

*St. John in the Wilderness*  
✝ Adult Education and Formation ✝

*Notes on:*  
**The Creed**

**Sep. 10, 2000 to Oct. 15, 2000**

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# The Creed 1. God the Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth

Notes by David Monyak. Last Update October 1, 2000

**I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

The Apostles' Creed

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

The Nicene Creed

## Questions, Issues, Topics

(Questions and topics are organized as in chapter 1 in **Credo. The Apostles' Creed Explained for Today.** Hans Küng. Doubleday. New York. 1992:)

1. History of the Apostles' and Nicene Creed
2. What does believe mean? What is Faith?
3. What does it mean to believe in God the Creator in the era of Modern Physics and Astronomy?
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5. What does it mean to believe in God the Almighty?
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7. Belief in God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, in a world divided between the three prophetic religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam

## 1. History of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds

### 1.1. Apostle's Creed

- does not go back to the apostles
- 5th century: is first found in complete form

- 10th century: Emperor Otto the Great introduces the Apostle's Creed as a replacement for the Nicene Creed at baptism

### 1.2. Nicene Creed

- adopted by the first great ecumenical council in 325 A.D.
- expanded at a later conference in Constantinople in 381 A.D.
- gradually became part of the Eucharistic liturgy, first in the East, then in the West
- by about 1000 A.D. had become part of the regular Roman mass

## 2. What Does Believe Mean? What is Faith?

### 2.1. What is God?

- God is that which cannot be defined, cannot be limited
- God is "a literally invisible, unfathomable, incomprehensible, infinite reality."
- God is therefore not an "object" discernable by science

**"A God who is there, is not God"**  
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

("God is not *vorhanden*, simply at hand, at our disposal, like an object on the physical world. Rather we are at God's disposal, and we are given to know God only by grace in revelation, by God's meeting us through the testimony of Bible and church." Owen Thomas, p78)

### 2.2. Belief, Faith, and Reason

If God cannot be defined or limited, if God is not a discernable object, then:

- God cannot be proven (or disproven) rationally
- As creatures of space and time, we cannot prove or disprove the existence of a reality outside or beyond the physical reality of space and time that we are familiar with
- Our pure, theoretical reason cannot reach to the reality of God (Immanuel Kant)

Therefore:

whatever **belief** and **faith** is, their foundations *cannot* be based on intellectual or philosophical arguments that God must/probably/ is likely to exist

## 2.3. What is Faith?

(from Küng):

- an act of the human being as a **whole**
- a human being with **reason** and a **heart**
- an act of **reasonable trust**, which includes:
  - thought
  - questioning
  - doubt
  - understanding
  - disposition

Augustine of Hippo:

- not a matter of believing something (*credere aliquid*)
- not a matter of believing someone (*credere alicui*)
- but a matter of believing in someone (*credere in aliquem*)

## 2.4. Conclusion

*I believe in God. . .*

means:

- A commitment, a *reasonable trust* of a whole human person (*reason* and *heart*)
- to the existence of a:
  - literally invisible, unfathomable, incomprehensible and infinite reality
  - a reality which is the source, ultimate meaning and goal of the universe's and our personal existence
  - the reality of God

# 3. What does it mean to believe in God the Creator in the era of Modern Physics and Astronomy?

## 3.1. Modern Cosmology and the Beginning of the Universe

### 3.1.1. *creatio ex nihilo*. God's Creation of the Universe from Nothing

Near the beginning of time, a "Big Bang" -- a great fireball of immense density and temperature -- filled all of space and started its evolution into the expanding universe of galaxies we see today. The theories of Relativity have made clear to us space and time are

woven together in a single created fabric called space-time. Models of the universe using the theory of General Relativity lead to a time = 0 where this fabric of space-time was undefined, and immediately after which both space and time abruptly began to exist. In the classical (classical = not including quantum mechanics) theory of General Relativity, our universe of space and time had a clear beginning -- an apparent moment of creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilio*)

### 3.1.2. *creatio conservata*. God's Sustaining of the Universe

Recent theories of cosmology which try to incorporate quantum physics effects into General Relativity (Quantum Gravity) suggest that the dimension we call time becomes "fuzzy" and turns into a fourth spatial dimension as we approach "time = 0". If true, it means there is no "beginning" to the universe, no "moment" of creation, for as we approach the "beginning" the dimension of time becomes undefined and disappears and we end up in a world of four spatial dimension in which there is no such thing as time.

Quantum cosmology reminds us that we should not give special import to a "moment of creation" All points of space-time are equally dependent on God and equally require an explanation. God is best thought of as creating and sustaining all of space-time. The theological concepts of *creatio ex nihilo* (creation from nothing) and *creatio conservata* (God's continued sustaining of the physical universe) are the same.

### 3.1.3. *The Theological Issue: What is the fundamental relationship between the world and God?*

God is the primal ground, primal author, creator of the universe

"God . . . works as the creative and perfect primal basis and thus as the guide of the world, immanent in it and superior to it, while fully respecting the laws of nature, which have their origin in God" - Küng

Belief in God is compatible with a variety of models of the world

## 3.2. Questions Physics and Astronomy Cannot Answer

The question of ultimate primal origins of the universe and of human beings:

- what was "before" the Big Bang?

- why is there something and not nothing? (the basic question of philosophy .. Leibniz and Heidegger)

These questions cannot:

- be answered by science,
- be dismissed as useless or meaningless

### 3.3. The Bible is a Testimony of Faith, not a Scientific Textbook

The language of the Bible is not a language of facts but a metaphorical picture language. The bible is not a scientific textbook, but does seek to interpret "scientific facts"

#### 3.3.1. The Two Biblical Accounts of Creation

There are two biblical accounts of creation (both seek to "interpret" the scientific facts of creation as believed at the time they were written):

- Earliest Version (about 900 B.C.E.) Genesis 2:4b to 2:25.
- Later Version (about 500 B.C.E.) Genesis 1:1 to 2:4a

They seek to give a *testimony of faith* to the question: what is the fundamental relationship between the world and God?

#### The Order of Creation

Genesis 1 (About 500 B.C.E.)	Genesis 2 (about 900 B.C.E.)
Light	Man
Firmament	Garden
Earth, plants	Vegetation
Sun, moon, stars	Rivers
Birds, fish	Beasts, birds
Humans (male and female)	Woman

#### 3.3.2. What the Biblical Accounts of Creation Tell Us

These stories of creation (which clearly contradict each other if interpreted as scientific accounts of creation), are meant rather to give a *testimony of faith* to the ultimate primal origin of the universe. They tell us:

- there is but one God
- God is the ultimate origin of each human being
- God is not in competition with an equally powerful evil counterforce. (there is no "dark side" comparable to God)
- all that is in the creation: night, day, waters, lowliest creatures, the human body and sexuality, are fundamentally good
- human beings are the goal of creation
- God's word is creative
  - one "model" of God the creator in the early church was called **emanation**.
  - Creation is the overflowing of the creative energy of God.
  - Just as light comes from the sun and reflects its nature, so the creation comes from God and reflects God's nature (A similar metaphor is used in the Nicene Creed to speak of the Son coming from the Father: "light from light")

### 3.4. Conclusion

*I believe in God. . . creator of heaven and earth.*

means:

- the ultimate and primal origin of the world and human beings is grounded in meaning and purpose and value
- that our lives are not ultimately meaningless passages from nothingness to nothingness

## 4. What does it mean to believe in God the Creator in the era of Modern Biology?

### 4.1. The Confrontation of Evolution With the Classical Theory of Redemption

The **Classical theory of Redemption**:

- a perfect primal state
- the sin of the Garden of Eden by the first human couple
  - the "original sin"
- this original sin transmitted down to the present by sexual procreation
  - hence the need to baptize infants (Augustine)

Problem: evolution tells us there never was a single human couple who could sin for all of humankind

## 4.2. The Science of Biological Evolution

Evolution: evolution of life, and the ascendancy of higher forms of life:

- self-organization of molecules
- natural selection, survival of the fittest (self-regulation)

The tension between **chance** and **necessity** in the development of life

- mostly chance?: "Pure change, absolutely free but blind, blind freedom at the very root the stupendous edifice of evolution" Jacques Monod.
- natural laws guide chance (view of most biologist today)

No apparent need for any special intervention by a creator God

## 4.3. Questions Biology Cannot Answer

Therefore:

- we do not need to postulate God to explain the transition of inanimate matter to life
- But it equally cannot be used to postulate the non-existence of God (i.e. it cannot prove that human beings, the products of evolution, do not need to believe in God)
- it cannot answer the questions:
  - where does this whole process come from?
  - what is it for? What is its goal?

**"The mystery is not *how* evolution takes place, but *that* it takes place"**

- von Ditfurth, French scientist

# 5. What does it mean to believe in God the Almighty?

## 5.1. What Does Almighty Mean?

"almighty"

- Greek *pantocrator* = "ruler of all"
- Latin *omnipotens* = "capable of doing everything."  
English: **omnipotence**

Expresses God's superiority and effectiveness (not opposed by any force of like potency, God's sovereign power over creation.

