations whatsoever”—of which he gives ten examples: e.g., the Creed supplies help for those who grieve the “loss of earthly riches,” who should thus consider that God is the Creator who guides and preserves; those who receive “outward disgrace and contempt,” they should recall Christ crucified; those who have lost friends may find help in the communion of saints; those who face bodily captivity, let them recall that serving Christ is “perfect liberty,” and so on.

### ***Exposition of the Lord’s Prayer***

Moving to the second work included in this volume, Perkins’s *Exposition of the Lords Prayer in the Way of Catechising, Serving for Ignorant People* was published in 1592,<sup>18</sup> and again the emphasis of catechesis is clearly notable in

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16. See John Fesko, *Beyond Calvin: Union with Christ and Justification in Early Modern Reformed Theology (1517–1700)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 254–68. See also Fesko’s summary article, “William Perkins on Union with Christ and Justification,” *MidAmerica Journal of Theology* 21 (2010): 21–34.

17. See Dewey Wallace, “Puritan and Anglican: The Interpretation of Christ’s Descent into Hell in Elizabethan Theology,” *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 69 (1978): 248–87.

18. William Perkins, *An Exposition of the Lords Prayer in the Way of Catechising, Serving for Ignorant People* (London: Robert Bourne and John Porter, 1592).

the title. In point of fact the combination of the Creed with the Lord's Prayer as dual catechetical tools was something that was done far earlier than Perkins, e.g., the Carolingian period saw numerous councils and synods which presented both the Creed and the Lord's Prayer as the foundational knowledge for all believers.<sup>19</sup> Even today, Thomas Cranmer's injunction to the parents of the child to be baptized still is read in many churches whose historical roots lay in the Church of England: namely, that they be taught the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

Before expositing that prayer, Perkins identifies another reason for publishing the work, as he explains in the prefatory pages. He protests a "book of late published in London" that claimed his name for authorship, which he claims commits the double sin of (1) being printed without his knowledge or consent and (2) being faulty. After pointing out some of these faults, more or less significant, he concludes clearly that the present volume serves as his "redress."

The exposition itself is a fairly extensive examination of each word/phrase of the Lord's Prayer, as well as the "manifold uses" for each—the writing of which is many times longer than that of the text's meaning. And after the prayer itself, there is an extensive and summary "use of the Lord's Prayer," as well as the "circumstances," or, ways in which one prays.

To this section is also appended a collection of prayers (with short expositions) from the Bible and a short, poetic song "gathered out of the Psalms, containing the sobs and sighs of all repentant sinners."

### ***Foundation of Christian Religion***

The last of the works included here is Perkins's 1590 *Foundation of Christian Religion Gathered into Sixe Principles*,<sup>20</sup> drafted in a catechetical form, to which copious biblical references and quotations are supplied.

As we have noted of the other works as well, Perkins's intent here is for instruction in knowledge and application, with an eye to the audience of "all ignorant people that desire to be instructed," to instruct them out of their "great ignorance." It appears that Perkins intended the *Foundation* to be something of a foundation for understanding the basics of theology, especially in its application, which he notes is the "very point in which you fail." He expressly states that the work's goal is that the "Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the institution of the two sacraments" will be "more easily"

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19. Susan Keefe, *Water and the Word: Baptism and the Education of Clergy in the Carolingian Empire* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2002).

20. William Perkins, *The Foundation of Christian Religion, Gathered into Sixe Principles: and It Is to Be Learned of Ignorant People, that They May Be Fit to Heare Sermons with Profit, and to Receive the Lords Supper with Comfort* (London: John Porter, 1590).



understood—but includes in this understanding not just “true knowledge” but both “unfeigned faith” and “sound repentance.” His list of thirty-two “common”—and regrettably, erroneous—“opinions” held by the people he wishes to instruct support this idea, and confront the errors of Roman Catholicism, what we would call today “easy believism,” issues of assurance, and various other problems—running the gamut from “drinking and bezelling in the alehouse or tavern” to the issue of magic and witchcraft to wrong views on what preachers are and what they do.

The catechism that follows was to be first memorized, and then studied in its exposition that followed every point. The initial, what we might term “shorter” catechism is quite lucid, and has six sections that proceed from knowledge of God, to man, Christ, salvation, obtaining/growing in faith, and the final state of humanity. The answers are short and abbreviated—e.g., “what do you believe concerning God?”: “There is one God, Creator and Governor of all things, distinguished into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” Each phrase is supported by a proof text or texts.

The exposition of the six principles has the feeling of a larger catechism, and follows a question format as well: “What is God? God is a spirit, or a spiritual substance, most wise, most holy, eternal, infinite.” By far the longest section is the fourth principle, covering soteriology, handling the meaning of the Ten Commandments under repentance, as well as the nature and definition of faith.

