

## Put TH Back in FAITH: Jude 1-4

The TH stands for Theology.

So here's a theology joke:

A Calvinist (or Presbyterian not Baptist) arrives at the gates of heaven. He sees that there are two lines going in. One has a sign that reads "predestined," and the other, "free will". He naturally heads to the predestined line.

While waiting, an angel comes and asks him "Why are you in this line?"

He confidently replies, "Because I chose it."

The angel looks surprised, "Well, if you 'chose' it, then you should be in the free will line."

So the Calvinist, now slightly irritated, obediently wanders over to the free will line.

Again, after a few minutes, another comes and angel asks him, "Why are you in this line?"

He sullenly replies, "Someone made me come here."

*Jude <sup>3</sup> Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people. <sup>4</sup> For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.*

The Greek word *urge* is like the speech a general gives to his fearful soldiers so they march courageously into battle. Paul uses the same word in Romans 12:1: "I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice... to God."

The Greek word *contend* means to struggle for, to exercise great effort for something. The word was used of athletic contests and the struggle and effort of the athletes in the Olympic Games.

*Faith* in this scripture refers to a well-defined body of truth. There's a definite article before faith; it's The Faith.

Greek *once for all* means once for all. There is no further revelation. (Islam claims the Qur'an to be the final revelation that supersedes the Bible, but it is not and does not.)

Greek *entrusted* means to hand down, to commit and entrust. The word is used for handing down authorized tradition in Israel. The faith was once for all entrusted to us. If someone entrusts something to your care, then you better take care of it like it belongs to you. Hopefully you take care of things entrusted to you. (*My parents entrusted me with their old photo albums and precious items - like my father's WWII bronze star. I have taken good care of these items entrusted to me.*) The FAITH has been entrusted to us and we must defend it, preserve its purity from people who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ. The Faith has been entrusted to us to proclaim it to the world. We do not add to the faith or subtract from it. We keep it as it has been given to us. We don't change its truth to make it acceptable for a new generation. Culture changes and becomes more and more corrupt, but *The Faith* does not change with the vicissitudes of human culture which has no absolute standard.

What is The Faith? Faith has THEological content. Put TH back in FAITH stand for THEology. The Faith contains propositional TRUTH that must be believed. The Faith has been under attack since it was revealed by Jesus Christ and formulated in creeds by the early church.

This means that Christianity as The Faith is not one among many faiths. It is a faith with well-defined theological propositions that are to be believed or rejected, so it cannot be mixed with other faiths. Christianity is not one choice in a buffet line with other religions.

The Faith has theological content, but its theological content rests upon a historical foundation which is God's work throughout human history.

Commentator Bill O'Rielly wrote a book *Killing Jesus*. Bill said the Bible is a book of theology, not history. If the history is not accurate, then why should we believe its theology? We might as well believe the Book of Mormon. Archaeology is proving more and more that the Bible is accurate history.

Skeptics say Christianity is a "blind leap of faith." Christianity would be a blind leap of faith if the Bible could only be trusted for its theology and not its history. The statement "blind leap of faith" is entirely inaccurate. Becoming a

Christian does not involve a “blind leap of faith.” Skeptics say science is superior to religion because it has experiments and facts. Christianity is inferior because it requires a “blind leap of faith.” (Evolution is considered science but it requires a huge blind leap of faith because all fossil and genetic evidence points to special creation.) Christianity is more like “reasonable steps of faith.” Belief in Jesus Christ is an easy and reasonable step of faith based on historical evidence which includes eyewitness testimony. The reason it’s hard to believe is not because of evidence but because of sin in the heart. The sins of pride and immorality resist belief. Atheists are atheists because they love their sin and don’t want to be accountable to God.

We must have an informed faith, a faith constructed of solid theology. Theology is the study of God - the greatest study any person can engage in. Theology comes from the Bible. We study the Bible and organize what is written about God into theological statements of truth. Theological truth enable us to live in relationship with God. The more we know about God the better our relationship with God will be.

One way to determine the theological core of The Faith is to study the creeds of the church and the theological propositions they contain. The Faith has been under attack since it was revealed by Jesus Christ and the early church formulated creeds to contend for The Faith.

### **Creeds and theological prepositions of The Faith:**

Who is God? The correct theological proposition is “One God, Three Persons.” The Bible reveals 3 Persons who are divine and are one God.

The Bible makes two essential theological statements about God.