## 5.2. God's Omnipotence in the Bible

(from Owen Thomas, p.92)

Manifest in:

- creation
- sustaining of creation
- judgment and deliverance of the people of God
  - accompanying signs and wonders
- names of God:
  - Yahweh's title: *sabbaoth* "God of hosts"
  - *el shaddai* = "God Almighty" in the Septuagint, New Testament and English translations

## 5.3. Tensions and Problems Created by an "Almighty" God

- may create the impression of a God who is above the world, a great king in absolute detached splendor, untouched, unsoiled by the suffering of creation
- implicitly raises questions why this almighty God who can do anything stands by in utter silence and watches suffering and evil continue in the world

## 5.4. Is God a Great King in Detached Splendor, Above the Sufferings of Creation?

*God is not an "architect or watchmaker" existing outside of creation*

"God does not work into the world from above or outside as the unmoved mover"

*God is "the all-embracing, all-permeating, infinite reality"*

Küng:

"God does not work above the world process but in the world process: in, with and among human beings and things"

" God is origin, center, goal of the world processes"

"God is not just active at individual, particularly important points or gaps in the world processes, but works as the creative and perfect primal basis and thus as the guide of the world, immanent in it and superior to it, while fully

respecting the laws of nature, which have their origin in God"

God is:

- "infinite and ungraspable"
- "the sea which is not drunk up"
- "the horizon which cannot be swept away"
- "the sun from which earth and human beings cannot be detached"

The concept of God as "in, with and among human beings and things" is what we mean by the sacramental nature of the universe will be discussed further in our series on the sacraments.

## 5.5. How Can an Almighty God Stand By in Silence Amid Suffering and Evil?

We will take up the question of how God can "stand by in silence" amid suffering and evil in the Creed 3. The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus. Also see notes in Theology 1: The Doctrine of God.

## 5.6. Conclusion

*I Believe in God . . . the Almighty*

When we profess a belief in the God, "the almighty"

- we acknowledge God's superiority to us, our "creatureliness"
- we need not feel God is detached, above us, away from us, unaffected, unmoved by our suffering

# 6. What does it mean to believe in God the Father in the era of feminism?

## 6.1. God Transcends Masculinity and Femininity

- God is not male
- God is not masculine or feminine, but transcends masculinity and femininity
- all terms for God are:
  - analogies
  - metaphors
  - ciphers
  - symbols

## 6.2. The Problem Posed by the Limits of Our Humanity in Speaking of God

A limitations of our humanity:

we have no higher names than human names: "father" and "mother" mean more to us as human beings than "the Absolute", or "Being"

## 6.3. Conclusion

*I believe in God, the Father . . .*

we must pray:

- to God who transcends masculinity and femininity,
  - post-patriarchally,
  - using one of the highest and most meaningful names we have as human beings ("father" and "mother") to evoke our awareness of God's fatherhood and motherhood towards us
- when we say, as Jesus taught us, Abba, "Our 'Father'"

# 7. Belief in God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, in a world divided between the three prophetic religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam

## 7.1. The Common Beliefs of Judaism, Christianity and Islam

Three religions (the three prophetic religions which believe in one and the same God of Abraham) believe in God, the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth: Judaism Christianity Islam

All have in common:

- belief in the one and same God of Abraham
  - Abraham: the great witness of the one true and living God
- history is not cyclic but directed to a goal
- revelation of Holy Scriptures
- the ethic of fundamental humanity in the Ten Commandments

## 7.2. Conclusions

As we pray, we should remember we pray in common with the Jews and Moslems to the one God, the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth

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**Loving the Questions. An Exploration of the Nicene**

**Creed.** Marianne H. Micks. Cowley. Boston. 1993

\*\* majority of material from this book

## The Creed 2. Jesus Christ, the Son of God

Notes by David Monyak. Last update September 16, 2000)

**I believe in Jesus Christ,  
God's only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.**

The Apostles' Creed

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God, eternally  
begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light, true  
God from true God,  
begotten, not made, of one Being with  
the Father.**

**Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation he came  
down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit he  
became incarnate from the Virgin  
Mary,  
and was made man.**

The Nicene Creed

### Questions, Issues

(Questions and topics from chapter 2 in **Credo**. Hans Küng. Doubleday. New York. 1992 and chapter 4 in **Loving the Questions. An Exploration of the Nicene Creed**. Marianne H. Micks. Cowley. Boston. 1993

1. Must we believe in a virgin birth?
2. What is the meaning and purpose of the nativity stories?
3. What does "Son of God" mean in the Old and New Testaments?
4. Early views of "Who Is Jesus?" The development of Classical Christology
5. A Sampling of Some Modern Christologies
6. Conclusion: The Absolute Paradox

**What do you think of the Christ?**

Matthew 22:42

**Who do you say that I am?**

Matthew 6:14

In theology, the study of "who is Jesus" is called **Christology**. We plan to do a future **series on Christology**. Christology is also discussed in the **Survey of Theology 3: The Doctrine of the Person of Christ**.

## 1. Must we believe in a virgin birth?

### 1.1. Introduction

virgin birth -- more precisely, we mean virgin conception in the Catholic Church "virgin birth" can refer to belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary

### 1.2. History

(from Owen Thomas, Introduction to Theology)

- found only in the birth stories of Matthew and Luke
- not in other parts of the New Testament, even when reference is made to Jesus' birth or incarnation
  - Galatians 4:4 "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law. . ." (NRSV)
  - Romans 1:3 ". . .the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh . . ." (NRSV)
  - Romans 8:3 "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh. . ." (NRSV)
  - 2 Corinthians 8:9 "For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." (NRSV)
  - John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." (NRSV)
- Immanuel prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 speaks of a young woman (Hebrew *alma*) who will bear a son Immanuel = "Son with us". In the Greek translation this was mistranslated as *parthenos* = virgin
- formed no part of earliest Christian preaching
- not mentioned by any of the apostolic fathers except Ignatius
- after 150 A.D., affirmed by most Christian authors
- questioned in the 19th century with the new historical - critical approach to the Bible

### 1.3. Is the Virgin Birth Essential to the Christian Faith?

(from Owen Thomas, Introduction to Theology; and Hans Kung, Credo)

#### 1.3.1. No - it is a myth, a legend, "theopoetical"

Problems in believing the virginal conception literally:

- Virgin births are not exclusively Christian
  - in Greek-Hellenistic mythology, many stories of "sacred marriages" of the gods with the daughters of men
    - sons of God: Perseus, Heracles, Homer, Plato, Alexander, Augustus
  - significant differences from ancient narratives: no intercourse between god and human beings
- The medical problem: genetics: parthenogenesis (procreation by a duplication of the female genes) can produce only a female child
- only brief mention in the scripture (see above)

Kung:

- virginal birth not a biologic fact, but an "interpretation of reality by means of a primal symbol"
- tells us God acted uniquely in history in the conception of the man Jesus
- One can confess Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God without believing in a literal virgin birth.

#### 1.3.2. No - and belief in it threatens the doctrine of the Incarnation

- contradicts the doctrine of the incarnation. Rather than the eternal pre-existent Son of God assuming human nature, it paints a picture of the "conception" of the Son of God, the point at which the Son of God came into being.
- threatens the full humanity of Jesus (only one human X chromosome, one divine Y)
- hostile to the body, sex, and marriage

#### 1.3.3. Yes - Belief in the Virginal Conception is Essential to the Faith

Barth:

- miracle of the virginal conception is part of the mystery of the Incarnation (the union of full humanity and full divinity)
- "human nature is involved not as willing, achieving, creative, and sovereign only receptive"

## 2. What is the meaning and purpose of the nativity stories?

### 2.1. Differences in the Birth Narratives

(largely taken from Loving the Questions. An Exploration of the Nicene Creed. Marianne H. Micks)

The birth narratives are present only in Matthew and Luke and differ widely

Luke:

- annunciation by angel Gabriel
- shepherds watching over flock
- does not include:
  - the visit of the Magi
  - the massacre of the Innocents
  - the flight to Egypt

Matthew:

- annunciation to Joseph in a dream
- wise men (number not mentioned) follow the star from the East

The general consensus among scholars is that the birth narratives are more legend than fact.

Mythic thinking conveying truth in narrative form

### 2.2. The political and social dimension of Christmas

(from Kung, Credo, page 45-47)

". . . the Christmas story, rightly understood, is anything but a harmlessly edifying or psychologically refined story of the dear child Jesus. All these biblical narratives are stories about Christ with a high degree of theological reflection, at the service of a proclamation with a very specific aim, which seeks to make clear in a way which is artistic, vivid and radically critical of society the significance of Jesus as the Messiah for the salvation of all the peoples of the earth"  
-- Kung, Credo page 46-47

- There is no silent night, no gentle infant, so tender and bright. The manger, swaddling cloths are signs of lowliness and poverty
- the savior born in a manger is an option for those without name or power (the shepherds)
- Magnificat of Mary speaks of the:
  - humiliation of the mighty
  - the exaltation of the lowly
  - filling of the hungry
  - sending away empty of the rich

- lordship (Son of God, Saviour, Messiah, King) is given to the Child rather than to Emperor Augustus
- contrasts the "peace on earth" with the coming of the Messiah with the deceptive Pax Romana based on tyranny

Infancy stories are thus powerful theological overtures to the gospels of Matthew and Luke

### 3. What does "Son of God" mean in the Old and New Testaments?

#### 3.1. "Son of God" in the Old Testament

Term often used in a broad sense, as "belonging to God" applied to:

- people of Israel (Exodus 4:22) "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: Israel is my firstborn son.'" (NRSV)
- Davidic king (2 Samuel 7:14) "{Thus says the LORD of hosts;} . . . I will be a father to him {Davidic king}, and he shall be a son to me." (NRSV)

#### 3.2. "Son of God" in the New Testament

Jesus does not use the term to describe himself

It is used by Paul and John, always in a special way in relationship to Jesus:

Paul uses "Son of God" it in a different way for Jesus versus believers

- for believers:
  - a sonship of adoption
  - all believers enjoy inheritance rights, male and female
- for Jesus:
  - God's own Son (Romans 8:3)

John:

- "son" *huios* applied to Jesus
- "children" *tekna* applied to believers

## 4. Early Views of "Who Is Jesus?" Development of Classic Christology

(largely taken from *Loving the Questions. An Exploration of the Nicene Creed.* Marianne H. Micks)

### 4.1. Christology "from Below" versus "from Above"

- From "Below"
  - emphasizes the humanity of Jesus or starts from the humanity of Jesus
  - also called an **ascending Christology**
  - also called an **exultation Christology**
  - perils of "from below":
    - in extreme can lead to **adoptionism** -- that God adopted the man Jesus at some point in this life, perhaps at baptism or at the resurrection.
- From "Above"
  - emphasizes the divinity of Jesus, or starts with the divinity of Jesus
  - also called a **descending Christology**
  - also called a **metaphysical Christology**
  - perils of "from above":
    - in extreme can lead to **docetism** (from Greek *dokein* to appear or seem) that Jesus only appeared to be human

### 4.2. Christology in the Scriptures

Earliest Christologies were christologies of "coming from below", **exultation christologies**, an election and empowerment of Jesus, consistent with the meaning of "Son of God" in the Old Testament.

