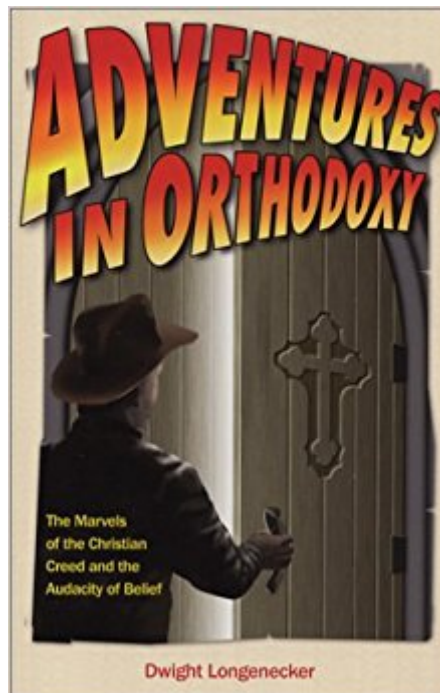




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Adventures In Orthodoxy: The Marvels Of The Christian Creed And The Audacity Of Belief



Synopsis

Watch out, Chesterton and C.S. Lewis! Here's a writer as clear . . . and as exciting! Christians often find the Creed as tedious as a contract, and orthodoxy dull as dirt. In these lively pages 'written for Christians and non-Christians alike' Dwight Longenecker shows that, on the contrary, orthodoxy is exciting and the Creed the beginning of a grand, mysterious adventure! Longenecker demonstrates that, like an ornate cathedral rich with endless nuances of light and shade, the Creed teases with paradoxical possibilities; it bursts with magnificent meaning and unexpected, eternal insights. It sweeps away nihilism, challenges indifference, and uproots religion grown stale and pedestrian. In a word, says Longenecker, the Creed catapults believers to the brink of mystery and invites them to dwell there, in silent wonder and contemplation. Here you'll finally encounter the Creed as it really is: a striking affirmation that bears us not into theological dead ends, but unto a world that never ends; not into an obsolete medieval universe 'closed, dark, and dying'; but unto a bright and exciting world that moves in ever increasing spirals of glory, a world to which the only natural response is a grateful and hearty "Amen!"

Book Information

Paperback: 190 pages

Publisher: Sophia Institute Press; 1st edition (March 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1928832660

ISBN-13: 978-1928832669

Product Dimensions: 8.7 x 5.5 x 0.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #949,939 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #146 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Catholicism > Theology #340 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Worship & Devotion > Catechisms #15367 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects

Customer Reviews

"Longenecker seizes the thrill of truth with insights of pyrotechnic brilliance." -- Joseph Pearce, author, *Literary Converts*
"We may have another Chesterton coming along here!" -- Thomas Howard, author, *Splendor in the Ordinary*

Dwight Longenecker was brought up an Evangelical, studied at fundamentalist Bob Jones University, and later was ordained as an Anglican priest in England. After ten years in the Anglican ministry as a curate, a chaplain at Cambridge, and a country parson, in 1995 Dwight was received into full communion with the Catholic Church. He has published in numerous religious magazines and papers in the UK, Ireland, and the USA, writing on film and theology, apologetics, Biblical commentary and Catholic culture.

