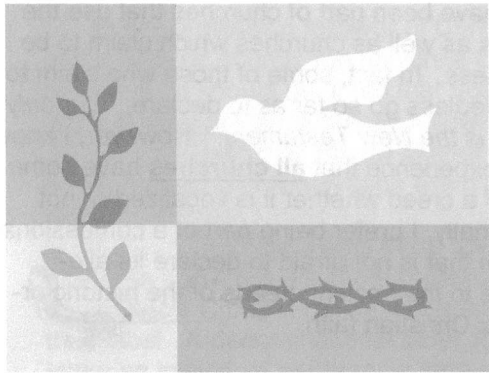


*The
One, Holy, Catholic
and
Apostolic Church*



A Strawberry Mountain View
"Unique - Challenging - Controversial!"



"Berry Good News!"

by:

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The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church

If you attend a church that uses the **Nicene Creed** you may have wondered what is meant when the congregation affirms, *"We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church!"*

- **What is the Church? and**
- **Where is this Church located?**

I have been part of churches that use the creeds as well as churches which claim to be creedless. In fact, some of those who claim to be creedless go so far as to declare, *"Our only creed is the New Testament!"* However, I know from experience that **all churches** have some sort of a creed whether it is vocalized or not. Personally, I prefer being part of a confessional church that is not afraid to declare its allegiance to the ancient creeds of the historic orthodox Christian faith.

None of the creeds are infallible nor are they divinely inspired. However, I believe that they **have a place** in the life of churches. Through the centuries the developing of creeds has insured a degree of maintaining integrity for helping keep churches on track. As a person who is a student of Church History and one interested in the historic Christian faith, I greatly appreciate **the rich heritage** that we have as Christians. I heartily subscribe and adhere to the ancient creeds and that without apology. The statement: *"We believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church"* is exciting, meaningful and more than mere words to the follower of Christ. It is tragic that so many evangelicals, charismatics and fundamentalists have **little or no appreciation** for the heritage of our faith as Christians. It has been said that the blood of martyrs, both of the past and of the present, is the seed of the Church.

THE CHURCH IS ONE

With the institutional Church torn asunder by literally thousands of divisions, sects, denominations, some might wonder how anyone can declare that the Church is 'one'.

There is but one Church of God. This spiritual body is made up of **all** who believe in and receive Christ as Savior and Lord. It goes **beyond** our divisions, sects and denominations. It is the body of Christ to which **all believers** have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into this body. We are taught,

*"The body of Christ has many different parts, just as any other body does. Some of us are Jews, and others are Gentiles. Some of us are slaves, and others are free. **But God's Spirit baptized each of us and made us part of the body of Christ. Now we each drink from that same Spirit... Together you are the body of Christ**". (1 Cor. 12:12, 13, 27) CEV*

Every disciple of Christ has been baptized by the Holy Spirit, hence is part of the Body of Christ. Contrary to what some teach this *is not* a second or third work of grace. It is the Lord who adds or baptizes **all believers** in Christ into this body, that we refer to as the Church. We are told in Acts 2:47 (NIV), *"And the Lord added to their number [the Church] daily those who were being saved"*. To be saved means to be made spiritually whole, healed, or complete.

Every authentic follower of Christ has the Holy Spirit, hence is part of the 'whole' Body of Christ, i.e., *the church of God whatever its label*. This Church goes beyond our sectarian and denominational labels. It is made up of **all** those who know Christ as Savior and Lord. It is **made up** of believing Protestants, believing Roman Catholics, believing Eastern Orthodox Christians, etc. It acknowledges Christ as **its only** rightful head. See – Colossians 1:17-18. It is the **"one faith"** that the apostle Paul

spoke of in his writing to the church at Ephesus where he wrote,

"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, who is above all and through all and in all". (Ephesians 4:4-6) NRSV

Christians may be divided organizationally, but spiritually those who are **'in'** Christ are one! See – Rom. 15:5-7; Col. 3:15-17.

THE CHURCH IS HOLY

Let's face reality, the institutional Church that we view through the eye of history has been anything but holy. All we need do is to look at the Crusades, the Inquisition, the time when Roman Catholics were killing Protestants and Protestants were killing Roman Catholics the racism, sexism and anti-Semitism to discover **a very unholy sinful body** that we call the Church. All too often Christ has stood **outside** the Church seeking entrance. See – Revelation 3:20. Yet, the Body of Christ, not as the organization but as **the organism**, is holy. It's founder, Christ said, *"I will build MY church"*. The apostle Paul wrote of the holiness of the Church in Eph. 2:21-22 (NRSV),

"In him [Christ] the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God".

God's Spirit dwells in the Church, therefore we can declare in the creed that, *"We believe in a holy church!"* See – Eph. 5:25b-27.

THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC

We Protestant Christians often hesitate to use the word, **'catholic'**. Some Protestants have **replaced** the word **'catholic'** in the creed with the word **'Christian'**. Yet, **the original word** used is a good and proper word to use. When used in the creeds **it is not** referring to

any one particular sect or denomination. Nor is it referring to a type or style of worship. This word in its purest and best meaning simply means, '**universal**'. The word '**catholic**' backs up what the early Christians acknowledged that the church was indeed one, holy, universal and from the apostles. The use of the word **catholic** to the Christians of the first centuries separated them from a number of heresies that were seeking to engulf the churches. It indicated orthodoxy in contrast to heterodoxy. It was applied to the followers of Christ throughout the Roman Empire shortly after the death of the last of the original apostles.

Every professing follower of Christ is part of the catholic church; the universal Body of believers. It should be noted that **not every church member** an authentic follower of Christ. The Reformer **Martin Luther** made the profound and true observation when he declared, "*the true Church is found in the churches!*" In other words there are authentic believers and there are mere professors who **do not know** Christ in churches regardless of their label. A denominational label *does not* make an individual necessarily an authentic Christian. Many nominal church members in reality are not truly Christians.

THE CHURCH IS APOSTOLIC

The Church of our Lord is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. We read of this in Ephesians 2:19-22 (CEV),

"You Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens with everyone else who belongs to the family of God. You are like a building with the apostles and prophets as the foundation and with Christ as the most important stone. Christ is the one who holds the building together and makes it grow into a holy temple for the Lord. And you are part of that building Christ has built as a place for God's own Spirit to live."

Using the term '**apostolic**' has nothing to do with '**apostolic succession**' of church

leaders. Those who hold this teaching believe that the only rightful ministers are those who can trace their ordination [laying on of hands] back to the apostles, especially through Peter. However, this **is not** what we mean when we declare in the creed that the Church is apostolic. There is **little evidence** to prove the teaching of apostolic succession of church leaders. The apostolic succession that we hold is that of **the faithful succession** of **apostolic doctrine, i.e., the doctrines [teachings] set forth in the New Testament by the original apostles.** When the Church was established and thereafter attention was given by the followers of Christ to what the original apostles taught. We are told in Acts 2:42 that these Christians, "**devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.**"

The Body of Christ, which is made up of all of the people of God, is truly **one, holy, catholic** and apostolic. The apostle Peter wrote,

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. One you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy". (1 Peter 2:9-10) NIV

Are you part of that Church which is one, holy, catholic and apostolic?

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