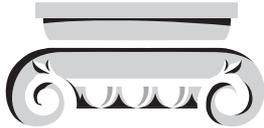
A young child with dark hair, wearing a light-colored patterned tank top and shorts, is walking through a field of tall, dry grass. The child is captured in a side profile, moving from left to right. The background is a dense field of grass, with some areas appearing more green and others more yellowish-brown, suggesting a natural, outdoor setting. The overall tone is warm and slightly desaturated.

Ancient Faith

FOR THE
MODERN
WORLD

A Brief Introduction
to the Apostles' Creed • BRIAN SCHMISEK

Ancient Faith for the Modern World



A BRIEF GUIDE TO
THE APOSTLES' CREED

Brian Schmisek



Contents

How to Use This Book / 5

Introduction / 7

Article One / 19

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.*

Article Two / 27

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

Article Three / 35

*He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.*

Article Four / 47

*He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.*

Article Five / 61

*He descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again.*

Article Six / 75

*He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

Article Seven / 81

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

Article Eight / 89

I believe in the Holy Spirit...

Article Nine / 105

The holy catholic Church, the communion of saints...

Article Ten / 115

The forgiveness of sins...

Article Eleven / 125

The resurrection of the body...

Article Twelve / 137

...and life everlasting. Amen.

Conclusion / 147

Appendix A / 149

Timeline

Appendix B / 151

Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed

Notes / 155

Acknowledgments / 165

How to Use This Book

This book is written primarily for Catholic school teachers, parish catechetical leaders, catechists, RCIA teams, deacons, college students, and inquiring lay persons who desire a basic knowledge of faith as articulated in the Apostles' Creed. It is my hope that this book will explain the meaning of the twelve articles of faith, their roots in apostolic faith, and their applicability and meaning for today.

The introduction covers background issues pertaining to the Apostles' Creed. For example, it was not actually written by the apostles but is based on the "Old Roman Creed." The Apostles' Creed was influential in Reformation debates and formed the basis of a major section of the Roman Catechism following the Council of Trent. The Apostles' Creed even forms the basis of a section the most recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC).

Following the introduction are twelve chapters, one for each article of the Creed. Each chapter begins with the article itself, how its roots are present in Sacred Scripture (in some cases both the Old Testament and the New Testament), what the article meant for early Christians (that is, what theological truth it was conveying), how the article may have been understood later, and how the article can be understood today, looking variously at the new catechism, the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, and the work of some contemporary theologians. Each chapter concludes with "The Bottom Line," summarizing the theological import of the article. Discussion questions are also provided for those who

study this material in a group setting, but the questions may also be fruitful for individual reflection. The questions are designed not only as a review of the material but also as an application of its relevance and meaning for today. Though not every chapter includes each element, this is the basic structure of the book. The final chapter of the book is a conclusion.

In a book on this subject matter, recourse to the sources is sometimes required. When reference is made to Hebrew, Greek, and Latin terms, they are transliterated. The reader will notice that brackets are sometimes used in the context of quotes. The brackets are used to indicate one of two things: a) the words in brackets are not in the original quote, or b) the words in brackets are there in the language being translated. The symbol § designates an article or section in a referenced source. Further discussion of certain material or more extensive documentation of an argument can be found in the notes. Overall, however, the book is designed to be read profitably without recourse to the notes for those who might find that burdensome.

Passages from the Qur'an are taken from the A. J. Arberry translation (*The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*. Touchstone, 1996). All non-scriptural translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Introduction

The Apostles' Creed, with its twelve articles of faith, is familiar to many Catholics who pray the Rosary. Catholics also hear and/or recite the Apostles' Creed at children's liturgies. The creed we usually say at a regular Sunday liturgy is usually referred to as the Nicene Creed. These two creeds, the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, hold a special place in the life of the church (CCC §193). Yet neither encompasses the entirety of the Catholic faith.

It is commonly assumed that the Apostles' Creed is so named because it comes from the Twelve Apostles. Legend has it that each apostle contributed one article.¹ However, we know today that the Apostles' Creed has a much more complex history. Instead of indicating that the creed comes directly from the twelve apostles, the term *apostles' creed* is used to mean that the creed reflects what the apostles believed and taught.