I have a good friend to thank for the fact that, buried on my to-read bookcase, beckoning to me with slimness and a slightly ridiculous title, I found a new favorite book. Dwight Longenecker's *Adventures in Orthodoxy* is wonderful. My friend told me it was a "joyful" read. I thought she was nuts to use that word in reference to a theological book. It turns out, though, that "joyful" is an understatement. Who would have thought the Apostles Creed, of all things, could be joyful? To be honest, I have never thought of the Apostles Creed beyond getting it said. I haven't sat down and picked it apart, and if I had, I surely couldn't have done it with the brevity, logic, and humor that Longenecker uses in this book. (Brevity AND humor? Yes, indeed. This book is less than 200 pages long!) "So all of us have sacred spaces," Longenecker writes in the introduction. "We all have beliefs, and we instinctively protect and defend those beliefs against every kind of revolutionary threat." He continues, "Now, what troubles me about these sacred spaces is that most often they're comfortable. They're furnished with recliner chairs, and the most famous recliner is called the La-Z-Boy. I'm suspicious of any belief system that makes the believer comfortable, because it's probably the construction of a lazy boy. Of course, a comfortable belief may be true, but if you think for a moment, isn't a belief that makes us uncomfortable more likely to be true? An uncomfortable belief is more likely to be true because we wish it weren't true. And if we wish something weren't true, it's less likely that we've made it up." What follows is a dissection of the Apostles Creed. Chapter by chapter, Longenecker takes each phrase of the Creed, the basis of Christianity, and picks it apart and finds its meaning and what truth it reveals. But don't be fooled into thinking it's DULL reading, because it's anything BUT dull. Whether it's his straight-in-your-face writing style or his charming self-deprecating humor or just the fact that I could relate with his examples and his approach. I remember learning the Creed, back in my younger days. It was not exciting; it was not interesting; it was not engaging. Thanks to Dwight Longenecker, my understanding of the Creed has deepened and I'm excited by this pillar of our faith. "All this theological fuss obscures the point of the Creed," he writes in the last chapter. "The Creed isn't the whole story. It was never meant to be. It is merely a precis or a summary. The Creed isn't the final word; in fact, it's the first word. It's the

first step on the journey, not the destination. The journey is conducted in a whole range of ways, of which theological reflection is only one part. Indeed, for most people, theological reflection scarcely comes into it. Instead, about the Creed they say, "Let it be," and the Creed becomes a kind of foundation on which the rest of their religious life is built. When integrated into a regular religious life, the Creed becomes a kind of support system."Without Adventures in Orthodoxy, I would have just kept plowing along, reciting the Creed when needed and not appreciating it except in bits and pieces. Thanks to this book, I have a deeper appreciation for this, and I feel like the support system of my faith has been strengthened.

The creeds of the Church can seem to the outsider (and even to many within the Church) to be dry, dusty relics of a bygone era. Carefully formulated statements of belief in precise Greek or Latin are as antiquated in the minds of the average citizen in our post-modern landscape as a suit of armor. After all, isn't this stuff just so pre-Vatican II? In *Adventures in Orthodoxy*, Dwight Longenecker demonstrates just how wrong this assumption of our times can be. Far from orthodoxy being dull, it is the beliefs of those who reject it that cling to unimaginative opinions and miss what Chesterton referred to as "the thrill of orthodoxy." It is the heterodox who cannot fathom anything beyond their own dull material existence and reject the possibility of things unseen. It is the heterodox whose minds are closed to the possibility of God's miraculous intervention in this world. It is the heterodox who cannot accept that the creator of the universe would become one of them. It is the heterodox who cannot understand a love so great that the Alpha and the Omega of existence would shed His precious blood to redeem our fallen race. Amazingly, Longenecker does not make the case through exercises in logic but in appeals to the soul. As he examines each line of the Apostles' Creed, it is the conscience and not the syllogism that is his tool. In countering the representative of the cynical man of our times (the man from Missouri) with the man of faith, he shows it is the former and not the latter who clings to a dry, dusty relic. In reducing the world to the purposeless motion of that which can be experienced, the man from Missouri has surrendered any frame of reference from which to judge that which is good, beautiful, and holy. In its place he has placed ever-changing subjective standards that can do little more than express the passing fads that momentarily catch the fancy of the people without feeding their hunger for the eternal. As Longenecker points out numerous times, the beliefs of the Christian faith in its fullness make no sense to those who have been raised on a diet of purposelessness and despair. Yet once one has put aside their initial reservations and accepted its surface contradictions, nothing will ever make sense again without it. This might not be the right book for those who are seeking a detailed theological exposition of the fine points of the

creeds. But for those Christians who mouth the words without thinking each week or wonder what's the big deal, Adventures in Orthodoxy might just be the medicine they need.

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