The Catechism of the New Apostolic Church

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Introduction

Professions of the New Testament

The Christian faith is intended to be shared with others. Already in early times, Christians were instructed to profess their faith and testify of it to others: "Always be ready to give a defence to everyone" (1 Peter 3: 15).

The New Testament contains statements and formulations in which the fundamental elements of the Christian faith, namely the profession of Jesus as the resurrected Lord, come to expression. Examples of this are:

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve" (1 Corinthians 15: 3-5).

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2: 5-11).

These formulations served to give authoritative expression to the faith and impart the fundamentals of Christian faith to those who wanted to be baptised and become Christians. Beyond that, belief in Jesus Christ, which was already menaced by heresies in New Testament times, was to be spread in unadulterated fashion.

Concerning the term

The term "Catechism" has its origin in the Greek language (from Greek *kata* = "downward", "toward", and *echein* = "ring out", "resound"), and was originally used in reference to the instruction of those who were being prepared for baptism with water. The content of the Christian faith and how it is to affect one's lifestyle is set forth in the Catechism.

The foundation for the doctrine of the Church is Holy Scripture. The core statements of its message, as contained in both the Old and New Testaments, are presented in the Catechism.

The work presented here will begin by exploring Holy Scripture, the Ecumenical Councils of the fourth to seventh centuries, as well as the early church creeds and the most important statements of the Christian faith.

Beyond that it will describe the insights that have developed since the renewed occupation of the Apostle ministry in the early nineteenth century, which are formulated in the New Apostolic Creed.

Structure and content

The Catechism of the New Apostolic Church starts off with some remarks on the self-revelation of God and Holy Scripture (Chapter 1). This is followed by an explanation of the New Apostolic Creed (Chapter 2) and an explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity of God (Chapter 3). Some central positions of Christian faith, which are valid across

denominational borders, come to expression in the chapter on the Trinity. Presented here is the belief in God, the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, the belief in God, the Son, who became human in Jesus Christ, who died and resurrected from the dead, as well as the belief in God, the Holy Spirit, through whom sanctification and the new creation are effectuated.

This is followed in Chapter 4 by statements on the condition of mankind before God, which also remark on the fall into sin and the necessity of redemption. In this context there is also commentary on the functions of the Mosaic Law and its relationship to the gospel. The remarks on the Ten Commandments (Chapter 5) make it clear that Christian faith is not a purely internal matter, but that it also has practical implications for conduct in life.

Believing sinners who have been made righteous by God practise their faith in the church, that is in the fellowship of the baptised, who believe in Jesus Christ and profess Him as their Lord. Chapter 6 describes the church of Jesus Christ and its various forms, and explains how the New Apostolic Church perceives itself within the one church of Jesus Christ. Ministry–the significance of which is presented in Chapter 7–is also part of the church of Christ. Here the Apostle ministry is understood as the source of all other ministries. This brings a pivotal element of the New Apostolic faith to expression: church and Apostle ministry belong together.

Chapter 8 contains remarks on the sacraments, namely Holy Baptism with water, Holy Communion, and Holy Sealing, that is the baptism of the Spirit. Here it becomes clear that the sacraments are essential elements of God's salvific care. They are fundamental to the New Apostolic faith.

The chapters on "Life after death" (Chapter 9) and "The doctrine of future things" (Chapter 10) deal with individual and universal eschatology, respectively. Every human being is confronted with questions as to what transpires after death, what form of relationship exists between the departed and God, and whether there are still opportunities for attaining salvation after death. Also presented here is the New Apostolic Christian goal of faith. Here we are given a glance into the future in accordance with God's plan of salvation.

These statements concerning the New Apostolic doctrine are supplemented by others that relate to the history of Christianity and the New Apostolic Church (Chapter 11) as well as to divine service (Chapter 12), and general practice in life (Chapter 13).

Functions

The Catechism of the New Apostolic Church takes into account earlier portrayals of the New Apostolic faith, but goes beyond previous publications of our Church in terms of both language and development of the contents of faith. Our bond with the fundamentals of faith of all Christians becomes evident in our acknowledgement of the early church creeds. The path to salvation in Christ is described in accordance with the stipulations of current understanding. This occurs in the knowledge that God, in His omnipotence, can also grant salvation to human beings in other ways than the revealed and recognisable path.

It can be considered an important function of the Catechism to serve as a basis for Church instruction and ministers' meetings. Beyond that it is intended to bring greater uniformity to doctrinal statements while taking other languages and cultures into account.

In this manner, the content will also serve to deepen the knowledge and strengthen the faith of New Apostolic Christians.

The New Apostolic doctrine is also to become clear in its relationship to the doctrines of other Christian churches. Thus the Catechism presents both sides, namely that which binds us together and that which distinguishes us. The presentation of these differences is not intended to exclude others or close ourselves off to them, but can rather be a starting point for fruitful dialogue with other Christians.

The Catechism is a call to all New Apostolic Christians to occupy themselves intensively with the content of their faith. Beyond that it is also an invitation to all other interested parties to become acquainted with the New Apostolic doctrine of faith.