

Round Table Discussion
Session 2: A Primer on Confessional Theology
Based on Dorothy Sayers, *Creed or Chaos*

Read the following and Discuss using the concluding Questions:

The Dogma IS the drama! These are words spoken by Dorothy Sayers concerning the play she scripted entitled “The Zeal of Thy House.” The action of the play involved a dramatic presentation of a few fundamental Christian “dogmas.” She tells of an incident involving its production when the producer sought to edit out certain “tedious complexities of dogma” to which Sayers insisted “if my play was dramatic it was not in spite of the dogma but because of it!”

With a zeal to reach today’s emergent, shall we say “post-modern,” generation there is an increasing trend to downplay the use of creeds and confessions, especially in worship, in order to accommodate to a general distrust of such things-- as if creeds and confessions are expressions of institutional power-plays or intolerance of others. For instance, however astute are the observations and questions raised by Brian McClaren, his “program” of emergent spirituality is perhaps best exposed in the title, *A Generous Orthodoxy, Why I am a Missional and Evangelical and Post/protestant and Liberal/Conservative and mystical/poetic and biblical and charismatic/contemplative and fundamentalist/Calvinist and Anabaptist/Anglican and Methodist and catholic and green and incarnation and depressed yet hopeful and emergent and unfinished...* As the subtitle suggests, one is often left with the impression once penned by G.K. Chesterton, that if a person believes in everything, he tends not to believe in nothing, but in everything! Indeed, and notwithstanding a biblical case for “creedalism” in its own right,” Dorothy Sayers also raises the issue of whether or not such trends are in effect loosing the “drama” in life and in worship. Here again, Sayers reminds us of a conversation that Jesus once had with a woman at the well. In her words:

Christ in his divine innocence said to the women of Samaria, “you worship what you do not know”—being apparently under the impression that it might be desirable, on the whole, to know what one was worshipping. He thus showed himself sadly out of touch with the 20th century mind, for the cry today is “away with tedious complexities of dogma—let us have the simple spirit of worship, just worship, no matter of what! The only drawback to this demand for a generalized and undirected worship is the practical difficulty of arousing any sort of enthusiasm for the worship of nothing in particular.

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Again, in the words of Dorothy Sayers,

Let us in Heaven's name drag out the Divine drama from under the dreadful accumulation of slipshod thinking and trashy sentiment heaped upon it, and set it on an open stage to startle the world into some sort of vigorous reaction. IF the pious are the first to be shocked, so much the worse for the pious—others will enter the Kingdom of Heaven before them. IF all men are offended because of Christ, let them be offended; but where is the sense of their being offended at something that is not Christ and is nothing like Him. WE do Him singularly little honor by watering down his personality till it could not offend a fly. Surely it is not the business of the church to adapt Christ to men, but to adapt men to Christ.

Discussion Questions:

What is the “drama” that Sayer’s is concerned about losing?

Can a person or church have a “confession”, albeit stated or implied, but then not be “confessional” in the sense that Sayer’s is wanting?

Why do you think “beliefs” scare people?

What if we lose the “one faith” as the basis of our Christianity unity. What are the alternative kinds of unity, and are they “Christian?”