Romans 1:3-4 one of the oldest confessions of faith:

"the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, and **was declared to be Son of God** with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. . ." (NRSV)

A Christology "coming from above" came soon afterwards in the gospel of John: the Word of God (the Logos of God) was made flesh

### 4.3. Classic Christology: Introduction

The tension between the humanity and divinity of Jesus is reflected in the Four Great Heresies over "who is Jesus" in the early centuries of the church:

- 1. Arius

- 2. Apollinaris
- 3. Nestorius
- 4. Eutyches

Dwelt with in four ecumenical councils:

- Council of Nicea 325 C.E.
- Council of Constantinople in 381 C.E.
- Council of Ephesus in 431 C.E.
- Council of Chalcedon 451 C.E.

Led to the "Classical Christology" formulation of Jesus as one person who was fully divine and fully human, a union of both divine and human natures. That is:

- **one** person
- **two** full natures (**Dyophysitism**, rather than **Monophysitism**)
  - divine
  - human

This is the Chalcedonian Definition of the Union of the Divine and Human Natures in the Person of Christ" 451 C.E. (printed in the back of the Book of Common Prayer). Related term: doctrine of the **hypostatic union** = the union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ without confusion

#### 4.4. Some Terminology

Greek	Latin	English	Meaning
<i>ousia</i>	<i>substantia</i>	substance	Fundamental reality. That which makes a thing what it is. That which exists independently of anything else**
<i>hypostasis</i>	<i>persona</i>	persona (loosely: "person")	Mode of being. The way in which a substance exists. The manner in which a reality is presented**
<i>physis</i>		nature	
<i>homoiousios</i>			similar in substance or <i>ousia</i>
<i>homoousios</i>			of the same substance or <i>ousia</i>
<i>nous</i>		soul, mind, reason	

\*\* from Owen Thomas. Introduction to Theology

Trinity:

- definition
  - three *hypostasis* in one *ousia* (Greek)
  - three *persona* in one *substantia* (Latin)
  - three person(a)s in one substance (English)
- The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are *homoousios*

Chalcedonian Christology.

- Jesus has:
  - one *hypostasis*, two *physis* (Greek)
  - one person(a), two natures (English)
- the two *physis* or natures (human and divine) are in a perfect union in which neither is confused with the other = **hypostatic union**

#### 4.5. Heresy of Arius

The second person of the trinity, the Logos or Word of God was not coeternal with the Father, but a lesser being created by God.

Jesus is thus greater than humanity, but less than God, an intermediary being, semi-divine and semi-human.

Chief opponent: **Athanasius**.

#### 4.6 Heresy of Apollinaris

If Christ is fully God, can he also be fully human? **Apollinaris** said no, Jesus cannot be fully human.

Human beings have:

- physical body
- human animal soul
- human rational soul (*nous* = soul, mind, reason)

Jesus had a:

- human physical body
  - human animal soul,
  - not a human rational soul. Jesus' rational soul was the the mind of God
- (Jesus was *not* fully human but only "two-thirds" human)

**Apollinaris'** proposal was deemed heretical at the council of Constantinople in 381 C.E.

#### 4.7 Heresy of Nestorius

**Nestorius**

- objected to calling Mary *theotokos* "God bearer"
- preferred to call her "Christ-bearer"

As a result, he was accused of saying Jesus was two persons rather than one person, each person with its own nature:

- "Son of God" (Mary not involved)
  - "Son of Man" (the Son Mary gave birth to)
- The two persons, the "Son of Man" and the "Son of God" or the Word were "linked" together in a perfect moral union

Dwelt with in the **Council of Ephesus** in 431 C.E.

## 4.8 Heresy of Euryches

Rather than:

- one person
- two natures
  - human
  - divine

Euryches said: Christ

- one person,
- *one* nature, a special human-divine nature

**Monophysitism** = one nature rather than  
**Dyophysitism**, two natures

Dwelt with in the Council of Chalcedon 451 C.E.  
Christ one person, two natures joined in the one person without mixture or confusion (= the doctrine of the **hypostatic union**)

(Coptic and Armenian churches still teach one person, one nature)

## 4.9 Summary

quote from Owen Thomas, Introduction to Theology, p148:

"orthodox Christology does not attempt to explain the substance of Christology, that is, how the two natures are united in one person. It attempts to indicate where the mystery lies, so to speak, and to defend the mystery against the attempts to dissolved it into a neat formula which would distort it.

Orthodox Christology gives the only possible answers to the questions posed by the various heresies.

- Is Christ just an inspired man like the prophets. . . No  
Christ is of one substance with the Father.
- Is Christ God masquerading as a human being? . . .  
No Christ is fully human, true humanity

- Is Christ linked to the Word of God in a perfect moral union. . . No, Christ is one person.
- Is Christ an intermediary being, semi-divine and semi-human?. . . No Christ is truly God and truly human."

## 5. A Sampling of Some Modern Christologies

### 5.1 Problem of Classical Christology

- Relies on Terminology of Middle Platonist Philosophy
  - meaning of a "nature", in particular "human nature", "divine nature"; and ancient ideas of "body", "soul", are difficult to relate to modern ideas about the nature of personhood
  - some of the ideas of Middle Platonist philosophy are clearly non-biblical
    - example: Greek ideas of deity static versus the Hebrew God of the Old Testament, who is:
      - passionate God
      - capable of anger
      - compassionate tenderness
- Classical Christology does not reality explain, but defines the boundaries of the mystery

The mystery of Jesus as fully human and fully divine remains. The following sampling is perhaps best considered as attempts to explore, clarify, or better define facets of this mystery

### 5.2 Byzantine Emphasis on the Divinity of Jesus as the Substantial presence of God

(largely from John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology, p. 38-39)

In the Orthodox church, the reality of union of the divine and human "substances" in Jesus is critically important because of its emphasis on "deification". It was necessary for God to become fully human so we can someday become fully divine

Maximus the Confessor (580-662 A.D.), father of Byzantine theology:

- each human being carries a logos. Each human being is the image of the divine Logos
- the purpose of human nature is to acquire similitude with God. That is, the "natural" God-established "movement", "energy" or will of man is directed toward communion with God or "deification"
- through Christ's humanity, deified according to the hypostatic union with the Logos, all human beings have access to "deification"

### 5.3 Kenotic approaches to Christology

(from Alister McGrath Christian Theology. An Introduction)

Early 17th century debate:

Why did Jesus not make use of all his divine attributes while on earth?

- used them in secret (*krypsis*)
- abstained from using them at all (*kenosis*)

A more radical form of *kenosis* emerged in the 19th century:

- incarnation involves *kenosis*: the deliberate setting aside of all divine attributes, all privileges of divinity
- Jesus emptied himself, abandoned all divinity from birth to resurrection
- the second person of the Trinity reduced himself totally to a human level

### 5.4 Divinity of Jesus as a Symbolic Presence of God

(from Alister McGrath Christian Theology. An Introduction and Owen Thomas. Introduction to Theology)

The humanity in Jesus is perfect or essential humanity. Jesus is our only example of "perfect" humanity"

Paul Tillich:

- God's presence in Jesus symbolic, not substantial
- the perfect humanity in Jesus is in fact identical to the divinity in Jesus.
  - to achieve perfect humanity is to achieve divinity, "eternal God-manhood"
- Jesus was the first example of a "New Being", the achievement of perfect humanity = divinity = "eternal God-manhood"
- becoming a "New Being", achieving "eternal God-manhood" is a possibility for all human beings

Serious problem with this Christology:

- the created cannot become identical with their Creator
  - therefore essential or perfect humanity can never be identical with the divinity of God
- Jesus the first New Being, the first eternal God-manhood is not God
  - (which Tillich would have admitted, for he felt God cannot appear under the conditions of existence, for God is the ground of being)

### 5.5 Divinity of Jesus as an Identity with the Function and Activity of God

(from Owen Thomas. Introduction to Theology and Hans Kung, Credo)

Middle Platonist defined identity of Jesus with God in static categories of "substance" and "nature" Some more modern Christologies have attempted to define the identity of Jesus with God in dynamical, functional terms

Kung:

In Jesus:

- God's word
  - God's will
  - God's love
- took on human form

So in everything Jesus did and said, he "manifested and revealed the word and will of the one God" (Kung) the unity of Jesus with God: a unity of "throne" of knowledge, of will, of action. A unity of the revealing of God with and through Jesus

**He who sees me sees the Father**

John 14:9

## 6. Conclusion: The Absolute Paradox

"Jesus Christ is the goal of everything, and the centre to which everything tends. He who knows him knows the reason of all things."

- Blaise Pascal

". . . from the beginning Christ the incarnate Word was there in the counsels of God, and even his humanity, like the humanity of us all, was taking shape in the long ages of cosmic evolution. There is nothing in all this that offends reason, though it certainly goes beyond what reason can reach; and there is nothing in it either that would deny that the divine Word has manifested itself beyond the human life of Jesus, in nature, in history, in the non-Christian religions. But for the Christian he remains, as Pascal claimed, the centre of everything. This is the absolute paradox -- that this humble crucified man is also the eternal Word of God."