The term *creed* comes from the Latin *credo* which means "I believe." (The Greek term is *symbolon*, from which we get our English word, *symbol*, which the Catechism uses with some frequency.) A creed is, then, a statement of faith. In some ways we can say Christians have had creeds from the earliest days of the church. Indeed, St. Paul seems to appeal to a creed when he says, "Jesus is Lord" (Romans 10:9). Philip baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch after he proclaims, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). We know that these early creeds grew in content so that it was no longer enough to claim "Jesus is Lord." Paul says

in his letter to the Corinthians, “yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things are and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are and through whom we exist” (1 Corinthians 8:6). There also is the famous example of 1 Timothy 2:3-6 which seems to draw on a credal statement to explicate the “knowledge of the truth”:

This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as ransom for all. This was the testimony at the proper time.

Early versions of creeds also grew to express other key aspects of faith in Jesus. For example, Ignatius of Antioch, who composed seven letters on his way to martyrdom in Rome (died circa 117) wrote:

Stop your ears, therefore, when any one speaks to you at variance with Jesus Christ, who was descended from David, and was also of Mary; who was truly born, and did eat and drink. He was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate. He was truly crucified, and (truly) died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth. He was also truly raised from the dead, his Father quickening him, even as after the same manner his Father will so raise up us who believe in him by Christ Jesus, apart from whom we do not possess the true life.²

Furthermore, there was a desire not only to express faith in Jesus and the key aspects of his life and death, but there was also a need to profess a belief in God the Father and in the Spirit. For example, at the

close of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus gives his disciples a command:

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

This command to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit may have given rise to the practice of professing faith in the context of baptism. For, ultimately, a creed was professed by catechumens immediately prior to baptism. Sometimes the catechumen was questioned (as we do today at times in the liturgy) and in so doing made a profession of faith in God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. With each name, the catechumen was plunged into the waters of baptism so that profession in the triune God was accompanied by a triune plunge! In fact, Hippolytus, writing about A.D. 215, tells us how baptisms were being done, and thus gives us an early form of the creed.

He who is to be baptized...is handed over by a deacon to the presbyter who stands near the water. A presbyter holds his right hand and makes him turn his face toward the east, near the water. Before going down into the water, his face toward the east and standing near the water, he says this after having received the oil of exorcism: “I believe, and submit myself to you and to all your service, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Thus he descends into the waters; the presbyter places his hand on his head and questions him, saying, “Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?”

He who is baptized replies, “I believe.” Then he immerses him in the water once, his hand on his head.

He questions him a second time, saying, “Do you believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God, whom the virgin Mary bore by the Holy Spirit, who came for the salvation of the human race, who was crucified in the time of Pontius Pilate, who died and was raised from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?”

He replies, “I believe.” Then he immerses him in the water a second time.

He questions him a third time, saying, “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete flowing from the Father and the Son?”

When he replies, “I believe,” he immerses him a third time in the water. And he says each time, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, equal Trinity.”³

As we can imagine, there were no sacramentaries in the early church. As a friend of mine likes to say, “Jesus did not hand out three-ring binders at the last supper.” Different locales practiced the faith in a variety of ways, especially in the first centuries of the church. We should not be too surprised to find that while many ancient creeds were similar, it is not possible to say that all creeds were the same. Rather than one distinct formula memorized by all churches everywhere throughout the Ancient Christian Mediterranean, there were a variety of creedal statements, and most likely a variety of creeds even in the same city, perhaps even in various liturgical settings. Moreover, the creed itself, along with the Lord’s Prayer, sacraments, and other cultic rituals were not to be written down on paper but on the heart.

It seems that a basic three-article formula (not unlike Matthew 28:19-20) was expanded in different ways, at different times, by a variety of communities, to express the faith of the believing community. These creedal statements were seen as legitimate expressions of faith, even though they may have differed on certain details (cf. CCC §192-193).