## **Conclusion**

All projects owe both their genesis and conclusion, as also the steps between the two termini, to many in different ways. Of special note are the thanks due to the RHB crew, in particular Linda and Gary den Hollander, the tireless typesetting team; Ann Dykema, Stephen Mouring, and Linda Rudolph, who labored in typing up the script in the first place; and also to Joel Beeke and Derek Thomas, the general editors of the series, for permission to work on this volume and patience in its completion. May many through this work be helped to come further “to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:1), and that according to godliness (Titus 1:1).

—Ryan M. Hurd



AN EXPOSITION OF THE SYMBOL,  
OR CREED OF THE APOSTLES

According to the tenor of the Scripture, and the consent of  
Orthodox Fathers of the Church

Reviewed and corrected by WILLIAM PERKINS

Aug. lib. Quæst. in Matthew 11  
*They are good catholics, which are of good faith and good life.*

LONDON  
Printed by JOHN LEGATT

1635



*To the Right Honorable, Edward Lord Russell, Earl of Bedford,  
grace, and peace, etc.*

Right Honorable, excellent is the saying of Paul to Titus: "To the pure all things are pure but to the impure and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their minds and consciences are defiled" [Titus 1:15]. In which words he determines three questions. The first, whether things ordained and made by God, may become unclean or no? His answer is, that they may, and his meaning must be conceived with a distinction. *By nature* things ordained of God are not unclean, for Moses in Genesis says, that God saw all things which He had made, and they were very good; yet they may become unclean either by law, or *by the fault of men*. *By law*, as when God forbids us the things which in themselves are good: without whole commandment, they are as pure things not forbidden. Thus, for the time of the Old Testament, God forbade the Jews the use of certain creatures; not because they were indeed worse than the rest, but because it was His pleasure upon special cause to restrain them, that He might put a difference between His own people, and the rest of the world: that He might exercise their obedience, and advertise them of the inward impurity of mind. Now this *legal impurity* was abolished at the ascension of Christ. *By the fault of men* things are unclean when they are abused, and not applied to the ends for which they were ordained. The second question is, to whom things ordained of God are pure? He answers, *to the pure*: that is, to them whose persons stand justified and sanctified before God in Christ in whom they believe, who also do use God's blessings in a holy manner to His glory and the good of men. [Acts 15:10; 1 Tim. 4:3]. The third question is, who they are to whom all things are unclean? His answer is, *to the unclean*, by whom he understands all such: (1) Whose persons displease God, because they do not indeed believe in Christ. (2) Who use not the gifts of God in holy manner, sanctifying them by the word and prayer. (3) Who abuse them to bad ends, as to riot, pride, and oppression of men, etc. Now that to such, the use of all the creatures of God is unclean, it is manifest, because all their actions are sins, in that they are not done of faith; and a man's person must first please God in Christ, before his action or work done can please Him. Again, they use the blessings and creatures of God with evil conscience, because so long as they are forth of Christ, they are but usurpers thereof before God. For in the fall of the first Adam, we lost the title and interest to all good things; and though God permit the use of many of them to wicked men, yet is not the former title recovered but in Christ the second Adam, in whom we are advanced to a better state than we had by creation.

Hence it follows necessarily, that (to omit all other things) nobility, though it be a blessing and ordinance of God in itself, is but an unclean thing, if the enjoyers thereof be not truly engrafted into Christ, and made bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh. The blood unstained before men is stained blood before God by the fall of Adam, if it be not restored by the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God. And hence it follows again, that nobility must not dwell solitary, but combine herself in perpetual fellowship with hearty love and sincere obedience of pure and sound religion: without which all pleasant pastimes, all sumptuousness of building, all bravery in apparel, all glistering gold, all delicate fare, all delightful music, all reverence done with cap and knee, all earthly pleasures and delights that heart can wish, are but as a vanishing shadow, or like the mirth, that begins with laughing, and ends with woe. A happy thing were it, if this consideration might take place in the hearts of all noble men: it would make them honor God, that they might be honored of God with everlasting honor, and it would make them kiss the Son lest He be angry, and they perish in the way [1 Sam. 2:22, 26; Ps. 2:12].

I speak not this as though I doubted of your lordship's care in this very point, but my only meaning is, to put you in mind, that as you have begun to cleave unto Christ with full purpose of heart, so you would continue to do it still, and do it more; and withal to manifest the same unto the whole world, by honoring Christ with your own honor, and by resembling Him especially in one thing, in that as He grew in stature and years, He also grew in grace and favor with God and men [Prov. 3:9–10; Luke 2:15]. And for this very cause (without any further consideration of earthly respects) I further present unto you an exposition of another part of the catechism, namely, the Symbol or Creed of the Apostles: which is indeed the very pith and substance of Christian religion, taught by the apostles, embraced by the ancient fathers, sealed by the blood of martyrs, used by Theodosius the Emperor<sup>1</sup> as a means to end the controversies of his time, and hereupon hath been called the *rule of faith*,<sup>2</sup> the *key of faith*.<sup>3</sup> And furthermore, I hope that your lordship will accept the same in good part, the rather because you vouchsafed when you were in Cambridge, to be an hearer thereof when it was taught and delivered. Thus craving pardon for my boldness, I take my leave, commending your lordship and yours to the protection of the Almighty. Anno Apr 2, 1595.