- 1 John 1:5: *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*
- 1 John 4:16: *God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.*

God is love and light. Light (holiness) balances love. Light and love embrace each other at the cross of Christ. God offers his Son as an atoning sacrifice; that's holiness and love. Jesus Christ satisfies the demands of light and love.

The most important creeds contend for the person of Jesus Christ. As Jude wrote there are “ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”

The key to examining any religion or cult is what does it teach about Jesus Christ. Satan cannot copy the truth. He can only corrupt it and cause people to deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

I ask one question about any religion: Who is Jesus Christ? It's the same question Jesus asked the disciples: “Who do people say that I am?”

- Judaism & Islam: Jesus is just a prophet (a false prophet in Judaism).
- Buddhism: Jesus is a bodhisattva helping people reach nirvana.
- Hinduism: Jesus was one of Vishnu's 10 avatars.
- Jehovah's Witnesses: Jesus is a created being, an angel, and Lucifer is his jealous brother.
- Mormon: Jesus is the firstborn of God's spirit children and Lucifer is his brother. (Satan wants to bring Jesus down to his level as a created being.)

I would like you to know and appreciate the creeds and councils of the church. It is important for your belief in The Faith.

First creed is recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. This first-century creed contains the basics of the Gospel. The Greek verb *entrusted* in Jude 1:3 is the same word used by Paul in 15:3: *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the **gospel** I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you— unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For I **entrusted** to you as of first importance what I also received: **that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, then***

*to the twelve.* <sup>6</sup> *Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.* <sup>7</sup> *Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.* <sup>8</sup> *Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*

Nicene Creed (AD 325) which was written to affirm Jesus' full deity. A false teacher named Arius taught that God the Father created the Son so the Son could not be fully divine. The Council of Nicea repudiated Arius and wrote a creed stating that the Father and Son are *homo-ousios* - Greek for "of the same essence." Thus, Jesus Christ as the Son is fully God.

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 essence (*homo-ousios*) with the Father.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.

Chalcedon Creed (AD 451) was written to affirm Christ's two natures. The Creed was adopted at the Council of Chalcedon as a response to certain heretical teachings about the nature of Christ. It established the orthodox view that Christ has two natures - human and divine - that are unified in one Person. Jesus Christ is one Person with two natures.

Apostles' Creed (ca. 390, but it is claimed to have been written by the Apostles in the first century) When the Apostles' Creed was composed, the main enemy was Gnosticism, which denied that Jesus Christ was truly man, truly human. The emphasis of the Creed is concerned with repudiating this error.

\*Everyone recite the Apostles' Creed in *Hymns for God's People* (p.235).

\*Concluding story: St. Peter Martyr & The Apostles' Creed

During the 13th century in Italy, an old heresy was revived known as Catharism. Catharist theology was essentially Gnostic in nature. They believed that there were two "gods"—one malevolent and one good. They denied the oneness of the Trinity, the goodness of the body and its resurrection, and the value of the sacraments. The Apostle's Creed written 1000 years earlier refuted these errors.

St. Peter of Verona, also known now as Peter Martyr, was converted to Christ at a young age. Peter joined a new religious order called the Dominicans. Peter was a brilliant preacher who had a deep knowledge of the faith. The Pope commissioned Peter to correct the false doctrine of the Catharists. His preaching drew large crowds in cities all throughout Italy. He also spoke out against Catholics whose actions didn't match their professed beliefs. He converted many and performed several miracles — especially among heretics, who were healed after repenting for their errors.

Peter's role as a defender of the faith attracted many enemies as well, who did not want him taking people away from Catharism.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* describes Peter's martyrdom.

*When returning from Como to Milan, he met a certain Catharist who with some others had plotted to murder him. The assassin struck him with an axe on the head with such violence, that the holy man fell half dead. Rising to his knees he recited the first article of the Apostle's Creed, and offering his blood as a sacrifice to God he dipped his fingers in it and wrote on the ground the words: "Credo in Deum". [I believe in one God] The murderer then stabbed him in the heart.*

Soon afterwards his murderer renounced his heretical beliefs and joined the Dominicans in their mission and led a life of holiness for the rest of his life.

Conclusion: Just believing propositional truth like creeds and confessions is not enough to have salvation. Theology leads us into a relationship with the Person who is truth. Jesus claimed (John 14:6), "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." You must personally receive Jesus Christ as savior and submit to His lordship which is living in obedience to His word. Communion demonstrates the nature of God

as love and light. Communion also demonstrates the nature of Christ as fully God and fully human.