A variety of ancient authors give witness to the creeds that were spoken: Rufinus, Jerome, Tertullian, Justin, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and others. These authorities might mention a particular creed and reference its locale. For example, we hear that there was a creed in Aquileia (an ancient city in Italy near modern day Venice) and a creed in Rome. The latter is known today as the “Old Roman Creed,” of which the Apostles’ Creed seems to have been a variant.

Old Roman Creed

The Old Roman Creed is a name used by scholars to refer to a creed, attested in many sources, that was used in Rome. Some authorities give us a Latin version. Others give us a Greek version. Scholars deduce that the Greek version is more primitive, thus pointing to its being the original language of the Old Roman Creed. Others suggest the Greek version was used for Greek-speaking catechumens and the Latin version was used for the Latin-speaking catechumens. Though we might suppose that a Roman audience would speak Latin, we also recall that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans in Greek, and the Gospel of Mark, often associated with the church at Rome, was written in Greek. For that matter, the entire New Testament was written in Greek. Since the Roman church still spoke Greek in the second century, that seems a likely date for the origin of the Old Roman Creed.

There are many witnesses to a creed in Rome. For example, the *Apostolic Traditions*, cited above, is associated with the Roman church. Tertullian (born circa A.D. 160) also tells us about a creed at Rome.

He was born a pagan in Carthage, became a Christian by 197, and was ordained a priest about 200. Sometime after 206, he seems to have become a Montanist (follower of Montanus, a mid-second-century heretic). By 213 Tertullian had completely separated from the church. He even separated from the Montanists and formed his own sect, which became known as the Tertullianists. Augustine himself later reconciled the Tertullianists with the church.

Writing as a Christian, Tertullian reflects the teaching of the church at Rome: “[The church at Rome] acknowledges one God and Lord, the creator of the universe, and Christ Jesus (born) of the virgin Mary, son of God the creator, and the resurrection of the flesh. The law and the prophets unites with the Gospels and the apostolic writings...” (*De praescriptione*, 36). While a Montanist, Tertullian wrote another work in which he makes attestation to a creed:

The rule of faith is altogether one, alone unchangeable and ir-reformable: namely, of believing in one God almighty, creator of the world, and his son Jesus Christ, born of the virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised on the third day from the dead, received into heaven, now seated at the right hand of the Father, to come again to judge the living, and the dead also, through the resurrection of the flesh (*De virginibus velandis*, 1.3).

Other theologians bearing witness to the Old Roman Creed include Rufinus, a contemporary of Jerome, who compares it with his own creed of Aquileia. The Old Roman Creed is also attested in Greek by Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra in Cappadocia, in an Apologia to Pope Julius I dated to 340 and preserved in Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 72.3.1. Rufinus compares the creed of his baptism at Aquileia with the creed professed at Rome. He admits that the Aquileian creed has some additions, while maintain-

ing that the creed has apostolic origin.

So, the Old Roman Creed is attested but must be reconstructed based on scholarship, with the knowledge that some scholars may propose other, more convincing reconstructions. For example, we may compare the creed at Rome given to us by Rufinus (in Latin) with the creed at Rome given to us by Marcellus (in Greek). Beyond even the issue of language (one in Greek, the other in Latin), there are slight differences between the two creeds. Scholars then reconstruct to the best of their ability what might have been the Old Roman Creed.

Reproduced here is the creed of Rome as attested by Rufinus and reconstructed by J.N.D. Kelly. Note the differences between this creed and the Apostles' Creed we recite today.

I believe in God the Father almighty
And in Christ Jesus, his only Son, our Lord,
Who was born from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried,
on the third day he rose again from the dead,
he ascended to heaven,
he sits at the Father's right hand,
Whence he will come to judge the living and the dead;
And in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Church,
the remission of sins,
the resurrection of the flesh.⁴

Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed⁵ is first referred to as such in a letter from Ambrose in 389. After calling it the "Apostles' Creed," Ambrose says that "the spotless Roman church has always guarded and saved [it]" (Letter 42.5). As cited above, Rufinus was convinced of the apostolic origin of the creed and even mentioned how at the original Pentecost each apostle made a contribution to it before setting out to preach. Augustine commented on the creed in Sermon 398, also known as *On the Creed to the Catechumens*. Later in *De Symbolo*, the spurious work of a pseudo-Augustine, the writer claimed that each apostle contributed one article:

How each apostle composed the creed.... On the tenth day after the ascension, when the disciples had gathered in fear of the Jews, the Lord sent the Spirit as he promised. It came as a glittering sword aflame. And filled with the knowledge of all languages they composed the creed.

