

A Brief Summary of the Faith

**With Questions and Answers Concerning
Theology, by Blessed Anastasius, Patriarch
of Antioch the Great, and Cyril of Alexandria**

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St. Cyril of Alexandria was the bishop of that city during the height of its influence in the Christian world. He is considered to be a Church Father and Doctor of the Faith. Cyril was bishop in the first half of the fifth century, a time when Nestorius challenged the concept of the Theotokos. Cyril was a staunch defender of the orthodox faith and the title of Theotokos.

St. Anastasius of Antioch was the bishop of that city in the sixth century. He too was a staunch defender of the orthodox faith during the time he reigned, incurring the wrath of the Emperor.

This brief summary of the faith is as fresh today as it was when it was written. As you read this summary, notice the word "Person" is not used to define the Holy Trinity. The Greek term hypostasis, which is defined in the Summary is used.

Question: What is your Faith?

Answer: I am a Christian.

Question: What is a Christian?

Answer: He who lives in God, and abides in piety and good will. (1)

Question: Concerning theology, how many natures do you confess?

Answer: I confess one nature.

Question: Of what kind?

Answer: Of God.

Question: What is God?

Answer: God is a blameless being, and the cause of everything; that is, He is all-powerful, almighty, and the underlying essence of every cause and nature.

Question: How can the Father be distinguished from the Son?

Answer: By their hypostases, inasmuch as the Father is unbegotten.

Question: How can the Son be distinguished from the Father?

Answer: By Their hypostases, inasmuch as the Son is begotten.

Question: How can the Holy Spirit be distinguished from the Father and the Son?

Answer: By Their hypostases, inasmuch as It proceeds. (2)

Question: How do you believe?

Answer: I believe in one God, the Father; and in the only-begotten of Him, God the Son; and in one Holy Spirit, God, that proceeds from the Father.

Question: What is a being?

Answer: A being is something self-existent, which does not rely on another for its composition.

Question: How many hypostases do you confess in God?

Answer: I confess three hypostases: Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit.

Question: What is a hypostasis?

Answer: It is a person, one in essence, an image of the nature of the Father: the persons of God of which we speak are bodiless and without form.

Question: What is particular to each of the three hypostases, and what do they have in common?

Answer: Particular to the Father is unbegottenness; to the Son, begottenness; to the

Holy Spirit, procession. Common to all of them are divinity and the kingdom.

Concerning Christ

Question: When you speak of the incarnation of Christ, how many natures do you confess?

Answer: I confess two natures: one divine, one human.

Question: What is the divine will? (3)

Answer: The divine will was to cleanse the lepers, for Christ wished to demonstrate the divine will and action, saying to the leper, "I will; be thou clean" [Matthew 8:3].

Question: What is the divine action?

Answer: The divine action is for "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" [1 Timothy 2:4].

Question: What is the human will?

Answer: The human will is to ask for drink on the Cross.

Question: What is the human action?

Answer: The human action was to travel, to struggle, and the like. (4)

Question: When you speak of the incarnation, how' many hypostases do you confess?

Answer: I confess one hypostasis, for He is the only Son of God, and the Son of a virgin.

Question: In what manner is the Son a partaker of the Father and Holy Spirit?

Answer: He is a partaker through the divine nature, for He is wholly God.

Question: In what manner is He a partaker of man?

Answer: Through the nature of His becoming man, for He is wholly man.

Question: Why was the Son made incarnate, and not the Father, or the Holy Spirit?

Answer: So as to preserve the nature of His hypostasis; to be a Son to Him in heaven, and a Son on earth. Amen.

Notes:

- (1) Another definition of a Christian is one someone who believes in one, triune God. This would of course exclude such groups as the Unitarians, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses to name a few.
- (2) The answers to the last few questions are an example of the "Monarchy of the Father". That is, the Father is the source of the Godhead, and the reason why there could be a triune God. Eastern Christians have opposed the use of the phrase "...and the Son" in the Creed since it seemingly, obscures the source of the Godhead. This controversy is truly more political than theological.
- (3) One heresy taught that Jesus had only one will. If so, he would be less than a full human. The contrast that follows is stark. Yes, Jesus obviously was a full man. He asked for water on the cross.
- (4) In short, Christ was both fully divine and fully human. As such, the Virgin could indeed be God Bearer, or Theotokos.
- (5) One question often heard is what is the difference between Begotten and

Proceeding? This answer offers some clarity. It is in the hypostasis of the Son to be begotten and to be Born. He truly was a Son on this earth.

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