Your Lordship to command,  
William Perkins

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1. Socrat. hist. Eccl. 1.5 cap. 10.

2. Aug. de temp. serm. 119.

3. Ambros. Sermon. 38.

## An Exposition of the Creed

“I believe in God,” etc.

No man justly can be offended at this, that I begin to treat of the doctrine of faith without a text, though some be of mind that in catechizing the minister is to proceed as in the ordinary course of preaching only by handling a set portion of Scripture, and therefore that the handling of the Creed, being no Scripture, is not convenient. Indeed, I grant that other course to be commendable. Yet I doubt not but in catechizing the minister has his liberty to follow or not to follow a certain text of Scripture, as we do in the usual course of preaching. My reason is taken from the practice of the primitive church, whose catechism (as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews shows) was contained in six principles or grounds of religion, which were not taken out of any set text in the Old Testament but rather was a form of teaching gathered out of the most clear places thereof. Hence I reason thus: that which in this point was the use and manner of the primitive church is lawful to be used of us now. But in the primitive church it was the manner to catechize without handling any set text of Scripture. And therefore the ministers of the gospel at this time may with like liberty do the same, so be it they do confirm the doctrine which they teach with places of Scripture afterward.

Now to come to the Creed, let us begin with the name or title thereof. That which in English we call the Apostles' Creed in other tongues is called “symbolum”—that is, a “shot” or a “badge.” It is called a shot, because as in a feast or banquet every man pays his part, which being all gathered, the whole (which is called the shot) amounts. And so out of the several writings of the apostles arises this creed or brief confession of faith. It is a badge, because as a soldier in the field by his badge and livery is known of what band he is and to what captain he does belong, even so by this belief a Christian man may be distinguished and known from all Jews, Turks, atheists, and all false professors. And for this cause it is called a badge.

Again, it is called the Creed of the Apostles not because they were the penners of it, conferring to it besides the matter the very style and frame of words<sup>1</sup> as we have them now set down. *Reason 1.* There are in this Creed

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1. Russin. in expos. Smyb & Hieron. ad Pam.

certain words and phrases which are not to be found in the writings of the apostles—namely, these: “he descended into hell”; the “catholic church.” The latter whereof no doubt first began to be in use when after the apostles’ days the church was dispersed into all quarters of the earth.<sup>2</sup> [*Reason*] 2. If both matter and words had been from the apostles, why is not the Creed canonical Scripture, as well as any other writings? [*Reason*] 3. The apostles had a summary collection of the points of Christian religion which they taught and also delivered to others to teach by, consisting of two heads, faith and love, as may appear by Paul’s exhortation to Timothy, wishing him “to keep the pattern of wholesome words, which he had heard of him, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus” [2 Tim. 1:13]. Now the Creed consists not of two heads but of one—namely, of faith only, and not of love also. Wherefore, I rather think that it is called the Apostles’ Creed because it does summarily contain the chief and principal points of religion, handled and propounded in the doctrine of the apostles, and because the points of the Creed are conformable and agreeable to their doctrine and writings.

And thus much of the title. Now let us hear what the Creed is. It is a sum of things to be believed concerning God and concerning the church, gathered forth of the Scriptures. For the opening of this description, first, I say it is a sum of things to be believed or an abridgement. It has been the practice of teachers both in the New and Old Testament to abridge and contract summarily the religion of their time. This the prophets used. For when they had made their sermons to the people, they did abridge them and penned them briefly, setting them in some open places, that all the people might read the same. So the Lord bade Habakkuk to write the vision which he saw and to make it plain upon tables, “that he may run that reads it” [Hab. 2:2].<sup>3</sup> And in the New Testament the apostles did abridge those doctrines which otherwise they did handle at large, as may appear in the place of Timothy aforementioned [2 Tim. 1:13]. Now the reason why both in the Old and New Testament the doctrine of religion was abridged is that the understanding of the simple as also their memories might be hereby helped, and they better enabled to judge of the truth and to discern the same from falsehood. And for this end the Apostles’ Creed, being a summary collection of things to be believed, was gathered briefly out of the Word of God for helping of the memory and understanding of men.<sup>4</sup> I add that this Creed is concerning God and the church, for in these two points consists the whole sum thereof. Lastly, I say that it is gathered forth of the Scripture to make

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2. Pacianus epist. 1. ad Symp.

3. Originally, “Hab. 3:2.”

4. Aug. serm. 119. de temp. cassian l.6. de in car. dom.



a difference between it and other writings and to show the authority of it, which I will further declare on this manner.

There be two kinds of writings in which the doctrine of the church is handled, and they are either divine or ecclesiastical. Divine are the books of the Old and New Testament, penned either by prophets or apostles. And these are not only the pure word of God but also the scripture of God, because not only the matter of them but the whole disposition thereof with the style and the phrase was set down by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And the authority of these books is divine—that is, absolute and sovereign—and they are of sufficient credit in and by themselves, needing not the testimony of any creature, not subject to the censure either of men or angels, binding the consciences of all men at all times, and being the only foundation of our faith and the rule and canon of all truth.