- John Macquarrie. Christology Revisited. Trinity Press International. Harrisburg, 1998. p. 114

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# The Creed 3. The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

Notes by David Monyak. Updated September 24, 2000

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died,  
and was buried.**

The Apostles' Creed

**For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

The Nicene Creed

## Questions, Issues, Topics

(Questions and topics from chapter 3 in **Credo**. Hans Küng. Doubleday. New York. 1992:)

1. Jesus the Christ in the cross of coordinates of the world religions
2. Jesus, the image of the sufferer par excellence
3. How did Jesus live?
4. Who is to blame for Jesus' death?
5. Why did Jesus have to die? Classical theories of redemption
6. A crucified God? A suffering God?
7. A test case for the question of theodicy: God in Auschwitz?
8. How can meaningless suffering be understood?
9. What is the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross?

## 1. Jesus the Christ in the cross of coordinates of the world religions

### 1.1. Buddha

symbolic figure for a

- life of spiritual contemplation
- monastic denial of the world
- a life according to the Eightfold Path
- leading to the transcendence of suffering and to Nirvana

### 1.2. Confucius

symbolic figure for

- an ethical morality
- a life in harmony and order

### 1.3. Moses

the prototype prophet, model for a life according to God's law

### 1.4. Muhammad

the prophet

- model of a life in accordance with the Qur'an,
- God final revelation, the path to world judgment and paradise

### 1.5. Jesus

the image of the sufferer par excellence  
is radically different

## 2. Jesus, the image of the sufferer par excellence

### 2.1. The Cross as Symbol

The Cross was:

- abhorrent instrument of execution and deterrence
- a brutal historical fact
- had nothing to do with life, wholeness, and true humanity

In Rome of the Caesars:

- the religion of the crucified Jesus may have seemed a bad joke.
  - First pictorial representation of crucified Jesus: a caricature on the wall in a 3rd century imperial residence of a suffering figure on the cross, with an ass's head, and note "Alexamenos worships his God."

First images of the cross as a symbol came after Constantine

- Expressions of suffering avoided
- Jesus portrayed as victor or in prayer

Early Renaissance:

- suffering of Christ on the cross first depicted

### 2.2. What does taking up one's cross mean?

does not mean:

- accepting supervision

- giving in
- surrendering
- become subservient
- humbling oneself
- accepting repression

means:

- taking up the cross of one's own life. Includes
  - acceptance of self
  - going one's way
    - in the risk of one own situation
    - in the midst of the uncertainty of one's own future

### 3. How did Jesus live?

To understand why Jesus had to die, and die the death he did, we must understand how he lived  
The death of Jesus cannot be separated from his message and person

- he was a layperson
- not a theologian
- not a priest
- apostles were from the common people

#### 3.1. Was Jesus a Political Revolutionary?

Jesus was fearless

but:

- no preacher of violence
  - Sermon on the Mount
  - at his arrest Matthew 26:52
- not a Zionist:
  - Matthew 22:21: Render to Caesar what is Caesar's
  - ate dinner with the worse collaborators with the occupying power (tax collectors)
  - spoke well of the national enemies, the Samaritans
  - did not promote class struggle
  - did not wish to abolish the law for the sake of revolution

#### 3.2. Was Jesus an Ascetic and Monk?

there were Jewish monks at the time of Jesus who lived in the monastery of Qumran by the dead sea  
there was also a pious group called the Essenes who lived apart the world in villages

however:

- Jesus lived publically
- not interested in external purity
- did not preach division
- not an ascetic
  - not a zealot for the law
  - ate and drank with followers, went to banquets
  - marriage did not make people unclean
  - renunciation of all material possessions was not necessary for discipleship
- did not lay down religious rules
  - no regular pious practices
  - no long prayers
  - habits, uniforms
  - no ritual baths

#### 3.3. Was Jesus a Pious Pharisee?

Pharisee may have been unfairly represented in the gospels because of their later conflict with early Christianity

Pharisee = "the separated"

- concern: actualize the Torah as the obligatory word of God
- took God's cause with great seriousness
- taught "joy in the law"
  - take God's commandments with unconditional seriousness
  - observe God's commandments with scrupulous exactitude

Jesus had much in common with Pharisees:

- lives among the people
- taught in synagogues
- ate and drank with them
- most of the verses of the Sermon on the Mount have rabbinic parallels
- authority of Moses never in question
- like them, wanted to fulfill the Torah
  - but: nothing can be read into the law the contradicts God's will: the well-being of human beings

compared to Pharisee:

- no pride in his achievements
- no pride in his own righteousness
- no contempt for the common people who did not know the law
- no exclusion of the unclean and sinners
- no doctrine of retribution
- 613 commandments and prohibitions not important
- remarkable openness and laxity

### 3.4. In Whose Name Did Jesus Speak?

Jesus preached on the basis of an experience and union and immediacy with God

what is remarkable is:

- nowhere does Jesus give grounds for his claims
- assumes the authority to proclaim God's will and God's cause without appealing to a higher authority

## 4. Who is to blame for Jesus' death?

### 4.1. Trial of Jesus before the Jewish Authorities

#### 4.1.1. Background of Trial

- much uncertainty
- may have been a committee composed mostly of Sadducees rather than the full Sanhedrin
- Pharisees are not mentioned
- body may have resolved only to hand Jesus over to the Romans rather than pass a death sentence

#### 4.1.2. Charges

- mostly unspecified in the gospels
- only the charge specifically mentioned is the rebuilding of the temple

one may guess concerns were Jesus':

- radical criticism of the traditional practice of many pious Jews
- arrogant protest against the trading in the temple
- provocative willingness to question Torah and the law, particularly Sabbath, fasting and cleanliness
- scandalous solidarity with law-breakers
- criticism of ruling groups

### 4.2. Roman trial and sentence

- Jesus was handed over to the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate and crucified in accordance with Roman practice.
  - Pilate: Governor of Judea 26-36 AD
- Charge on the cross: King of Jews
  - To Romans:
    - assumption of a royal title
    - an infringement of Roman majesty
    - high treason
  - Thus the trial of Jesus was a transformation of the Jewish charge, relating to religious transgressions, into the political charge of high treason

### 4.3. So who is to blame?

- not the Jews. The Jewish as a whole had not rejected Jesus
- not the Romans
- but particular Jewish and Roman authorities who were entangled in the case in their own way

### 4.4. Where would we have stood?

Our questions should be:

- are we still crucifying Jesus by our behavior
- where we would have stood at that time. With:
  - Pontius Pilate?
  - Annas and Caiaphas?
  - Peter?
  - the Roman soldiers (orders are orders)?
  - women at Jesus side

## 5. Why did Jesus have to die? Classical theories of redemption

from Alister E. McGrath. Christian Theology

### 5.1. The Cross as Victory

The cross was a ransom for sinners that secured victory over the devil for humanity

just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (NRSV)  
-- Matt 20:28

For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (NRSV)  
-- Mark 10:45

...who gave himself a ransom for all (NRSV)"  
-- 1 Tim 2:6

A ransom to who?

To the Devil: Gregory of Nyssa:

#### "Fishhook theory"

- the devil had acquired rights over fallen humanity
- humanity could be released from the devil's power only if the devil exceeded his authority
- Jesus, a sinless person is sent into the world
- The devil tries to claim him and thus exceeds rights
  - Jesus *humanity*: the bait.
  - Jesus' *divinity*: the hook

## 5.2. The Cross as a Means of Forgiveness

Anselm of Canterbury "**satisfaction theory**"

- Jesus' death provided *satisfaction* for God's violated honor, God's sense of justice because humanity did not pay full liege to their Lord
- pays back to God the debt of obedience humanity owes

Calvin

- Jesus bears the infinite wrath of God against sin

## 5.3. The Cross as Sacrifice

Jesus death the perfect *sacrifice*, the paschal lamb

"has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself"  
-- Hebrews 9:26

"We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all"  
-- Hebrews 10:10

## 5.4. The Cross as Moral Example

Public demonstration of the love of God: Abelard:

"**example theory**"

- give the human race a new example of loving self-giving
- moves us to a new level of compassion and repentance

## 6. A Crucified God? A Suffering God?

### 6.1. The Cross as Suffering God. The Death of God

Post WWII:

Only a suffering God, a crucified God can help us:

- God can give meaning and dignity to human suffering because God is also in pain and suffers
- The cross is an event between the Father and the Son. The Son suffers the pain and death of the cross; the Father gives up and suffers the loss of his Son.
  - through the death of the Son, God became involved in "perishability", "transience" "transitoriness"
  - the cross represents God's self-identification with the transitory world of suffering

### 6.2. The Cross as Suffering Humanity in the Distress of Death

Küng:

- must not level down God's transcendence
- must not accept a "weak God" who "has to torture himself to resurrection by suffering and death if he is not to suffer eternally."

Küng: "the cross is not the symbol of the 'suffering', 'screaming God', indeed 'the symbol of God suffering the distress of death', but the symbol of humanity suffering the distress of death."

## 7. A test case for the question of theodicy: God in Auschwitz?

### 7.1. Was God in Auschwitz?

if God exists, the God was also in Auschwitz?

Yes!

But how could a good and gracious God have been in Auschwitz without preventing Auschwitz?

### 7.2. Some Explanations for Theodicy

from Alister McGrath. Christian Theology

**theodicy** = the justification of the goodness of God in the face of the presence of evil in the world

#### 7.2.1. Irenaeus

Greek patristic thought:

- humans are created with capacities for maturity which require contact and experience of good and evil world = "vale of soul-making" (John Keats)
- Good and evil are thus necessary presences in the world.