Peter said, "I believe in God, the Father almighty."

Andrew said, "and in Jesus Christ his Son."

James said, "Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit...born of the Virgin Mary."

John said, "suffered under Pontius Pilate....was crucified, died, and was buried, according to the flesh."

Thomas said, "He descended into hell...on the third day he rose from the dead."

James said, "He ascended into heaven...he is seated at the right hand of God, the Father almighty."

Philip said, "from there he will come to judge the living and the dead."

Bartholomew said, “I believe in the Holy Spirit.”

Matthew said, “The Holy Catholic Church...the communion of saints.”

Simon said, “the remission of sins.”

Thaddaeus said, “the resurrection of the flesh.”

Matthias said, “Life eternal” (Sermon 240, *De Symbolo* IV).

It is interesting that the list of the twelve used for the creed comes from the Gospel of Matthew (“the church’s Gospel”) with the name of Matthias in place of Judas, as told in Acts 1:26. Yet the list of the twelve from Acts names Jude of James as one of the twelve instead of Thaddaeus (see “Lists of the Twelve” in the appendices). The New Testament itself does not agree on the list of the twelve apostles. We are forced to follow either the Marcan/Matthean tradition or the Lucan tradition. The Gospel of John, with its fierce and overriding emphasis on Jesus, does not even bother to give us the list of the twelve.

Thus, the stage was set for the promulgation of the finalized version of the Apostles’ Creed as used throughout the medieval period in the West. This “apostolic” catechetical instruction was a convenient tool for teaching the faith. The credibility of the story went unquestioned up until the fifteenth century, when an attempt at reconciliation with the Eastern Church at the Council of Florence brought the issue to the fore. The representatives of the Eastern Church doubted the authenticity and authority of the creed, as it was not in use within their church. Moreover, they argued, such a creed had its origin neither in Sacred Scripture nor in the writings of the early church fathers. Since the advent of the renaissance, most serious scholars have abandoned the idea that the creed with its twelve articles originated with the apostles. Instead, they recognize that various creeds grew along with the early church.

Martin Luther arrived on the scene in the early sixteenth century. His contribution to creedal studies was to change a single but significant word of the Apostles' Creed, that of *Catholic* to *Christian*.⁶ The Roman Catholic Church responded, in a way, by making their version of the Apostles' Creed one of the bedrocks of the Roman Catechism that was produced in the wake of the Council of Trent. The Roman Catechism expressed the faith of the church around the four pillars of Creed, Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, and Sacraments. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, published in the waning years of the twentieth century, followed the Roman Catechism's four pillars.

Both the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed can be found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The texts of the two creeds are reproduced between articles 184 and 185, with creeds in general being discussed from articles 185 to 197. (See pages 151-153.)

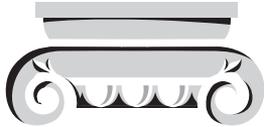
This is the Apostles' Creed as Catholics recite it today:

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

In the following pages we will explore each of the articles of this creed, showing how in some cases they reflect beliefs found in the Old Testament but in many other cases they express a unique Christian perspective, especially when it comes to the person of Jesus.

Article One



I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

The English phrase *I believe* is a translation of the Latin word *credo*. Each individual Christian professes a personal faith in common with the community of believers, so that the faith “I believe” is also the faith “we believe.” This was how English-speaking Catholics throughout the world professed their faith in the liturgy for several decades following Vatican II. With the liturgical changes introduced during the pontificate of Benedict XVI, however, the English language translation of the creed was changed from “we believe” to “I believe,” to more accurately reflect the Latin.