Ecclesiastical writings are all other ordinary writings of the church consenting with [the] Scriptures. These may be called the word or truth of God, so far forth as their matter or substance is consenting with the written Word of God; but they cannot be called the scripture of God, because the style and phrase of them was set down according to the pleasure of man, and therefore they are in such sort the word of God, as that also they are the word of men. And their authority in defining of truth and falsehood in matters of religion is not sovereign but subordinate to the former, and it does not stand in the authority and pleasure of men and counsels but in the consent which they have with the Scriptures.

Ecclesiastical writings are either general, particular, or proper. General are the creeds and confessions of the church, dispersed over the whole world; and among the rest [is] the Creed of the Apostles, made either by the apostles themselves or by their hearers and disciples, apostolical men, delivered to the church and conveyed from hand to hand to our times. Particular writings are the confessions of particular churches. Proper writings are the books and confessions of private men. Now between these we must make difference. For the general Creed of the Apostles (other universal creeds in this case not excepted), though it be of less authority than Scripture, yet has it more authority than the particular and private writings of churches and men. For it has been received and approved by universal consent of the catholic church in all ages, and so were never these. In it the meaning and doctrine cannot be changed by the authority of the whole catholic church. And if either the order of the doctrine or the words whereby it is expressed should upon some occasion be changed, a particular church of any country cannot do it without catholic consent of the whole church. Yet particular writings and confessions made by some special churches may be altered in the words and in the points of doctrine by the same

churches without offence to the catholic church. Lastly, it is received as a rule of faith among all churches to try doctrines and interpretations of Scriptures by, not because it is a rule of itself—for that the Scripture is alone—but because it borrows its<sup>5</sup> authority from Scripture with which it agrees. And this honor no other writings of men can have.

Here some may demand [what is] the number of creeds. *Answer.* I say but one creed, as there is but one faith. And if it be alleged that we have many creeds, as besides this of the apostles, the Nicene Creed and Athanasius Creed, etc., I answer, the several creeds and confessions of churches contain not several faiths and religions but one and the same. And this, called the Apostles' Creed, is most ancient and principal. All the rest are no new creeds in substance, but in some points penned more largely for the exposition of it, that men might better avoid the heresies of their times.

Further, it may be demanded, in what form this Creed was penned? *Answer.* In the form of an answer to a question. The reason is this. In the primitive church, when any man was turned from gentilism<sup>6</sup> to the faith of Christ and was to be baptized, this question was asked him: what do you believe?<sup>7</sup> Then, he answered according to the form of the Creed, "I believe in God," etc. And this manner of questioning was used even from the time of [the] apostles. When the eunuch was converted by Philip, he said, "What doth let me to be baptized?" Philip said, "If thou dost believe with all thine heart, thou mayest" [Acts 8:37]. Then he answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." By this it appears that although all men for the most part among us can say this Creed, yet not one of a thousand can tell the ancient and first use of it; for commonly at this day of the simpler sort it is said for a prayer, being indeed no prayer. And when it is used so, men make it no better than a charm.

### **Faith Described Generally<sup>8</sup>**

Before we come to handle the particular points of the Creed, it is very requisite that we should make an entrance thereto by describing the nature, properties, and kinds of faith, the confession and ground whereof is set forth in the Creed. Faith therefore is a gift of God, whereby we give assent or credence to God's word. For there is a necessary relation between faith and God's word. The common property of faith is noted by the author to the Hebrews, when he says, "Faith is the ground of things hoped for: and the demonstration of things that are not seen" [Heb. 11:1]. For all this may be understood not only of justifying

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5. Originally, "his."

6. *Gentilism*: paganism.

7. Cyrill catec. 1. Mystag. Tert. de resurrect. Origen. hom. 5. in Num.

8. This heading appears in the margin.

faith but also of temporary faith and the faith of miracles. Where faith is said to be a ground, the meaning is that though there are many things promised by God which men do not presently enjoy but only hope for, because as yet they are not, yet faith does after a sort give subsisting or being unto them. Secondly, it is an evidence or demonstration, etc.—that is, by believing a man does make a thing as it were visible, being otherwise invisible and absent.