Problems:

- appears to lend dignity to evil
- what of that evil that rather than advancing human growth destroys those humans (Hiroshima, Auschwitz)

#### 7.2.2. Augustine

was fascinated as a young man by **Gnosticism** and **Manichaeism**, which taught the reason for evil was:

- matter was evil, created by a demigod from pre-existent matter
- salvation = transfer human beings from matter world to spiritual realm

Augustine:

- all creation is the work of God
- evil came into the world because humanity chose evil
  - how did evil come to be an option to choose?
    - Satan, a fallen angel originally created good, tempted Adam and Eve

### 7.2.3. Abandon God's Omnipotence

**Process Theology:**

- God has chosen not to coerce, but only to persuade

Popular book "When Bad Things Happen to Good People"

- abandons the notion of God's omnipotence

But God robbed of all power would cease to be God.

### 7.3. Theology of Silence

theology of silence: answer of some Jewish theologians to question of justification of God in face of all suffering:

- "If I were to know him, I would be him" (old Jewish saying)
- quote scripture following report of death of Aaron's two sons killed by divine fire:

"And Aaron was silent."

-- Leviticus 10:3

## 8. How can meaningless suffering be understood?

Küng: There is no satisfactory explanation to theodicy:

"suffering, -- excessive, innocent, meaningless suffering, both individual and collective -- cannot be understood theoretically, but can only be lived through. For Christian and Jews there is only a practical answer to the problem of theodicy  
-- Küng p 91

Message from Job:

- in the last resort, God is incomprehensible to human beings
- human beings are given the possibility of showing trust in this God
- God also respects human protest against suffering

## 9. What is the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross?

Outwardly: Jesus' death was meaningless, godforsaken dying.

"cross is a clear fiasco, which cannot be turned into any kind of mystery. It is an unprecedented abandonment of the one sent by God, by both human beings and by God."  
-- Küng

A meaning can enter only with a belief in the resurrection of Jesus to new life through and with God.

By so believing in Jesus' resurrection, Jesus' apparently meaningless, godforsaken death on the cross becomes an invitation:

- to trust in a hidden meaning in even apparently meaningless suffering
- to practice endurance and persistence in this life to the end

# The Creed 4. The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus

Notes by David Monyak

**He descended into hell.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the  
Father.  
He will come again to judge the living  
and the dead.**

The Apostles' Creed

**On the third day he rose again in  
accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the  
Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge  
the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

The Nicene Creed

## Questions, Issues, Topics

(Topics and notes are from chapter 4 in **Credo**. Hans Küng. Doubleday. New York. 1992:)

1. Descent into the underworld?
2. An ascension?
3. Do we believe in the empty tomb?
4. Is resurrection from the dead un-Jewish?
5. Do we believe in the resurrection of the One?
6. What "resurrection" does and does not mean
7. Belief in a personal resurrection as a radicalization of belief in the God of Israel

## 1. Descent into the underworld?

### 1.1. Descended into what?

Translations: descended. . .

- into the subterranean sphere
- into the underworld

- into hell
- to the dead
- into the realm of death

Possibilities:

- 1 realm of the dead Hebrew *Sheol*, Greek *Hades*: the place of all departed, good and evil; neutral place
- 2. hell: Hebrew *gehenna*, Latin *infernum*: the place of the damned
  - Middle Ages view of possible destinations after death:
    - hell
    - purgatory
    - heaven
    - pre-hell
    - pre-heaven
    - *limbus patrum* (righteous of the old Testament)
    - *limbus puerorum* (unbaptized children)
- 3. Jesus went through torments of hell on the cross, suffered the wrath of God, temptation of ultimate despair
  - view of Reformers (Luther and Calvin)
  - but how do they know this?

## 1.2. Scriptural Basis

Scripture basis (only one): I Peter 3:18-20

"For Christ suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water." (NRSV)

## 1.3. What Can We Believe in Professing This Article of the Creed?

Not all articles of faith have the same importance

- this article has no unambiguous biblical basis
- there is no official statement or consensus what this part of the creed means

Kung suggests:

- not a journey of suffering or a triumphal journey
- consider it a symbol of the possibility of salvation:
  - for pre-Christian and non-Christian humanity
  - the pious of the Old Testament
  - all of the dead

## 2. An Ascension?

## 2.1. Scriptural background

Scriptural basis:

- The ascension is initially mentioned only by Luke.
  - gospel of Luke, written in the 70's A.D.
  - Act of the Apostle (Sequel to Luke or "Luke 2"), written between 80 to 90 A.D.
  - Luke was much more interested in the bodily reality of the risen Christ and documenting the eyewitness of the apostles than the other gospel writers
- Was added to Mark in the second century.

## 2.2. Must we believe in a "literal" ascension?

### 2.2.1. Problems with the Ascension story as literal truth

Picture of the ascension Jesus going upward into heaven presupposes a three storied tiered universe that we no longer believe:

- hell (down there)
- earth (here)
- heaven (up there)

The narrative model of other such "ascensions" to describe "a journey to heaven" existed in the ancient world:

- Elijah (in the Old Testament)
- Enoch (in the Old Testament)
- Heracles
- Empedocles
- Romulus
- Alexander the Great
- Apollonius of Tyana

Discrepancy in the timing of the Ascension by Luke:

- Gospel of Luke -- Ascension same day as Easter
  - (Note: some scholars have suggested the mention of the ascension in the gospel of Luke was added later by someone other than Luke)
- Acts -- 40 days between the Easter and the Ascension
  - forty years of Israel in the wilderness
  - forty days of Elijah fasting
  - forty days of Jesus fasting

### 2.2.2. What is the Purpose of the Ascension Story?

Kung:

- Luke's story is based on a model familiar to his

listeners.

- He used this traditional narrative model and form to convey the important theology that Jesus has been exalted, has gone back to the Father, sitting at the right hand of the Father.
- It is this theological truth we must believe rather than necessarily believe in a literal ascent.

The LORD says to my lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool (NRSV)  
- Psalm 110:1:

Why did Luke do this?

- aid in the visualization of the exaltation of Jesus, of Jesus entering back into God's reality
- stress a mission to the world instead of inactive waiting from the imminent expectation
  - a correction to the sense of imminent expectation
  - Acts 1:11 "They said {two men in white robes}, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (NRSV)

## 3. Do we believe in the empty tomb?

### 3.1. Is the empty tomb proof of the resurrection of Jesus?

If you find an empty tomb, who would presume its occupant had been raised from the dead?  
The empty tomb is no proof; it says only:

**He is not here**  
- Mark 16:6

An explanation is required:

**He is risen**  
- Mark 16:6

The empty tomb did not lead to belief in the risen Christ. In the Gospel of John, only the beloved disciple initially believed in the risen Christ after hearing the tomb was empty

Kung:

"The Easter event is not determined by the empty tomb but at best illustrated by it."

### 3.2. The critical truth of the Easter stories

Main point of the stories of the Easter event:

- Jesus did not remain dead
- the Risen Christ is the he who died on the cross

. . .and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. . ." (NRSV)  
- 1 Corinthians 15:4

But he {an angel} said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. . ." (NRSV)  
- Mark 16:6

. . . and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead -- Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming. (NRSV)  
- 1 Thessalonians 1:10 (51 or 52 A.D.)

## 4. Is Resurrection from the Dead un-Jewish?

Life after death was an age-old Israelite conviction

### 4.1. In Early Jewish history

Shadowy joyless existence in an "underworld"

### 4.2. Late in Jewish history before Christ

Believed God raises the dead:

- not simply immortality of the human being
- but a new life of the whole person with God

Belief in resurrection from the dead was an explicit dogma of classical Judaism

### 4.3. Close of Medieval Times

At close of mediaeval discourse belief in a personal resurrection was lost as a central teaching.

### 4.4. Today

Although a personal resurrection is not a central teaching of Judaism today, it continues to be affirmed in the traditional liturgy:

- second blessing of the Eighteen Benedictions (the *Shemoneh Esreh*)
- repeated during the *Amidah* standing prayer
- asserts "God keeps faith with those who lie in the dust and will according to his mercy, raise the dead, restore them bodily and grant them eternal life."  
(quoted by Kung from: Arthur A. Cohen, in

## 5. Do We Believe in the Resurrection of the One?

### 5.1. What caused Jesus disciples to believe in his resurrection?

What happened to cause Jesus' disciples to leave hiding as followers:

- of a criminal crucified by the Romans,
- one condemned as a blasphemer by Jewish authorities?

The reason given by the first disciples of Jesus for their new faith was

- Jesus himself
- overwhelming appearances before witnesses leading to public testimony
  - Paul mentions a whole series of witnesses who are still alive:
    - . . .and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me (1 Corinthians 15:5-8)

Whatever the nature of these appearances, they

- convinced many to change their whole life
- convinced many that God had spoken and acted through this one person

### 5.2. The conviction of all early witnesses

All early witnesses shared the conviction:

- the crucified one is alive
- the crucified one "sits at the right of the Father"
  - Psalm 110:1 "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand!'"

## 6. What Resurrection Does and Does Not Mean

### 6.1. What was Jesus' Resurrection?

Jesus' resurrection was:

- not
  - a revived body returned only to earthy life.
  - a return to life in this space and time.

- a return to life in this space and time.
- a continuation of this life in space and time
- a passage into nothingness
- but
  - a passage into that "ineffable and incomprehensible last and first reality" = God
  - a "real event" in the divine sphere

## 6.2. What is Resurrection Bound To?

God did not need the bodily remnants of the earthly existence of Jesus to preserve the identity of Jesus. We need not necessarily believe in resurrection as the revival of a dead body.

Resurrection is new life, an entering into a completely different form of existence

- analogy: caterpillar to butterfly

What then is resurrection "bound to"?

Only to the identity of the one irreplaceable person

Paul:

God raises to a *some pneumatikon* = pneumatic body = spiritual corporeality" Implies:

- continuity
  - corporeality stands for the identity of the person
- discontinuity
  - not a revival of the old body, but a raising into a new dimension

# 7. Belief in a Personal Resurrection as a Radicalization of Belief in the God of Israel

## 7.1. Question for each person

Is dying:

- dying into nothingness, into ultimate meaninglessness, or
- into God's most real reality? Into God's incomprehensible, all-embracing ultimate reality?

