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Know The Creeds And Councils (KNOW Series)



Synopsis

In every generation, the Christian church must interpret and restate its bedrock beliefs, answering the challenges and concerns of the day. This accessible overview walks readers through centuries of creeds, councils, catechisms, and confessions--not with a dry focus on dates and places, but with an emphasis on the living tradition of Christian belief and why it matters for our lives today. As a part of the KNOW series, *Know the Creeds and Councils* is designed for personal study or classroom use, but also for small groups and Sunday schools wanting to more deeply understand the foundations of the faith. Each chapter covers a key statement of faith and includes a discussion of its historical context, a simple explanation of the statement's content and key points, reflections on contemporary and ongoing relevance, and discussion questions.

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Customer Reviews

This small volume covers the ecumenical councils (synods of the church undivided, and accepted as foundational throughout the churches); important denominational councils, the significant creeds such as the Apostles' Creed, Nicene and Athanasian; and the major catechisms. Holcomb acknowledges the political forces behind these documents, both secular and sacred, while steering carefully away from expressing support of any of the political views, historic or contemporary. A concise reference that is orthodox and even-handed has been needed for decades. While not entirely ecumenical, nor neutral, it is concisely factual. Holcomb refers to the scriptural basis of the orthodox choices made by councils and synods. I can detect a subtle bias in Holcomb's

viewpoint. He is an Episcopalian (the American version of Anglican, part of the world-wide Anglican Communion) and although he teaches at a seminary in the Reformed tradition, he does favour a high church Anglican interpretation. Anyone who mentions both Reginald Pole and John Henry Newman, with their peripheral involvement in councils and credal theology, must fall within the bailiwick of the nineteenth century Oxford Movement. Holcomb praises the wide inclusiveness of Anglican theology, a commendation with which I do not agree. At times I thought he strove to be generous in naming some points of Calvinist theology as orthodox. Much if Calvin's strict predestinational theology fails to accommodate a generous God of grace. Generally, it is a useful book for anyone who needs a readable reference concerning the councils and creeds. It proceeds historically, which makes the subject more interesting, and demonstrates that theological thought builds on the past rather than appearing suddenly.

Other than the Apostle's Creed, are you familiar with other creeds? How about confessions? What are they? What's the difference between them? What about catechism? Why were they created? These and many other related questions would be answered by Holcomb in this book. Holcomb first defines the various terms used in this book, creeds, confessions and catechism. Following which these are then presented in a chronological order, allowing the readers to see how the creeds have developed, deepen and also modified in their wording to be more specific to the various challenges that arose at the different eras. In Creeds, whenever a creed/confession/catechism is presented, 3 sections would always be explored: the historical background, content and relevance. Holcomb is especially strong in giving the historical context of the creeds/confession/catechism, often highlighting the historical framework/situations where the creeds are contextualised, allowing you to see the importance of developing such creeds/confessions/catechism. What is interesting is that Holcomb not only includes Protestant creeds and confession, in this book you can also read about the Roman Catholic Creeds and Councils, and Holcomb does not skimp on the explanation about them. Lastly, under relevance, Holcomb is perceptive about the importance of creeds and confessions and the need for Christians to be familiar with them. Even when discussing about the Vatican II, Holcomb is still able to draw relevant application for Christians and thus gives excellent support for the Christian to be well versed in them.

I would definitely recommend Justin Holcomb's Know the Creeds and Councils. This isn't the first book I've read on the subject of church history, though I wish it had been! The book I read was thick, scholarly, and in my opinion, poorly organized. This one, on the other hand, was reader-friendly,

well-organized, and written primarily to be UNDERSTOOD. In the introduction, he defines the four key terms used throughout the book: creeds, confessions, catechisms, and councils. He shares his purpose for writing the book: "to provide an accessible overview of the main creeds, confessions, catechisms, and councils of Christian history. It is an introduction to some of the most important theological declarations in the Christian tradition." He shares his method: "For each creed, confession, catechism, or council, I present historical background, a short summary of the content, and thoughts on contemporary relevance. At the end of each chapter are discussion questions and recommended reading for further study." The chapters are arranged chronologically, of course. The definitions he gives are straight forward. For example, this is how he defines the term catechism: "A catechism is a book or document giving a brief summary of the basic principles of Christianity in Q&A form. Catechisms represent the practical, on-the-ground application of the main teaching agreed upon at church councils and expressed through creeds and confessions." Chapter 1: The Apostles' Creed ca.

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