

Chalkboard

By

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For weeks I have been writing about core beliefs and the school board's desire to revisit the mission statement of the district. Repeatedly, I have alluded to the idea that beliefs of a body shape the direction in which it moves. For months, the school board has been working to blend individual core beliefs into a set of unified statements that all members of the district could accept as representing answers to the question, "When it comes to the education of the students of Gentry, I (we) believe...."

This week and next I will take a side path and write to you of some core beliefs I hold as an individual. Understand from the beginning, my core beliefs are no more important than any other person living in the district. On the flip side of the coin, my position in life might give them a larger audience. Let me then espouse some core belief of mine that is central to my being.

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord: Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic (universal) church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen."

"There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is

fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.”

The first quote is commonly called the Apostles’ Creed. The second, longer quoted section is an excerpt from the Southern Baptist “Faith and Message”. Ignoring being redundant, I believe what is written in each.

I learned the Apostles Creed as a boy growing up in a tiny, rural Presbyterian church which had my great-grandfather listed as one of the founders in 1858. My mother remains as an Elder there now. I offer the second excerpt from the “Faith and Message” because I now belong to a Southern Baptist Church and have for the last twenty some-odd years. Somewhere in between being a Presbyterian and a Southern Baptist, I married a Freewill Baptist and was told by my father, a converted Presbyterian and son of a Missionary Baptist preacher, that as far as deciding which church to attend, it was more important to go together as a family than whose name was above the door. He said he figured it was the same God being worshipped.

Why is my church background important to a newspaper column purportedly committed to public school happenings and the education of your child? Some long time ago in one of these weekly articles I wrote to you that it is always important to know what the “person in charge” believes and does not believe because a person’s actions are often shaped by his or her beliefs.

I note that “being in charge” is not a statement of pride. It merely reflects what I was hired to be at Gentry Public Schools fifteen years ago. Nor does that statement go any further than day-to-day operations of the district. The long term “being in charge” of the big picture is reserved to the Gentry School Board by state law.

Part of “being in charge” entails making recommendations to the school board on various course of action they may wish to pursue or not pursue. That is also given by law. At least on paper that makes sense. While all are very well educated, none of Gentry’s board members are educators for their life’s work. My training is education and I am the “hired help”. Restated, I am paid to make careful considerations that are in the best interest of the overall operation of the district and its mission.

Next week I will tie several open-ended articles, like this one, together.