## 7.2. What is dying into God?

Death and resurrection are distinct concepts:

- death:
  - human affair
- resurrection:
  - God's affair, God's gift, God's grace
  - grounded in God's faithfulness
  - new creative act of the One who calls into being

## 7.3. What grounds do we have to believe in a personal resurrection?

Radicalization of our belief in the creator God of Israel who raised the crucified Christ, the innocent man who was executed

The radicalized belief that:

- God does not stop half-way but continues consistently to the end
- the God of the beginning is also the God of the end
- the God who is the creator of the world and human beings is also the God who is their perfecter
- God's love for us cannot be less than any human love

# The Creed 5. The Holy Spirit, the Church, the Communion of Saints

Notes by David Monyak. Last update Oct 8, 2000

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,**

The Apostles' Creed

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the  
Son\*.**

**With the Father and the Son he is  
worshiped and glorified.**

**He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and  
apostolic Church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the  
forgiveness of sins.**

The Nicene Creed

\* "and the Son" - the *filioque* clause. This was not part of the original Nicene Creed. It was later inserted into the Creed by the Western Church in reaction to Arianism. By the 9th century the addition was nearly universal in the Western Church. However, the addition was rejected in the Eastern Church.

## Questions, Issues, Topics

(Questions and topics from chapter 5 in **Credo. The Apostles' Creed Explained for Today.** Hans Küng. Doubleday. New York. 1992:)

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?
2. Is Pentecost an historical event?
3. What is the church?
4. The apostolic church: authority grounded in service?
5. What does catholic mean today? What does evangelical mean?
6. Is the church "holy"?
7. What does "communion of saints" mean?
8. What does "forgiveness of sins" mean?

## 1. Who is the Holy Spirit?

### 1.1. Introduction

(from Kung: Credo)

- Holy Spirit is God
- "of one substance with the Father and the Son"
  - i.e. of the same essential nature as the Father and Son
- God's invisible activity
- tangible yet intangible
- invisible yet powerful
- as important to life as the air we breathe
- laden with energy like the wind, the storm
- the personal nearness of God to us
- God nearness to the world
- *not* a third element, a something between God and us

*spiritus* (Latin - masculine)

*ruach* (Hebrew - feminine)

*pneuma* (Greek - neuter)

### 1.2 The Holy Spirit in the Bible

#### 1.2.1. The Spirit in the Old Testament

(from Owen Thomas, Introduction to Theology, pages 195-196)

The Spirit of God as the personal presence and power of God:

- cooperates in the work of creation
  - *ruach* is the breath or storm of God which moves over the waters
- guides rulers and king
- inspires the prophets
- sanctifies Israel

#### 1.2.2. The Spirit in the New Testament

(from Owen Thomas, Introduction to Theology, pages 195-196)

- the Spirit is the manifestation of the power and presence of God
  - at Jesus' conception
  - at Jesus' baptism
  - at the beginning of his public ministry
  - in his works of healing
- After the Resurrection:
  - Spirit given to the community of the church
  - guides and empowers the mission of the church
  - in Paul
    - Spirit is the way Christ is present in the church
    - is present in each individual
    - helps each individual to produce the fruits of the Spirit, esp. love

- In John:
  - counselor
  - bears witness to Christ
  - confirms Christ teachings

### 1.3. How does the Holy Spirit relate to the Father and the Son? The *Filioque* Controversy

(from McGrath, Christian Theology, An Introduction, pages 302-306)

#### 1.3.1. History of the *Filioque* Clause

- Original Nicene Creed:
  - Spirit proceeds from the Father only
- by 9th century, Western churches added routinely:
  - "Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son"
  - *filioque* = Latin for "and from the Son"

#### 1.3.2. Eastern View of the Trinity

Greek patristic fathers: there is only one source of being within the Trinity: Father alone was the sole cause of all things

- Son is "begotten" (Greek *genesis*) of the Father
- Spirit "proceeds" (Greek *ekporeusis*) from the Father (both derive from the Father in different ways)

Imagery:

- Son is the Word of God. The Spirit is the Breath of God
- Father pronounces his word and at the same time breathes out to make his word capable of being heard

Distinction critical: if no distinction, then the charge could be made the Father had two Sons

#### 1.3.3. East versus West

- Eastern / Greek Church:
  - To say Spirit proceeds from the Son also compromises fundamental principle that the Father is the source of all divinity
- In Western church Augustine had taught
  - the Spirit must proceed from the Son also
  - John 20:22 (post-resurrection appearance of Jesus) "When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" (NRSV)
  - Western Image: Father and Son together breathe the Holy Spirit
- Compromise (too late to heal schism):
  - Council of Lyons 1274: "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, yet not as from two origins but as from one origin"

### 1.4. How can we think of the Holy Spirit?

#### 1.4.1. *Perichoresis*

(from McGrath, Christian Theology, An Introduction, pages 302-306)

*Perichoresis* or *circumincessio* or "mutual interpenetration"

- each person of the Trinity shares the life of the other two
- each penetrates the others and is penetrated by them

#### 1.4.2. *Appropriation*

(from McGrath, Christian Theology, An Introduction, pages 302-306)

All three persons of the Trinity are active in all actions of God, but it is "appropriate" to think of some actions as being the work of one of the persons of the Trinity

Examples:

- It is appropriate to think of Creation as the distinctive work of the Father (even though all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit mutually interpenetrating each other and sharing each other's lives are present and active)
- It is appropriate to think of redemption as the distinctive action of the Son (even though all, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, mutually interpenetrating each other and sharing each other's lives are present and active)

#### 1.4.3. *Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ*

(from Kung: Credo and McGrath, Christian Theology, An Introduction, pages 302-306)

we can think of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus within us, for:

- The Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit all mutually interpenetrate each other
- Jesus is therefore present through the Spirit, in the Spirit, as the Spirit

1 Cor 15:45 "Thus it is written, 'The first man, Adam, became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit." (NRSV)

#### 1.4.4. *Holy Spirit is Love*

(from McGrath, Christian Theology, An Introduction, pages 302-306)

Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity:

- The Spirit is the bond of union between the God and the believer
- The Spirit is the bond between the Father and Son in the Trinity
- That bond is Love

## 2. Is Pentecost an historical event?

### 2.1. The Church began as an "event"

- The Church, a sense of community distinct for Israel, began as an "event", not through a formal act of institution or foundation
- There is no saying of Jesus in any of the gospels calling for a foundation of church

### 2.2. The Pentecost "event"

Described only in Luke as:

- the day on which the promised Spirit of God descends on humankind
- the hour of birth of the Jerusalem community

### 2.3. Did Pentecost actually take place?

Kung: it is plausible:

- *Penetekoste* = Greek for "fiftieth day"
- this was the harvest festival day on the Jewish festival calendar
- many pilgrims came to Jerusalem
- there was also a tradition of a spirit led mass ecstasy in Jerusalem on the Jewish festival harvest day
- reasonable to suppose a first "assembly" of the followers of Jesus mostly from Galilee had come to Jerusalem on this day
- Jesus' mother and brothers were also described as being there

## 3. What is the Church?

### 3.1. Images of the Church in the New Testament

(from Owen Thomas, Introduction to Theology)

Four images of the church in the New Testament:

- **The congregation of the faithful**
- **The body of Christ**
- **The fellowship of the Spirit**
- **The community of hope**

#### 3.1.1. The congregation of the faithful

- emphasizes **faith** is the basis of Christian life in the church
- Paul's teaching about salvation:
  - salvation is by *grace received through faith* and not by any works of the law

- the classic Protestant emphasis on the nature of the Church

#### 3.1.2. The body of Christ

An image in Paul's letter to the Ephesians

**Body** is used a metaphor: emphasizes Christian life is a *participation in the Christ* through the Spirit.

The church is the **body of Christ** because:

- it is the community in which the Spirit of Christ dwells
- the Spirit of Christ gives gifts to members of the church, allowing them to function like part of a whole body
- the life and well-being of the community depends on the service and function of all its members, just as the function of a body depends on the function of all its parts
- membership is gained and sustained by the sacraments, which are related to the true body of Christ
  - baptism to death and resurrection of Christ
  - Eucharist to the body and blood of Christ
- Christ is the head of the community or body

This is the classic Catholic emphasis on the nature of the Church

#### 3.1.3. The fellowship of the Spirit

- Possession of the Spirit is the decisive mark of being a Christian
  - Romans 8:9: "But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." (NRSV)
  - 1 John 4:13: "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit." (NRSV)
- the presence of the Holy Spirit is what makes the Church what it is

This image is related to the above:

- congregation of the faithful
  - faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit
  - 1 Corinthians 12:3: "Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." (NRSV)
- body of Christ

- presence of the Holy Spirit makes the Church the body of Christ

### 3.1.4. *The community of hope*

The church is also a "fellowship" of the end-time:

- powers of the age to come are already at work, but not yet fully present
  - life of the church is a foretaste of what is to come
  - the church is not now fully what it is meant to be
    - 1 John 3:2: "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is." (NRSV)
    - Romans 8:22-23: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies." (NRSV)
- looks forward to the return of Christ and the fulfillment

## 3.2. The Essential Church versus the Outward / Empirical Church

### 3.2.1. *Is the church of the Creed the essential, invisible church or the outward, visible church?*

- Essential Church
  - **invisible** church
    - those who genuinely belong to Christ
    - defined by faith
    - in the doctrine of predestination, it is the invisible community of the "elect", some of whom are in the visible church and some who may not be
- Outward or Empirical Church
  - **visible** church
    - defined by subscription to a Creed, submission to a particular bishop (see section on limits below)

Modern theologians tend to reject the idea that the church talked about in the New Testament and the Creed is the invisible church. The church of the New Testament is:

