

**THE APOSTLES' CREED  
IN THE LIGHT OF  
MODERN DISCUSSION**

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The Apostles' Creed in the Light of Modern Discussion by Henry A. Stimson

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MODERN DISCUSSION

BY  
HENRY A. STIMSON  
D.D., RIPON; M.A. AND S.T.D., YALE

"And this is the victory that hath overcome the world,  
even our faith." I JOHN 5: 4.

BOSTON  
The Pilgrim Press  
CHICAGO

1899.

TO THE MEMBERS  
OF THE  
MANHATTAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH.

MY DEAR PEOPLE, WHOSE KIND AND LOVING AP-  
PRECIATION HAS INSPIRED THIS WORK, AND  
WHOSE TRUE AFFECTION AND STEAD-  
FAST DEVOTION ARE MY DAILY  
JOY AND STRENGTH.

*“ To learn what is true, in order to do what is right—this is the summing up of the whole duty of man.”*

PROF. HUXLEY.



## PREFACE

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If, as is more than ever probable, the faith of the first century is to be the faith of the twentieth century, many troubled souls will be immensely comforted. We are witnessing this remarkable phenomenon; the oldest extant Christian Confession that has any completeness is rapidly and widely finding a new acceptance. It is heard to-day in public worship upon more lips than any form of words outside the Bible.

The title, "The Apostles' Creed," need trouble no one. The origin of the Creed is unknown; although it has undergone some slight modifications, it has so simple and compact a unity as to indicate that it was struck out at a single heat. It is a crystallization of the Christian faith, as that faith, passing out of the dry and narrow atmosphere of Jerusalem, came to self-consciousness in the more liberal and cosmopolitan atmosphere of Antioch. It is in this sense the Creed of an apostle, *i. e.*, of a man who has a message because he has something that he believes. It is for the whole Church and for all time because it is triumphant and not defensive; it is conscious of no enemies; it joyfully affirms. We take it upon

our lips with the thought that for nearly two thousand years it has been the answer of believing hearts to the revelation of God.

In studying the Creed I hold with Harnack, that the sources of our knowledge of Christianity in the New Testament are trustworthy and harmonious. I do not believe that there was such a conflict between Paul and the other apostles as has been claimed, but, with Ritschl, I believe that the peculiar character of the history of the post-apostolic church is due rather to a "blunting of Pauline ideas arising from the incapacity of the Gentile mind to follow the great apostle in his experiences and preconceptions." I therefore hold myself free to refer to any part of the New Testament for my sufficient authority.

The Bible is for the Christian the final test. It is a record of the self-revelation of God through a historical process; but it is important to remember that the revelation did not cease when the canon of Scripture closed. God has continued to reveal himself as the deepening and widening life of his people has made it possible for him to unfold the contents of the original revelation; as with the advancing season the buds on a tree open into blossom and fruit. The original revelation was intimately connected with the personal experience and attainments of individual men. With-

out them it could not have been made in that form and at that time. The history of God's people ever since has stood in the same relation to the progressive disclosures. The creeds of the Church are therefore both a history of the Church in its relation to divine truth and a disclosure of the truth as it was known at different stages. Every creed must therefore be reinterpreted for each age. It may not be rewritten, for it is given only to certain epochs to attain to the intensity of spiritual heat which will permit their striking off the expressions which shall both crystallize and illumine the sum of the truth to which they have attained. But each age has its own intellectual outfit to the test of which its inherited truths must be subjected before they will be usable. Shibboleths will disappear, but there is no great harm in that; life will have its way; and there will be a fair field for brotherly love. Only in such times we need to keep in mind Athanasius' remarkable saying, "They seemed to be ignorant of the fact that when we deal with words that require some training to understand them, different people may take them in senses not only different but absolutely opposed to each other." John Calvin declared that so long as the central truths of Christianity are held intact difference of opinion is to be tolerated. Here we have central truths; we ought all to know what they are,