

FAITH

in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: because the Lord lives, we shall also live both here and hereafter. "If Christ be not raised from the dead then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Cor. 15:14).

In the Church, this is the faith we confess at our baptism. If we were baptized as infants, this is the faith our godparents professed on our behalf, in the words of the Apostles' or Nicene Creeds. Infant baptism especially makes clear one last thing that needs to be said about faith. Faith is not something we do on our own. It is our response to God's gift of himself in Jesus Christ. God's Holy Spirit is already at work in us, bringing us home to the Father through the Son. Faith is a gift. It is grace. You can rely on it. You can put it to the test. You can take God at his word.

Jesus said, "Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28) and "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth;
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the
right hand of God the Father almighty.
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and
the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.



THE
LIVING CHURCH

We are a Christian ministry based primarily in the
Episcopal Church, a member of the Anglican Communion.
Since 1878 we have published educational resources of various kinds
and *The Living Church* magazine.

The Nature of Belief
and Trust in God

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:6).

The definition of faith in the Letter to the Hebrews is very different from its typical use today. Contemporary people tend to use faith in opposition to science, to refer to an inferior form of knowing. Science involves facts, and everyone can and should agree about them. Water is made up of two molecules of hydrogen and one molecule of oxygen. Earthquakes are caused by the movement of tectonic plates. More complex forms of life have evolved from simpler forms of life. We can know these facts with certainty, since they are based on rigorous investigation.

Then, we are prone to think, there are things that we may believe. We say *Take it on faith* when we are not able to give a coherent reason for our belief. We refer to *blind faith*, which is unreasonable or even contradicted by science or common sense. And so we divide reality into a world of certainty and uncertainty, facts and beliefs.

The opposition is based on a misunderstanding of how science really works. Science does not give us indisputable facts. It gives us reason for confidence in an understanding of the world that is developed by careful investigation of reality. Scientists continually test and refine our understanding of the world. Faith is similar. It is neither blind nor without evidence. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Faith is the substance of promises that have been made. By faith we hold on to all the promises of God, which are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

In the Bible God promises that he will come to us, save us, and dwell with us, that we will be his people

and he will be our God. He promises to give us a new heart and a new spirit, a new relationship with God and with each other that begins now and never ends (Ezek. 36:26). Faith is the trust that lives life in and from these promises.

Traditionally faith is said to have two components: belief and trust. There are teachings central to the Christian faith that we are to believe: for example, Jesus is the eternal Son of God sent by the Father for the salvation of the whole world (see John 1:1-18, 3:16). But we must learn to trust in this belief.

Martin Luther is said to have explained it this way. A man is shipwrecked and drowning. He sees a piece of the wreck floating by, and he believes it will hold him up. This is not a blind faith. The wreckage is floating. It looks big enough to hold him up. So he swims over to it and throws himself upon it. He trusts in it for his salvation, and he finds it can hold him up. He has what Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, the author of the first Book of Common Prayer, called lively faith: a grateful, growing belief and trust that cannot help but issue in an active love of God and neighbor. This faith

motivates us to walk “in all those good works that it has been prepared for us to walk in.”

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. (Eph. 2:1-10)

Faith is not an inferior form of knowing; it is an ingredient in every kind of knowing. We cannot know anything without exercising belief and trust. The scientist trusts

that reality has a rational order that can be discovered, and that the human mind is capable of recognizing the order. Trust in God’s revelation of himself in Jesus Christ likewise makes it possible for us to know things that we would otherwise not know, and it opens a world of unending discovery. Christian faith is belief in the triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — who made all things, redeemed all things, and loves and preserves all things. Christian faith is trusting