Faith is of two sorts: either common faith or the faith of the elect—as Paul says he is an apostle according “to the faith of God’s elect” [Titus 1:1], which is also called “faith without hypocrisy” [1 Tim. 1:5]. The common faith is that which both the elect and reprobate have, and it is threefold. The first is historical faith, which is when a man does believe the outward letter and history of the Word. It has two parts—knowledge of God’s Word and assent unto the same knowledge. And it is to be found in the devil and his angels. So St. James says, “The devils believe, and tremble” [James 2:19]. Some will say, what a faith have they? *Answer.* Such as whereby they understand both the law and the gospel. Besides, they give assent to it to be true, and they do more yet in that they tremble and fear. And many a man has not so much. For among us, there is many a one which has no knowledge of God at all, more than he has learned by the common talk of the world—as, namely, that there is a God, and that He is merciful, etc. And yet this man will say that he believes with all his heart. But without knowledge it cannot be that any should truly believe, and therefore he deceives himself. *Question.* But whence have the devils historical faith? Were they illuminated by the light of the Spirit? *Answer.* No, but when the gospel was preached, they did acknowledge it and believed it to be true, and that by the virtue of the relics of God’s image, which remained in them since their fall. And therefore this their faith does not arise from any special illumination by His Spirit, but they attain to it even by the very light of nature, which was left in them from the beginning.

The second kind of faith is temporary faith, so called because it lasts but for a time and season and commonly not to the end of a man’s life. This kind of faith is noted unto us in the parable of the seed that fell in the stony ground. And there be two differences or kinds of this faith. The first kind of temporary faith has in it three degrees. The first is to know the Word of God and particularly the gospel. The second, to give an assent unto it. The third, to profess it, but to go no further. And all this may be done without any love to the Word. This faith has one degree more than historical faith. Examples of it we have in Simon Magus (Acts 8:13), who is said to believe because he held the doctrine of the apostle to be true and withal professed the same. And [it is] in the devils also, who in some sort confessed that Christ was the Son of the Most Highest and yet looked for no salvation by Him (Mark 5:7; Acts 19:15). And this is the

common faith that abounds in this land. Men say they believe as the prince believes; and if religion change, they will change. For by reason of the authority of princes' laws, they are made to learn some little knowledge of the Word. They believe it to be good, and they profess it. And thus for the space of thirty or forty years men hear the word preached and receive the sacraments, being for all this as void of grace as ever they were at the first day. And the reason is because they do barely profess it without either liking or love of the same.

The second kind of temporary faith has in it five degrees.<sup>9</sup> For by it, first, a man knows the Word. Secondly, he assents unto it. Thirdly, he professes it. Fourthly, he rejoices inwardly in it. Fifthly, he brings forth some kind of fruit. And yet for all this [he] has no more in him but a faith that will fail in the end, because he wants the effectual application of the promise of the gospel and is without all manner of sound conversation. This faith is like corn on the housetop, which grows for awhile, but when heat of summer comes it withers. And this is also set forth unto us in the parable of the seed, which fell in stony ground, which is hasty in springing up; but because of the stones, which will not suffer it to take deep root, it withers. And this is a very common faith in the church of God, by which many rejoice in the preaching of the word and for a time bring forth some fruits accordingly with show of great forwardness, yet afterward shake off religion and all [Luke 8:13]. But (some will say) how can this be a temporary faith, seeing it has such fruits? *Answer.* Such a kind of faith is temporary because it is grounded on temporary causes, which are three. (1) A desire to get knowledge of some strange points of religion. For many a man does labor for the five former degrees of temporary faith only because he desires to get more knowledge in Scripture than other men have. [2] The second cause is a desire of praise among men, which is of that force that it will make a man put on a show of all the graces which God bestows upon His own children, though otherwise he want them, and to go very far in religion, which appears thus. Some there are which seem very bitterly to weep for the sins of other men and yet have neither sorrow nor touch of conscience for their own, and the cause hereof is nothing else but pride. For he that sheds tears for another man's sins should much more weep for his own, if he had grace. Again, a man for his own sins will pray very slackly and dully when he prays privately, and yet when he is in the company of others he prays very fervently and earnestly. From whence is this difference? Surely, often it springs from the pride of heart and from a desire of praise among men. [3] The third cause of temporary faith is profit, commodity, the getting of wealth and riches, which are common occasions to move to choose or refuse religion, as the time serves. But such a

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9. This paragraph break was not in the original.

kind of believers embrace not the gospel because it is the gospel—that is, the glad tidings of salvation—but because it brings wealth, peace, and liberty with it. And these are the three causes of temporary faith.

The third kind of faith is the faith of miracles, when a man, grounding himself on some special promise or revelation from God, does believe that some strange and extraordinary thing which he has desired or foretold shall come to pass by the work of God. This must be distinguished from historical and temporary faith. For Simon Magus, having both these kinds of faith, wanted this faith of miracles and therefore would have bought the same of the apostles for money [Acts 8:19]. Yet we must know that this faith of miracles may be in hypocrites, as it was in Judas, and at the last judgment it shall be found to have been in the wicked and reprobate, which shall say to Christ, “Lord, in Thy name we have prophesied and cast out devils and done many great miracles” [Matt. 7:22; 1 Cor. 13:2].

