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BOOK REVIEWS

Ignatius Puthiadam and Xavier Irudayaraj, *The Christian Faith: Creed in the Indian Context*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2008, Pages 297, ISBN: 817086459-3

The creed generally is a statement of belief often recited as part of the religious service. A creed is sometimes referred to as a symbol signifying a “token” by which persons of like beliefs might recognize each other. The authors of this book have successfully attempted to understand and evaluate the Christian Creed in the religious, social and cultural context of India. While theologizing in context has become a trend and dictum of our faith praxis, these authors have attempted to rightly interpret Christian faith in the multi-religious, linguistic and cultural milieu of India, taking into consideration the developments in the natural and social sciences, modern trends in theology and philosophy, but without diminishing the pastoral praxis that flows from genuine faith. This is also a proof for the progressive, creative and contextualized understanding of Christian identity, being faithful to the revealed divine truths.

In the introductory part, the authors explain the creed in general and the Christian creed in particular taking into account the Trinitarian structure, content and meaning of the Apostle’s creed and different

stages in the formulation of the Nicene-Constantinople Creed. Consisting of four chapters, this book analyzes the twelve articles of Christian faith. In the first chapter there is a progressive development of a general understanding of faith to a wider Christian understanding of faith from its allied perspectives. The problems raised against practising faith are also evaluated in the background of religious pluralism. The second chapter fully concentrates on the first article on God the Father. This chapter deals with the Christian and non-Christian understanding of the fatherhood of God along with the ancient and modern criticism against religion and God.

In the third chapter, the authors concentrate on the second to seventh articles of faith, though there is priority for the second article on Jesus Christ, the only Son of God the Father. Different titles of Jesus Christ, problems concerning the titles, the uniqueness of Jesus' Sonship and Lordship, meaning and various aspects of incarnation are taken into consideration. In presenting the fourth article, the authors shed light on the creed taking a different turn. Suffering, the problem of evil, the inner meaning of resurrection, the empty tomb, ascension and judgment are analyzed under the title of remarks. Towards the end of this chapter the authors have attempted to analyze the question 'who Jesus Christ is,' the central question to all the gospels. While attempting to deepen the Christian faith on Jesus Christ, the authors invite the Christians of Indian soil to listen to the faith content of non-Christian brethren, however being faithful to the Christcentred life and activity. By discussing the Christian faith in the living Jesus Christ, the Hindu belief in Krishna and Rama, the similarities and dissimilarities between Buddha and Jesus, the authors bring forth the uniqueness of Christ and

the mystical character of Indian religious system. The Christian faith is rooted on the strong foundation of historical facts as they have eternal value in the Christian perspective, while Hindus consider them as passing and transitory.

The articles from eight to twelve are dealt with in the fourth chapter, beginning with the eighth article on the Holy Spirit. Here the authors analyze who Holy Spirit is, the Spirit's holiness and a detailed account of 'filioque.' It is because of the ecumenical movements, the eastern and the western churches try to see the meaning of filioque, both from the angle of the New Testament, and of Christian tradition. In connection with this, the authors also admit the Pentecost as a historical event, where there is a real experience of the Spirit. While explaining the holy, apostolic and catholic attributes of the Catholic Church, the authors clearly tell us that the Holy Spirit and the Church are closely knit together. The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church and thus we confess that the Church is holy. When we say that the Church is catholic, it means the universal, full and missionary dimensions of the church. The fundamental duty of the church is preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. In the Eucharistic celebration, the Christian community keeps the memory of Jesus Christ. The authors are also successful in finding out a distinction between the catholic and protestant understanding of the concept of the Church and apostolic succession in the Church. While there is diverse opinion on different articles of faith between the Christian denominations, the authors strongly suggest that being genuinely Christian means to be ecumenical Christians. The deeper meaning of the communion of saints and forgiveness of sins bring us the certitude that our life will have a new beginning. The

forgiveness is the sign that manifests the fact, that the salvation offered by Jesus Christ, is alive and operative within us. The last two articles; the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting are pointing to the future. The book ends with the different connotations associated, when we say 'Amen' at the end of the creed. It shows the reliability, fidelity and firmness of faith of a person, who freely and joyfully accepts all the articles of faith.

Undoubtedly, this book is the result of deep meditation, study and reflection on the Christian creed or faith in the context of the original Christian message and tradition and in the multi-religious context of India. It is an outstanding contribution for the seekers of theological wisdom, especially in the field of revelation and faith, as the authors prove that revelation of God is not a divine communication of certain theories and truths, but a progressive reality of God's love, culminated in the incarnation.

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