- a visible community of specific fallible human beings with names and addresses
- just as Israel in the Old Testament was always the visible community

### 3.2.2. *What are the limits of the church? What are the conditions for membership?*

- in the New Testament:
  - baptism in name of Jesus
  - confession of faith in Jesus as Lord
  - participation in the Eucharist
- added in 2nd and 3rd centuries:
  - affirmation of rule of faith
  - being in communion with a bishop
    - later: bishops had to be in communion with the bishops of Rome
    - not true in the East after the Great Schism between the Eastern and Western churches
- the Reformers
  - proper preaching of the word
  - proper administration of the sacraments
  - Anglicans add communion with a bishop standing in apostolic succession

## 3.3. The Church as "horizontal" community versus "vertical" community

### 3.3.1. *Is the reality of the Church a fundamentally "vertical" community?*

- an event *now* between God and humanity
- a community continually being created anew through the hearing of the word *now*
- the traditional Protestant emphasis

### 3.3.2. *Is the reality of the Church a fundamentally "horizontal" community?*

- a body *continuous* in history
- an institution stretching back to the founding of the church by Christ and the apostles, united through the *continuities* of sacrament and church order
- the traditional Catholic emphasis

## 3.4. What is the nature of the unity of the church?

The New Testament and the Creeds speak of one church

- Ephesians 4:4-6: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. . ." (NRSV)
- Nicene Creed:
  - "We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church"

If we believe the church of the Creed is the visible community, then clearly:

- the church is not one, but divided
- there are many churches
- many will not share the Eucharist with each other

The **disunity of the church** comes out particularly in the image of the church as the **Body of Christ**. The "parts of the body" are clearly not working together for the whole in cooperation. We must therefore profess "We believe in only holy catholic Church" with pain.

If however you believe the church of the Creed is an invisible, essential community, then you can argue the unity of the church is spiritual and invisible

## 4. The apostolic Church: authority grounded in service?

### 4.1. The need for human authority and structure

church community of people who are free and equal  
Galatians 3:28: "neither slave nor free, neither man nor woman"

However, the church still needs human authority organization, structure

### 4.2. What kind of authority and structure?

- structures of church
  - best thought of as ministries, callings
- authority and power in the church
  - power (authority) must be delegated, but should be grounded in service, not rule, not force, not privilege
- government of the church
  - Word of God, Jesus Christ must rule the Church
  - a monarchy, a hierarchy, or the democratic vote of the people: none can be presumed to be substitute or a guarantee of revelation
  - a democratic church = can describe only how it organizes and structures is service under God's Word, through the Holy Spirit

### 4.3. Apostolic succession: a division between clergy and laity?

**apostolic succession**

- not a special privilege of the called but a task of the

whole church

- a call to live in accord with the testimony of the apostles
- it is made concrete in the exercising of the apostolic ministry
- is an invitation to all Christians in the church to become "more apostolic" = strive to be loyal to the origin of the church

## 5. What does catholic mean today? What does evangelical mean?

### 5.1. What does "catholic" mean?

- the universal, entire church as distinct from the local church
- does not denote any confessional church
  - "Roman Catholic" is strictly speaking a contradiction, combining a particular and universal
- to be *catholic* means to be concerned with the whole, universal, world-wide church

### 5.2. What does "evangelical" mean?

- a church primarily orientated on the *evangelium Christi* = the gospel of Jesus Christ
- does not exclude tradition, but subordinates it to the gospel
  - submits all traditions, doctrines, practices to the light of the gospel

### 5.3. An opportunity for ecumenism

There is nothing mutually exclusive about "catholic" and "evangelical"

- a baptized Catholic can also have a truly evangelical disposition
- a baptized Evangelical (Protestant) can show a truly catholic breadth

## 6. Is the church "holy"?

### 6.1. What is holy?

- **holy** = being set apart by God for God
- there is no mention in the New Testament of "institutional holiness"
- the only holiness is the holiness of the individual = total orientation on the will of God

## 6.2. In what way can the church be holy?

A church can be holy only to the degree the individuals making it up are holy.

Since all individuals are also fallible and therefore sinful, we must say:

- the community calling itself the church is *holy and sinful at the same time*
- the church is part of the battlefield between God's Spirit and evil in the world
  - front runs not only through the holy church and the unholy world
  - but also through the middle of the human heart

## 7. What does "communion of saints" mean?

the community of believers = another description of the church

## 8. What does the "forgiveness of sins" mean?

### 8.1. Guilt

- no one is spared experiences of helplessness, failure, guilt
- everyone is entangled in complex histories of guilt they would like to repress or deny
- there is a modern tendency to deny/repress/reduce guilt to what can be proven legally

### 8.2. Jesus' intent: liberation from guilt

Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God calls for *metanoia* = turning back from a false, sinful way

Kung: means:

- "to invite them to an inner, radical and total conversion and homecoming of the whole person to God"
- "to a life lived for fellow human beings"

invitation is for:

- "the pious and righteous who do not think that they need repentance"
- "those criticized, rejected and repudiated by the pious: the lost sons and daughters"

## 8.3. Means of liberation: the forgiveness of sins

Jesus promised forgiveness of sins, claiming what in Judaism is a province of God alone

forgiveness is

- the offer of God's grace given without condition
- makes liberation possible
- purpose of all *metanoia*, repentance, "penance": create new positive possibilities
- "put a line under it; you are forgiven"

## 8.4. Ways we are forgiven

Ways in which forgiveness of sins is possible:

- baptism
- preaching of the gospel
- general absolution in liturgy
- absolution from any believer
- special absolution of ministers
  - norm in the Catholic church

## 8.5. The need that God's forgiveness be passed onto others

Forgiveness of guilt between people is not "natural"

Divine forgiveness is tied to forgiveness between human beings

"there can be no reconciliation with God without reconciliation in the interpersonal sphere"

This is central in Jesus' teachings:

- Matt 6:12: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (NRSV)
- Matt 6:14: "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (NRSV)
- Parable of the generous king who forgives his minister a giant debt

demand is:

- not a new "law"
- a moral appeal to
  - human generosity and warm-heartedness
  - individuals
  - representatives of state

# The Creed 6. The Resurrection of the Dead and Eternal Life

Notes by David Monyak. Updated Oct 15, 2000

I believe in . . .  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

The Apostles' Creed

We look for the resurrection of the  
dead,  
and the life of the world to come.

The Nicene Creed

## Questions, Issues, Topics

(Questions and topics taken from chapter 6 in **Credo. The Apostles' Creed Explained for Today.** Hans Küng. Doubleday. New York. 1992:)

1. The heaven of faith
2. The physical end of the world
3. Is world history the world's judgment?  
The hope for ultimate justice
4. Do we believe in the devil?
5. Is there an eternal hell?
6. The problem of unexpiated guilt
7. Human destiny
8. The resurrection of the body
9. Will we see only God?
10. Another attitude to dying
11. What are we on earth for?

## 1. The heaven of faith

1. the heaven of faith not the "heavens above"
  - *not* the "heaven of astronauts"
  - God does not dwell in a local/spatial sense above the world
  - God is present *in* the world
2. the heaven of faith is not in a reality outside the world
  - *not* a metaphysical reality in a dimension *outside* the world
  - *not* in an "other-worldly beyond"
  - Rather the *World is hidden in God*
3. the heaven of faith is:
  - not a place, but a mode of being

- the hidden, invisible incomprehensible sphere of God
- God and heaven are the same

## 2. The physical end of the world

### 2.1. The end of the universe

"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and those who live on it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be forever, and my deliverance will never be ended."

Isaiah 51:6

Second Isaiah of the bible (during the Babylonian exile)

"For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind" (NRSV)

Isaiah 65:17

Third Isaiah of the bible (after the Babylonian exile)

Cosmological models of the Universe suggest the universe is doomed to die

### 2.2. The end of humanity, caused by humanity

We have the power to destroy ourselves through:

- nuclear war
- nuclear accident
- over-population
- catastrophic pollution
- loss of the ozone layer

### 2.3. The images and visions of the end times in the Bible

Can we find information about the signs of the end-times in the bible?

The biblical statements about the end of the world are:

- a testimony of belief in the perfecting of God's work on his creation
- an authoritative testimony of faith to the great destination of the universe, its goal in God

Tells us the end has two sides:

- the end of the old imperfect universe
- its consummation by the new: the new heaven and the new earth

### 3. Is world history the world's judgment? The hope for ultimate justice

#### 3.1. There is no complete justice in this world

Hegel's idealism:

- world history itself is the world's judgment
- all accounts will eventually be settled in history

But all accounts are not settled in history. There is no complete justice in this world for nations or individuals

#### 3.2. The Last Judgment

The biblical picture of a Last Judgment:

- ultimate bringing together to God of all people so that justice is done
- gathering of all humanity to its creator, judge, perfecter

tells us:

- all institutions, political, economic, and religious are under God's judgment
- the meaning of each individual human life will be God's judgment
- all generations, all human beings must share in judgment and God's justice
- life's ambiguities and negatives can be overcome only by God
- Jesus Christ is the last judge

### 4. Do we believe in the devil?

#### 4.1. Trivialization of the power of evil

two ways to *trivialize* the power of evil:

1. privatization of evil in the individual, to say:
  - no such thing as evil as a principal transcending individuals
  - only reality is the evil in human beingsBut evil is substantially more than the sum of the wickedness of individuals
2. personification of evil into a host of rational, individual spiritual beings which take a hold of people: devils and demons

#### 4.2. Demons and devils

- there is no mention of a devil in the Creeds
- entered the Bible during the Persian occupation (539-331 B.C.)
- belief was widespread at the time of Jesus
- no longer played a role in later Judaism
- not a belief in modern Judaism

### 5. Is there an eternal hell?

#### 5.1. The Fear of Hell

Consequences of the fear of hell:

- any means seemed justified to save themselves and others from eternal damnation and hell fire
- led to forced conversions, burning of heretics and witches, pogroms against Jews, crusades,
- the Reformers were equally guilty

Jesus was no hell fire preacher

- his message was of God news, of liberation
- Mark 1:14: "Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God." (NRSV)

Hell is absent from the Creed

#### 5.2. Can we believe in a God who would punish a creature for all eternity?

In the early church, prominent theologians and church fathers assumed the punishment of hell would be imposed only for a short time:

- Origen
- Gregory of Nyssa
- Didymus
- Diordore of Tarsus
- Theodore of Mopsuestia
- Jerome

543 A.D.: synod held against Origen:

- defined the punishment of hell as being "temporally unlimited"

Questions:

- is a person to be damned forever, unhappy forever for a single sin? With no prospect of redemption?
- do we have to believe in:
  - a God who looks endlessly at the hopeless, merciless, loveless, cruelly physical and psychological torture of his creatures for eternity?
  - a God of mercy who offers no mercy to the dead?