And thus much for the three sorts of common faith. Now we come to true faith, which is called the faith of the elect. It is thus defined: faith is a supernatural gift of God in the mind, apprehending the saving promise with all the promises that depend on it. First, I say it is a gift of God (Phil. 1:29) to confute the blind opinion of our people that think that the faith whereby they are to be saved is bred and born with them. I add that this is a gift supernatural, not only because it is above the corrupt nature in which we are born, but also because it is above that pure nature in which our first parents were created; for in the state of innocency they wanted this faith, neither had they then any need of faith in the Son of God as He is Messiah. But this faith is a new grace of God added to regeneration after the fall and first prescribed and taught in the covenant of grace. And by this one thing faith differs from the rest of the gifts of God, as the fear of God, the love of God, the love of our brethren, etc. For these were in man’s nature before the fall; and after it, when it pleases God to call us, they are but renewed. But justifying faith admits no renewing. For the first engrafting of it into the heart is in the conversion of a sinner after his fall.

The place and seat of faith (as I think) is the mind of man, not the will; for it stands in a kind of particular knowledge or persuasion, and there is no persuasion but in the mind. Paul says indeed that we believe with the heart (Rom. 10:9). But by the heart he understands the soul, without limitation to any part. Some do place faith partly in the mind and partly in the will, because it has two parts: knowledge and affiance. But it seems not greatly to stand with reason that one particular and single grace should be seated in divers parts or faculties of the soul.

The form of faith is to apprehend the promise. “That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:14) and “to receive Christ”

(John 1:12) and “to believe” are put one for another. And to believe is to eat and drink the body and blood of Christ. To apprehend properly is an action of the hand of man, which lays hold of a thing and pulls [it] to himself; and by resemblance it agrees to faith, which is the hand of the soul, receiving and applying the saving promise.

The apprehension of faith is not performed by any affection of the will, but by a certain and particular persuasion whereby a man is resolved that the promise of salvation belongs unto him, which persuasion is wrought in the mind by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 2:12). And by this the promise which is general is applied particularly to one subject.

By this one action saving faith differs from all other kinds of faith. From historical, for it wants all apprehension and stands only in a general assent. From temporary faith, which though it make a man to profess the gospel and to rejoice in the same, yet does it not thoroughly apply Christ with His benefits. For it never brings with it any thorough touch of conscience or lively sense of God’s grace in the heart. And the same may be said of the rest.

The principal and main object of this faith is the saving promise: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life” [John 3:16]. But some will say, Christ is commonly said to be the object of faith. *Answer.* In effect it is all one to say “the saving promise” and “Christ promised,” who is the substance of the covenant. Christ then, as He is set forth unto us in the word and sacraments, is the object of faith. And here certain questions offer themselves to be scanned.

The first, what is that particular thing which faith apprehends? *Answer.* Faith apprehends the whole Christ, God and man. For His Godhead without His manhood and His manhood without His Godhead does not reconcile us to God. Yet this which I say must be conceived with some distinction according to the difference of His two natures. His Godhead is apprehended not in respect of His efficacy or nature, but in respect of His efficacy manifested in the manhood, whereby the obedience thereof is made meritorious before God. As for His manhood, it is apprehended both in respect of the substance or thing itself and also in respect of the efficacy and benefits thereof.

The second, in what order faith apprehends Christ? *Answer.* First of all, it apprehends the very body and blood of Christ. And then in the second place the virtue and benefits of His body and blood, as a man that would feel in his body the virtue of meat and drink must first of all receive the substance thereof.

To go forward, besides this main promise, which concerns righteousness and life everlasting in Christ, there be other particular promises touching strength in temptations, comfort in afflictions, and such like, which depend on the former. And they also are the object of justifying faith; and with the

very same faith we believe them, wherewith we believe our salvation. Thus, Abraham by the same faith wherewith he was justified believed that he should have a son in his old age (Rom. 4:9, 22). And Noah by that faith whereby he was made heir of righteousness believed that he and his family should be preserved in the flood—this conclusion being always laid down, that to whom God gives Christ, to them also He gives all things needful for this life or the life to come in and by Christ. And hereupon it comes to pass that in our prayers, besides the desire of things promised, we must bring faith, whereby we must be certainly persuaded that God will grant us such things as He has promised. And this faith is not a new kind or distinct faith from justifying faith. Thus, we see plainly what saving faith is.

Whereas some are of opinion that faith is an affiance or confidence, that seems to be otherwise; for it is a fruit of faith. And indeed no man can put any confidence in God, till he be first of all persuaded of God's mercy in Christ toward him [Eph. 3:12].

Some again are of mind that love is the very nature and form of faith, but it is otherwise. For as confidence in God, so also love is an effect which proceeds from faith. "The end of the law is love from a pure heart, and good conscience, and faith unfeigned" (1 Tim. 1:5). And in nature they differ greatly. Christ is the fountain of the water of life. Faith in the heart is as the pipes and leads that receive in and hold the water. And love in some part is as the cock<sup>10</sup> of the conduit, that lets out the water to every comer. The property of the hand is to hold, and of itself it cannot cut. Yet by a knife or other instrument put into the hand it cuts. The hand of the soul is faith, and its<sup>11</sup> property is to apprehend Christ with all His benefits and by itself can do nothing else. Yet join love unto it, and by love it will be effectual in all good duties [Gal. 5:6].