Moving on to the object of that belief, it is in some ways surprising that the Apostles’ Creed, with its twelve articles of faith, has only one article addressing “God the Father.” This is because the basic belief in God the Father is not something that has been a matter of debate or argument for Christians. It needs little clarification, and in some ways the belief in God the Father is shared with Jews, unlike the profession of faith in Jesus Christ, his Son, which is reflected in six articles or about half of the creed. Despite this seeming clarity about belief in God the Father, however, it bears mentioning the various ways in which the image of God has grown and transformed throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Old Testament

The appellations of God expressed in this article stem from the Old Testament where God is called “Father” (Psalms 68:5; 89:26; Isaiah 9:6), “almighty” (Genesis 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exodus 6:3; Psalms 68:14; 91:1; Ezekiel 10:5; Joel 1:15; Wisdom 7:25; Sirach 42:17; 50:14); and “creator of heaven and earth” (Genesis 1:1; 2:4; Isaiah 40:28; Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 33:6-9).

The term *Father* in the Old Testament was applied to God in the sense that God was the father of Israel. For example, anthropomorphic

images of God teaching Ephraim to walk convey the sense of God as parent (Hosea 11:3). In Deuteronomy 1:31, God is portrayed as carrying the Israelites through the desert as a man carries his child. The sense of God as parent is also evident in the metaphor of God hovering over his brood as an eagle would (Deuteronomy 32:10-12). God was also father to the king (2 Samuel 7:14).

Almighty is a title for God associated with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph (for example, Genesis 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exodus 6:3). The Hebrew term underlying *God Almighty* is *El-Shaddai*. There were many various titles for God, such as God of the Mountain (*El-Har*); God Most High (*El-Elyon*, Genesis 14:18); God of Vision (*El-Roi*, Genesis 16:13); God Everlasting (*El-Olam*, Genesis 21:33); God of Bethel (or *El-Bethel*, or “God of the house of god,” Genesis 31:13; 35:1,3,7); God the God of Israel (*El-Elohe-Israel*, Genesis 33:20); God the God of your fathers (*El-Elohe-Abikah*, Genesis 46:3); Shield (*Magen*, Genesis 15:1), and many others. Yet in the midst of all these names for God, the term *El-Shaddai*, or *God Almighty*, stands out because of its association with the patriarchs. It is an ancient title for God. In the story of God’s self-revelation to Moses, God says, “I am the LORD [*YHWH*]. As God the Almighty [*El-Shaddai*] I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but by my name, LORD, [*YHWH*] I did not make myself known to them.” (Exodus 6:2-3).

In the Exodus passage, we see that *El-Shaddai* and *YHWH* are one and the same. They are not two gods. The same God whom the patriarchs worshipped as *El-Shaddai* now calls Moses. But now, God reveals his name as *YHWH*. This name is also known as the “tetragrammaton” or “four-letters.” This name was holy and not to be pronounced. In Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament, the four letters were often rendered as *kyrios*, or *Lord*, if they were rendered at all. In the *New American Bible*, this highly respected name for God is rendered by the

all capitals, LORD. So, any time we see *LORD* in the *New American Bible* we recognize that the underlying Hebrew is *YHWH*. The word is written *YHWH* because biblical Hebrew script uses only consonants. One might vocalize the tetragrammaton as “Yahweh,” or “Jehovah.”

To be precise, the term *YHWH* does not mean *Lord* but was rendered as such to avoid saying *Yahweh*. When a Jew came across this name in the sacred text, he would not pronounce it. Instead he would say *adonai*, a Hebrew word which means “Lord.” For example, in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) the term *YHWH* is often rendered as *kyrios*, or *Lord*. The Greek term *kyrios* also translates the Hebrew term *adôn* (*Septuagint*, Psalm 113:7) and the Aramaic word *mare* (Theodotion’s version of Daniel 2:47; 4:16,21; 5:23). Each are used in the Old Testament as a way to refer to God.⁷

The root meaning of *shaddai* is disputed. Scholars differ on its etymology. Those who translated the term into Greek or Hebrew often used *pantokrator* and/or *omnipotens*, thus indicating that the term meant for them “powerful one, strong one, or almighty.” That same Greek term *pantokrator* was also used of God in the New Testament. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 6:18 Paul calls God *pantokrator* immediately after referring to God as *father* (Paul is freely quoting 2 Samuel 7:14). *Pantokrator* is also a frequent term in the book of Revelation. When St. Jerome translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Latin, he often used the term *Deus omnipotens*, or *God All-powerful/Almighty* for *El-Shaddai*. These Greek and Latin terms are a clue that in the creed the underlying term for *pantokrator* or *omnipotens* is ultimately the Hebrew term *shaddai*. The God of the Old Testament, the God of the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the same as the God of the Christians.

