



Di Berardino, Angelo, ed.

We Believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church

Ancient Christian Doctrine 5.

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

We Believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church is the fifth and final installment in IVP's Ancient Christian Doctrine series. As with all the books in the series it mines the vast body of patristic literature for relevant quotations concerning an article of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, this time, obviously the final article which consists of three clauses: "We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen." These three clauses are then broken down even further and treated according to the following chapter titles:

1. We Believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church: The Church
2. We Believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church: One Holy Catholic and Apostolic
3. We Acknowledge One Baptism
4. For the Forgiveness of Sins
5. We Look for the Resurrection of the Dead
6. And the Life of the World to Come: Blessedness and Condemnation
7. And the Life of the World to Come: Christ's Return, the Judgment and Eternal Life

As with the other volumes in this series each chapter begins by presenting the article of the N-C Creed under examination in Greek, Latin, and English with the specified clause in bold print.

Brief sections then follow which set the material in its historical context and give an overview of what the section will contain before moving on to the quotations themselves which are all preceded by topic headings and concluded with footnotes leading the reader to the source material where the full quotation can be read in context. Most readers will need to consult the abbreviations key (ix-xi) to track down the footnoted references as they are abbreviated and many times lead to works that are probably not familiar to most of the intended audience of this series (i.e., while many of the quotations come from Roberts and Donaldson's *Ante-Nicene Fathers* as well as Schaff's *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* there is a plethora of material that has been quoted, adapted, or translated from Greek and Latin texts as well as scholarly monographs).

It should be noted here that the quotations are not all commentary on the N-C Creed itself (as some pre-date it), but rather the N-C Creed is the culmination of the thinking that we find in these quotations, and many others not found in these volumes. It's a statement of faith that summarizes the early Church's view of the biblical message presented throughout the Old and New Testaments. It's truly amazing to read through the material and see just how united early Christians were on these matters, although we must admit that the selected material is not comprehensive or exhaustive, so in the end we're only presented with a partial picture. Nonetheless, the overall similarity in thinking on matters such as infant baptism or the resurrection of the body (to take just two examples) is something to take note of when you realize that these men were separated by time and place (i.e., they wrote over the course of a few centuries and from many different geographical locales).

This takes us to the distinctive features of this final volume alone which are the "Biographical Sketches & Short Descriptions of Select Anonymous Works" (283-303) and the "Timeline of Writers of the Patristic Period" (304-09). The biographical sketches are extremely brief at only a sentence or two but they cover all the major players and give key information. The timeline is perhaps my favorite feature as it not only lists the writer and the time in which they lived, but it also lists the location from where they wrote, and the language in which they wrote (Latin, Greek, Coptic, or Syriac). Both of these features are extremely useful as is the rest of the back matter which includes an outline of the book's contents (276-77), a list of ancient authors and texts cited (279-82), and finally a Scripture index (312-16).

The introduction by the volume's editor Angelo Di Berardino (xiii-xxxii) and the conclusion to the Ancient Christian Doctrine series by series editor Thomas Oden (269-75) make this a complete volume in more ways than one, i.e., Di Berardino's introduction looks at the clauses of the Creed under examination and sets the reader up for what follows in helping us to think about the importance and relevance of the ideas represented by this material in the life of the Church and Oden's conclusion quite literally completes the series serving as an overview of the series as a whole while still informing the reader at the same time. One could read this volume alone and

still come out with a great understanding of the importance of the N-C Creed and its place in the life of the Church from Oden's conclusion.

We Believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church accomplishes exactly what it set out to do in providing readers with a compendium of quotations from the church fathers on the articles of faith expressed in the N-C Creed. This volume (and those that have preceded it) is useful on many levels, for example, it can act as a catalyst for a more in-depth examination of the subjects covered or the writers quoted, or it can aid in sermon preparation as it did with my pastor this past Easter Sunday (April 4, 2010) when he wanted a general overview of the patristic witness concerning baptism since he was performing baptisms. And finally I'd suggest that this series as well as IVP's *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* series help the modern reader to engage in fellowship with the Church of old in ways that they probably wouldn't have otherwise.