Now to proceed further, first, we are to consider how faith is wrought; secondly, what be the differences of it. For the first, faith is wrought in and by the outward ministry of the gospel, accompanied by the inward operation of the Spirit, and that not suddenly but by certain steps and degrees—as nature frames the body of the infant in the mother's womb (1) by making the brain and heart; (2) by making veins, sinews, arteries, bones; (3) by adding flesh to them all. And the whole operation of the Spirit stands in two principal actions: first, the enlightening of the mind; the second, the moving of the will. For the first, the Holy Ghost enlightens men's minds with a further knowledge of the law than nature can afford and thereby makes them to see the sins of their hearts and lives with the ugliness thereof and withal to tremble at the curse of

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10. *Cock*: ?.

11. Originally, "his."

the law. Afterward, the same Spirit opens the eye to understand and consider seriously of righteousness and life eternal promised in Christ. This done, then comes the second work of the Holy Ghost, which is the inflaming of the will, that a man, having considered his fearful estate by reason of sin and the benefit of Christ's death, might hunger after Christ and have desire not so much to have the punishments of sin taken away as God's displeasure and also might enjoy the benefits of Christ. And when He has stirred up a man to desire reconciliation with God in Christ, then withal He gives him grace to pray not only for life eternal but especially for the free remission and pardon of all his sins. And then the Lord's promise is, "Knock and it shall be opened, seek and ye shall find" [Matt. 7:7]. After which He further sends His Spirit into the same heart that desires reconciliation with God and remission of sins in Christ and does seal up the same in the heart by a lively and plentiful assurance thereof.

The differences and degrees of faith are two: (1) a weak faith; (2) a strong faith. Concerning the first, this weak faith shows itself by this grace of God—namely, an unfeigned desire not only of salvation (for that the wicked and graceless man may have), but of reconciliation with God in Christ. This is a sure sign of faith in every touched and humbled heart, and it is peculiar to the elect. And they which have this have in them also the ground and substance of true saving faith, which afterward in time will grow up to great strength. *Reason 1.* Promise of life everlasting is made to the desire of reconciliation. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the poor" (Ps. 10:17). "My soul desires after thee, as the thirsty land" (143:6).<sup>12</sup> "He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him" (145:19). "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6). "I will give unto him which is athirst, of the well of the water of life freely" (Rev. 21:6). *[Reason] 2.* The hungering desire after grace is a sanctified affection. Where one affection is sanctified, all are sanctified. Where all are sanctified, the whole man is sanctified. And he that is sanctified is justified and believes. *[Reason] 3.* God accepts the will and desire to repent and believe for repenting and believing indeed. Wherefore, this desire of reconciliation (if it be soundly wrought in the heart) is in acceptation with God as true faith indeed. But carnal men will say, "If faith, yea, true faith show itself by a desire of reconciliation with God in Christ for all our sins, then we are well enough, though we live in our sins; for we have very good desires." I answer that there be many sundry, fleeting motions and desires to do good things, which grow to no issue or head but in time vanish as they come. Now such passions have no soundness in them and must be distinguished from the desire of reconciliation with God that comes from a bruised heart and brings

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12. Originally, "Ps. 14:36."



always with it reformation of life. Therefore, such, whosoever they are, that live after the course of this world and think notwithstanding that they have desires that are good deceive themselves.

Now faith is said to be weak when a man either fails in the knowledge of the gospel or else, having knowledge, is weak in grace to apply unto himself the sweet promises thereof. As, for example, we know that the apostles had all true saving faith (except Judas), and when our Savior Christ asked them whom they thought He was, Peter in the person of the rest answered for them all and said, “Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God” [Matt. 16:16]; for which our Savior commended him and in him them all, saying, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock”—that is, upon Christ, which Peter confessed in the name of them all—“will I build my church” [v. 18; 8:26]. And yet about that time we shall find in the Gospel that they are called men of “little faith” [16:8]. Now they failed in knowledge of the death of Christ and of His passion and resurrection and were carried away with a vain hope of an earthly kingdom. And therefore when our Savior showed them of His going down to Jerusalem and of His sufferings there, Peter a little after his notable confession began to rebuke Christ and said, “Master, have pity on thyself, this shall not be unto thee” [16:22].<sup>13</sup> And until He had appeared unto them after His death, they did not distinctly believe His resurrection.

Again, weak faith, though it be joined with knowledge, yet it may fail in the applying or in the apprehension and appropriating of Christ’s benefits to a man’s own self. This is to be seen in ordinary experience. For many a man there is of humble and contrite heart that serves God in spirit and truth, yet is not able to say without great doubtings and waverings, “I know and am fully assured that my sins are pardoned.” Now shall we say that all such are without faith? God forbid. Nay, we may resolve ourselves that the true child of God may have a hungering desire in his heart after reconciliation with God in Christ for all his sins, with care to keep a good conscience, and yet be weak sometimes in the apprehension of God’s mercy and the assurance of the remission of his own sins.

