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The Creed by Luke Timothy Johnson

In his work, Johnson sets the goal to examine the language of the creed in the attempt to perceive the sense the Word of God brings to the Christians. However, the author claims from the beginning that the divine mystery is so powerful and endless that the human language falls short to grasp it wholly. After all, the truth about God cannot and should not be proven through mere reason but based on faith, on the ability to believe in His existence deep in the heart.

“We Believe in One God”

The principal statement and concept that form the foundation of the entire Christianity is the belief in one God. In Chapter 3, first of all, Johnson explains the importance of the faith in the real, true existence of God as the primary truth of the people's life, which forms the basis for the rest of the world. Furthermore, the fact that it is impossible for humans to either see or to touch Him only demonstrates the inadequacy of their measurement. The mystery of God cannot be directly examined, but it is present everywhere and makes the existence of the marvelous world possible for the humans.

Since God constitutes the beginning and source of life, agnosticism and atheism as well as humanistic atheism are wrong worldviews. All their arguments and purposes lack both reason and morality, and the Book of Wisdom stresses their ignorance and foolishness. Moreover, Paul claims that their statements are prompted by lie and insincerity which lead to violence and destruction (Johnson 71). In the end, non-believers deprive their own lives of the higher, more powerful presence that can open new horizons for the human spiritual

growth and valuable, meaningful life. In conclusion, Johnson recalls the statement about one God and presents its proof from the analysis of the scriptural world.

Chapter 4. “And in One Lord Jesus Christ”

In this chapter, Johnson makes the person of Jesus Christ the focus of the attention. In particular, the author aims to explain the concept of the unity of his two facets, the divine and human ones. Being the Son of God, he is truly involved in the sacrificing and devoted love for humanity. The creed emphasizes that through his humanity, Jesus only confirms his divinity.

The researcher analyzes the evidence presented in the Scripture indicating the existence of Christ, the “Son of God, who was born of the Holy Spirit out of the Virgin Mary and was crucified” (Johnson 104). The creed proves his salvation and resurrection as well as his divinity. However, the process of Jesus Christ’s discovery did not start with a full appreciation of his ontological relationship with God. In different sources, he was the Messiah, the Son of God, but also a prophet, a king, a Son of Man, or a savior (Johnson 105).

Further, the author considers the evidence from the Gospels and reveals that despite the miracles, neither his disciples nor the enemies grasped who he was during his ministry. Only later, Christ’s power and presence made everyone realize that he truly was the “Son of God in power through the Spirit of Holiness by his resurrection from the dead” (Johnson 107). The author fulfills a profound analysis of different sources including Paul’s letters, Hebrews, the Gospels, and the reports of eye-witnesses with the purpose to explore their interpretation of the issue of Christ’s divinity. Consequently, he draws an evidence-based, reasonable conclusion that Jesus was God who helped his Father rule, save the humans, and glorify the presence of God on the Earth through the Word of God. Overall, the perception of Christ as the Son of God possessing the divine nature can be traced beginning from the first centuries as demonstrated in the earliest writings.

“He Came Down from Heaven”

In this part of the work, Johnson considers the most mysterious concept of the Christian narration about God, namely His descent from and ascent to heaven. Since the divine nature is associated with mystery, the categories of space and time cannot adequately relate the God’s world. However, due to His descending to humans, it becomes possible to speak about God in spatial and temporal terms.

Importantly, Johnson emphasizes the symbolic nature of the deity’s “descending” and “ascending” (153). Therefore, he claims that care should be taken not “to reduce God to a material and limited existence” (Johnson 153). According to the Fourth Gospel, the book of John, Jesus came from Heaven with the particular purpose to realize the will of God on the Earth because the latter had sent him. In other words, the language of the creed implied the change in condition, not in place. Christ came into flesh to bring the Word of God to humanity, and afterwards, the Son returned to Heaven. Both Paul and John state that Jesus changed his state on purpose: being God, he turned into a poor, sinful slave. The only reason for this metamorphosis was his desire to save humanity, and Jesus was willing to sacrifice for the sake of its salvation.

“He Was Incarnated by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and Became Human”

Johnson outlines three observations in relation to the title and discusses their meanings. In addition, he highlights the difficulties due to translations, the first one being gender exclusivity while the second one deals with the notion of the virgin birth. Based on the analysis of the Gospels by Luke and Matt, the author reveals the major statement of the New Testament as presented by the early Christian writers. Thus, they conveyed the conception of Jesus as “a miraculous intervention by the Holy Spirit, bypassing normal sexual intercourse between a male and female” (Johnson 156).

Works Cited

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why it Matters*. New York: Random House, 2003. Print.