

**O Praise Ye the Lord***Tate and Brady (1696)*

O praise ye the Lord, Prepare your glad voice,  
His praise in the great Assembly to sing;  
In their great Creator Let Israel rejoice;  
And children of Zion Be glad in their King.

Let them His great Name Extol in their songs,  
With hearts well attuned His praises express;  
Who always takes pleasure To hear their glad tongues,  
And waits with salvation The humble to bless.

With glory adorned, His people shall sing  
To God, Who their heads With safety doth shield;  
Such honor and triumph His favor shall bring;  
O therefore for ever All praise to Him yield!

**ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ***In the Nick of Time***Devices and Creeds***Kevin T. Bauder*

“My faith has found a resting place not in device nor creed....” This line opens one of the hymns that used to be sung regularly in Baptist churches. It is still sung in some. It can be taken in two ways.

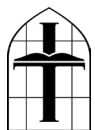
One is to suggest that devices and creeds (or symbols or confessions—these terms are nearly interchangeable) are antithetical to genuine faith in Jesus Christ. In fact, the hymn itself sets up a contrast: “I trust the ever-living one: His wounds for me shall plead.” Understood in this sense, to trust Christ is to refuse to trust creeds and confessions.

The text can also be read a slightly better way. It can be understood to say that the real object of saving faith in Christ Himself: we trust in Him, and not in our statements about Him. Taken in this sense, the song is less obviously false, but it continues to suggest some sort of contrast between Christ and doctrine, with the former being essential and the latter being dispensable.

Frankly, I wish that we could eradicate this hymn from our worship. Why? Because we cannot trust Christ as a mere name or sentimental abstraction. We can only trust a Christ who is understood in some specific way. We could trust the Christ of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. We could trust the Christ of the Mormons. We could trust the Christ of the Unitarians. We could trust the Christ of Protestant Liberalism. Or we could trust the Christ of Christian orthodoxy.

Can’t we just trust the Christ of the Bible? The question seems reasonable, but it shows the exact problem. Each of these Christs purports to be the Christ of the Bible. The Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that their Christ is found in the Bible. The Mormons assert that their Christ is found in the Bible. It does no good to say, “I trust the Christ of the Bible,” unless you specify just who that Christ is.

“Alright,” you might say, “I believe that the Christ of the Bible is the Second Person of the Godhead: coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial with the Father.” Perhaps you might even back up this statement with some biblical references. If this is what you said, then you would be correct: this is the biblical Christ whom we must trust.



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Perhaps you might continue, “I believe that by His incarnation the Christ of the Bible added to His deity a complete human nature, becoming fully and genuinely a man.” You might back up this statement with other biblical references. Once again, you would be right. This affirmation also defines the Christ whom we must trust.

You might further say, “I believe that the Christ of the Bible is one person in two complete natures, human and divine, such that His person must never be divided, and His natures must never be either confounded with or converted into each other.” Again, you might support this statement with biblical references. For the third time, if you said this, you would be correct. This affirmation also describes the Christ whom we must trust.

If you wished, you could add many similar true statements, each of which could be backed up by biblical references. Each of those statements would do two things. Positively, it would specify the identity of the biblical Christ who you claim to be biblical and in whom you believe. Negatively, it would contrast this Christ (the one you believe to be biblical) with the various false Christs (the ones apostates claim to be biblical).

Specifically, the first statement above contrasts the true, biblical Christ with the Christ of the Arians and the Modalists. The second statement contrasts the biblical Christ with the Christ of the Docetists, Cerinthians, and Apollinarians. The third statement contrasts the biblical Christ with the Christ of the Nestorians, Eutychians, and Monophysites. These contrasts go to the heart of the matter, because who Christ is determines what He can do. The biblical Christ can save if you trust Him. The Christs of the Arians, Modalists, Docetists, Cerinthians, Apollinarians, Nestorians, Eutychians, and Monophysites will send you to hell if you trust them.

Which Christ you believe to be biblical is an issue of paramount importance. It is not sufficient simply to say, “I believe in Christ.” You must believe in the *right* Christ among several contenders. You must believe in the *true* Christ. You must say which is the Christ of the Bible and which are pretenders. Therefore, the three statements above, and other statements like them, are absolutely indispensable to the Christian faith. You could not possibly claim to believe in the true and biblical Christ if you were to reject these statements.

Let us suppose that you were to take these statements and put them together, thus:

I believe that the Christ of the Bible is the Second Person of the Godhead: coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial with the Father. By His incarnation He added to His deity a complete human nature, becoming fully and genuinely a man. He is one person in two complete natures, human and divine, such that His person must never be divided, and His

natures must never be either confounded with or converted into each other.

Affirming this statement would not save you, for only Christ Himself can save you. Yet the only Christ who can save is the Christ who is defined in this statement. Consequently, denying it would surely keep you from salvation. Your denial would keep you from the true and living Christ. If you trust the true and living one, then you are not simply trusting a name or a sentiment. Your only safe resting place is in the Christ of this statement.

Now notice that this statement is exactly a creed. Creeds are descriptions and definitions of what people take to be biblical. This particular creed certainly does not say everything that needs to be said, but it is still a creed. It describes or defines the only Christ who merits your trust because He is the only Christ who can save. If you are genuinely trusting the Christ of the Bible, then you are trusting the Christ of this creed. To deny this creed is to place yourself in eternal peril. Consequently, there is an important sense in which the resting place of your faith *is* in a device and creed.

Of course, we do not confuse creedal descriptions and definitions with the gospel message. We do not evangelize by simply having people repeat the creed. Indeed, people may and usually do trust Christ without knowing the full description and definition of His person and work. But that does not diminish the importance of having a description or definition. When you encounter someone who believes in a false Christ, then the defense of these creedal descriptions and definitions takes center stage.

We need devices and creeds. If we had not already received them, we would be forced to invent them. The only Christ who merits our trust is a Christ who is rightly described in creeds.



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This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.

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