But if faith fail either in the true knowledge or in the apprehension of God’s mercies, how can a man be saved by it? *Answer.* We must know that this weak faith will as truly apprehend God’s merciful promises for the pardon of sin as strong faith, though not so soundly—even as a man with a palsy hand can stretch it out as well to receive a gift at the hand of a king as he that is more sound, though it be not so firmly and steadfastly. And Christ says that He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.

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13. Originally, “Matt. 16:21.”

The Church of Rome bears men in hand that they are good Catholics if they believe as the Church believes, though in the mean season<sup>14</sup> they cannot tell what the Church believes. And some Papists commend this faith by the example of an old, devout father, who, being tempted of the devil and asked how he believed, answered that he believed as the Church believed. Being again asked how the Church believed, he answered, “As I believe,” whereupon the devil (as they say) was fain<sup>15</sup> to depart. Well, this fond and ridiculous kind of faith we renounce as being a means to muzzle men in blindness, superstition, and perpetual ignorance. Yet withal we do not deny but there is an implicit or infolded faith, which is when a man as yet having but some little portion of knowledge in the doctrine of the gospel does truly perform obedience according to the measure thereof and withal has care to get more knowledge and shows good affection to all good means whereby it may be increased. In this respect, a certain ruler who by a miracle wrought upon his child was moved to acknowledge Christ for the Messiah and further to submit himself to His doctrine is commended for a believer, and so are in like case the Samaritans [John 4:33, 42].

And thus much of weak faith, which must be understood to be in a man not all the days of his life, but while he is a young babe in Christ. For as it is in the state of the body—first we are babes and grow to greater strength as we grow in years—so it is with a Christian man. First, he is a babe in Christ, having weak faith, but after grows from grace to grace till he come to have a strong faith, an example whereof we have in Abraham, who was strong and perfect both in knowledge and apprehension. This strong faith is when a man is endued with the knowledge of the gospel and grace to apprehend and apply the righteousness of Christ unto himself for the remission of his own sins, so as he can say distinctly of himself and truly that he is fully resolved in his own conscience that he is reconciled unto God in Christ for all his sins and accepted in Him to life everlasting. This degree of faith is proper to him that begins to be a tall man and of ripe years in Christ. And it comes not at the first calling of a man unto grace. And if any shall think that he can have it at the first, he deceives himself; for as it is in nature—first we are babes, and then as we increase in years, so we grow in strength—so it is in the life of a Christian. First, ordinarily, he has a weak faith and after grows from grace to grace, till he come to stronger faith and at the last he be able to say he is fully assured in his heart and conscience of the pardon of his sins and of reconciliation to God in Christ. And this assurance arises from many experiences of God’s favor and love in the course of his life by manifold preservations and other blessings, which, being

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14. *Mean season*: meantime.

15. *Fain*: to desire or will.

deeply and duly considered, bring a man to be fully persuaded that God is his God, and God the Father his Father, and Jesus Christ his Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost his Sanctifier.

Now howsoever this faith be strong, yet is it always imperfect, as also our knowledge is, and shall so long as we live in this world be mingled with contrary unbelief and sundry doubtings more or less. A great part of men among us, blinded with gross ignorance, say they have faith and yet indeed have not. For ask them what faith they have, they will answer they believe that God is their Father, and the Son their Redeemer, etc. Ask them how long they have had this faith; they will answer, ever since they could remember. Ask them whether they ever doubt of God's favor; they will say they would not once doubt for all the world. But the case of these men is to be pitied; for howsoever they may persuade themselves, yet true it is that they have no sound faith at all, for even strong faith is assaulted with temptations and doubtings. And God will not have men perfect in this life, that they may always go out of themselves and depend wholly on the merit of Christ.

And thus much of these two degrees of faith. Now, in whomsoever it is, whether it be a weak faith or a strong, it brings forth some fruit, as a tree does in the time of summer. And a special fruit of faith is the confession of faith, "I believe in God," etc. So Paul says, "With the heart a man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth man confesseth to salvation" [Rom. 10:10]. Confession of faith is when a man in speech and outward profession does make manifest his faith for these two causes: (1) that with his mouth outwardly he may glorify God and do Him service both in body and soul; (2) that by the confession of his faith he may sever himself from all false Christians, from atheists, hypocrites, and all false seducers whatsoever. And as this is the duty of a Christian man to make profession of his faith, so here in this Creed of the Apostles we have the right order and form of making confession set down, as we shall see in handling<sup>16</sup> the parts thereof.

The Creed therefore sets down two things concerning faith—namely, the action of faith and its<sup>17</sup> object, which also are the parts of the Creed: the action, in these words, "I believe"; the object, in all the words following, "in God the Father Almighty, Maker," etc. And first let us begin with the action.

"I believe in God." We are taught to say, "I believe," not, "We believe," for two causes: first, because (as we touched before) in the primitive church this Creed was made to be an answer to a demand or question, which was demanded of every particular man that was baptized; for they asked him thus,

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16. Originally, "handing."

17. Originally, "his."