- a God of peace who perpetuates a lack of peace and reconciliation?
- a God of mercy and love of enemies who takes vengeance on his enemies for all eternity?

One answer:

- God does not damn,
- but human beings damn themselves, isolate themselves from God
- this state is made definitive by death

But:

- God rules over the realm of the dead (the Psalms)
- How can anything be made so definitive that it is immune to the all powerful and all merciful God?

Thus: Kung:

- It is a contradiction to accept God's love and mercy and at the same time the existence of a place of eternal torment.
- Even the punishment of hell must remain subordinate to God, his will, his grace

## 6. The Problem of unexpiated guilt

### 6.1. Purgatory

Problem: how is the purification and cleansing of guilt-laden people possible after death?

One solution: **Purgatory**:

- intermediate stage after death before entering heaven
- a place for purification
- rejected by the Reformers as having no biblical basis

Idea of **Purgatory** arose in part to explain the widespread liturgical practice of praying for the dead from the very beginning of the church. What was the good of such prayers if the dead were not in some state that prayers might help alter?

Article XXII of the Articles of Religion in the "Historical Documents" section of the Book of Common Prayer (page 872) condemns the "Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory," but perhaps not rule out other forms of a purgatory. The book of Common Prayer includes Prayers for the Dead.

Thomas in **Introduction to Theology** over the issue of purgatory: "the theologian must probably remain agnostic"

### 6.2. God's Justice and the Problem of Unrequited Guilt

Problems of unrequited guilt remains:

- Is dying into God, the ultimate reality, to be the same for one and all?
  - do all enter into eternal bliss the *same* way?
  - criminals and their victims the *same*?
  - murderers and their victims the *same*?
  - those who have struggled all their life to do God's will and those who shut out other and done only what pleased them, the *same*?
- where is God's justice?

### 6.3. Another Possibility for Purification after Death

What does dying into God mean?

- act of the whole person in which we are graciously judged
- purified healed by God
- made fully and completely human
- made whole

Kung: Our purification after death may be in our encounter with God

- through the wrath of God's hidden grace
- God
  - judges
  - purifies
  - liberates
  - enlightens
  - heals
  - fulfils

## 7. Human destiny

### 7.1. What is Hell?

If:

- It is a contradiction to accept God's love and mercy and at the same time the existence of a place of eternal torment.
- Even the punishment of hell must remain subordinate to God, his will, his grace

Then is there no hell? What is hell?

**Hell** = exclusion from communion with the living God.

There is a tension between God's gift of **human freedom** versus the **power of God's love**:

- the **human freedom** to turn away from God's love
- the **power of God's love** to win all people freely

The gift of human freedom means hell is:

- an extreme, last possibility of remoteness from God which we cannot rule out
- the possibility of:
  - forfeiture of the meaning of our life,
  - exclusion of ourselves from communion with God

New Testament statements about hell remind us:

- of the unconditional seriousness of God's claim
- of the urgency of human repentance
- life is serious business
- life is the emergency!

## 7.2. Who will be saved?

Can we presume all will be saved? Hitler, Stalin?  
Kung: no.

Superficial **universalism**:

- does not do justice to:
  - the seriousness of life
  - significance of moral decisions
  - weight of individual responsibility
- above all: contradicts the sovereign responsibility of God to save

**Double predestination**:

- some to blessedness
  - others to damnation predetermined
- contradicts:
- God's will for universal salvation
  - God's mercy and love

## 7.3. What does the possibility of hell mean for our living?

- for those taking their individual responsibility lightly:
  - warned exclusion from communion with God is an extreme possibility
- for those despairing over the infinite seriousness of their responsibility:
  - even in "hell" there are no limits to God's grace

Ultimately we must have faith in God's mercy and trust in God:

- Psalm 31:16 "Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your steadfast love." (NRSV)
- Romans 3:28: "For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law." (NRSV)
- Luke 18:13: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" (NRSV)

## 8. The Resurrection of the body

(from Owen Thomas. **Introduction to Theology, Revised Edition**, page 223)

The body is:

- basis of interpersonal communications
  - basis of social life
  - basis of historical life
- fully part of the natural world
- manifestation of our individuality

Thus the resurrection of the body tells us:

- Christian hope is not an escape from:
  - the body
  - social life
  - historical life
  - but a fulfillment of these
- because the body is part of the natural world, its resurrection points to the fulfillment of the whole cosmos
- because the body is part of our individuality, implies also our fulfillment as individuals

## 9. Will we see only God?

How do we imagine eternal life?

Saints sitting on golden chair singing hymns of praise?

### 9.1. Old Testaments Images of Heaven

Heaven is not:

- a flight from the world
- a hostility to matter
- a devaluation of the body
- but a new creation -
  - either transformation of this world
  - or a new creation of the old world

"The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (NRSV)  
Isaiah 11:6-9

"For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to

mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime" (NRSV)  
Isaiah 65:17-20

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD;. . ." (NRSV)  
Jeremiah 31:33-34

## 9.2. New Testament Images of Heaven

images of the kingdom of God in the New Testament:

- bride and wedding feast
- the living water
- the tree of life
- the new Jerusalem
- images of community, love, clarity, fullness, beauty, harmony

all pictures

## 9.3. What Can We Say and Hope For in Faith?

### 9.3.1. *An ineffable mystery, the mystery of God*

The consummation of humankind and the world is:

- a new life in the unimaginable dimensions of God
- beyond our time and space
- must therefore remain:
  - an ineffable mystery
  - the mystery of God

1 Tim 6:16: "It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion." (NRSV)

### 9.3.2. *What can we say about eternal life and the kingdom to come?*

In faith we can say:

**Eternal life** is truly *life*

- the opposite of eternal boredom

- includes unimaginable, infinite developments in the sphere of the infinite
- the glory of eternal life is new, unimaginable, unthinkable, ineffable
  - 1 Corinthians 2:9: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (NRSV)

The **kingdom of our consummation** is not a human kingdom but a kingdom of God.

Therefore heaven is a kingdom of:

- ultimate salvation
- the fulfillment of justice
- perfect freedom
- unambiguous truth
- universal peace
- infinite love
- overflowing joy
- eternal life

because it is God's kingdom

## 10. Another attitude towards dying

We will each die a very personal death

### 10.1. The responsibility for our dying

Modern medicine, by increasing our powers over death has also increased our responsibility for our dying.

To what degree can we justifiably prolong life?

Principles:

- goal must be to help, not simply prolong death
- therapy is justified only if it can lead to a rehabilitation, a restoration of function and of life
- individuals have the right to reject treatment that prolongs life
- the state has no role in decisions (we must not forget Nazi euthanasia)

### 10.2. An art of dying

What is a death worthy of human beings, of a Christian?

- to die like a Stoic (emotionally cold, relaxed, without emotion)?
- but Jesus did not die in impassive detachment, but with a cry of anguished godforsakenness

But through the Resurrection of Jesus, death has lost its "sting"

- "we do not die into a darkness, a void, nothingness, but into new being, into the fullness, ... the light of a quite different day"
- in death we "may simply let ourselves be called, led, borne"

Should this not allow another attitude to dying for the Christian?

Perhaps makes possible:

- a dying in quiet composure, hopeful certainty, in gratitude for this life, despite all evil
  - in faith that our anxiety and trembling will be taken up by a God who is love
  - in faith that our life is changed, but not taken away

## 11. What are we on earth for?

### 11.1. The chief aim of human life

What is the chief aim of human life?

- Calvin, Geneva Catechism 1547
  - to know God
- Catholic Catechism 1847
  - We are on earth to know God, to love him, to serve him and in that way to arrive in heaven
- not asked in the Book of Common Prayer Catechism

But what about:

- self-fulfillment?
- self-development?
- love of neighbors?
- love of those far away?
- daily work?
- profession?
- human relationships?

Kung: The meaning of life is:

- not simply God or the divine, but also for human beings
- not just for heaven, but also for happiness on this earth
- not just to know God, but also self-fulfillment, love of neighbors and those far away

But also not merely happiness on this earth, daily work, profession:

- for what then is our meaning when we can no longer contribute?

### 11.2. Is being a Christian no more than being a human being?

Being a Christian is:

- a extension
  - a deepening
  - a rooting
  - a radicalization
- of being human.

By:

- by grounding humanity in faith in God
- directing one's living by Jesus Christ

We:

- can cope with:
  - and all that is positive and good
  - but also all that is negative
    - sin
    - guilt
    - meaninglessness
    - death
- out of an unshakable trust in God that relies ultimately on God's grace

### 11.3. Summary of Living as a Christian

Kung's summary of living as a Christian:

- "By following Jesus Christ,
- people in the world of today
- we can live, act, suffer and die
  - in a truly human way
  - in happiness and unhappiness,
  - life and death
- sustained by God,
- and helpful to fellow men and women."

# The Creed

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