Another Old Testament appellation of God repeated in the Apostles’ Creed is “creator of heaven and earth.” This is significant in that many myths of the ancient Near East posited that the earth had been

made of the dead bodies of gods, or that the sun, moon, and stars were themselves gods. Genesis 1 relates that God created the earth, the seas, the heavens, and all they contain. The sun is not a god, but is a “big light” placed in the sky by God to govern the day. The moon is not a god, but is a “little light” placed in the sky by God to govern the night. The sky itself is a firmament established by God by the voice of divine command. Creation was not difficult work for God; it was not labor intensive. Moreover, creation itself is not God. God is distinct from creation.

God is also a *good* creator. Seven times the narrator of the first creation story tells the reader that God saw that it was good. After the sixth day, creation is declared “very good.” This is an important lesson for us in the modern world. The created world is good, and it is a source of goodness. Creation itself may be seen as God’s first revelation. We human beings learn something of the creator by studying creation. Rather than a source of evil and temptation, creation is something good, even very good. More than that, creation is ultimately a free gift. These ideas found in the opening of the Bible may be read throughout the sacred canon and into the New Testament (Romans 1:25; 1 Peter 4:19). It comes as no surprise then to read this basic affirmation of faith in the first article of the Apostles’ Creed.

New Testament

Ultimately, the earliest followers of Jesus (who were Jews) knew that they were worshipping the same God they had always worshipped, and the same God Jesus himself had worshipped. This image of God as Father was certainly apparent in the ministry of Jesus (for example, John 6:27), who taught his disciples to address God *Father*, *Abba* in Aramaic, translated in Greek as *Pater* (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2). St. Paul gives evidence that second generation Christians indeed cried “Abba” (Romans 8:15; Galatians 6:4). The father image is thus meant to convey authority

as well as loving care, concern, and protection.

Thus, for the early Christians, calling God *Father* echoed the faith expressed in the Old Testament. The God of the Old Testament was the God of Jesus Christ, the God of the New Testament, the God of the Christians. This line of thinking was challenged by the second-century Christian thinker Marcion, who was later declared a heretic. He believed that the Old Testament God was so unlike the God of Jesus Christ that the Old Testament itself was inspired by the devil. Early Christians fought Marcionite thought by maintaining that both the Old Testament and the New Testament were inspired by the same God, the one God, the Father of Jesus Christ.

Despite the fact that Jesus himself, the early Christians, and centuries of Christians from then on addressed God as Father, some today find that term, or any other masculine referent for God, inadequate. Some modern theologians query whether “father language” is really appropriate when speaking of God, for God is ultimately neither male nor female.⁸ These theologians claim that the father language arose in a patriarchal world that no longer corresponds to our own. The *Catechism* tells us that the Father language is used to express authority and loving care (CCC § 239). And yet, we know that mothers are able to express loving care, concern, and protection just as fathers do. In the same paragraph as that cited above, the *Catechism* says, “God’s paternal tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood” (CCC § 239). The *Catechism* cites two scripture passages on this: Isaiah 66:13 and Psalm 131:2. While some modern theologians are raising our awareness of the issues surrounding paternal images of God, the image of God as father remains dominant in the scriptural, liturgical, and theological tradition.

THE BOTTOM LINE

There is a God. God reveals himself as a parent to his chosen people and to all. This father image expresses the loving care and authority of God. By his love, God calls a people and makes them his own. By his authority, he creates the heavens and the earth. As creator, God is distinct from creation. God is not the same as creation but is the source of creation. Accordingly, Christians respect and care for creation but do not worship it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Refer to *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §198-421.

- What makes the first person of the Trinity unique among the three persons to you? Explain why.
 - At what times in your own prayer life do you address God as “Father?” What other names do you use to address God?
 - How does your relationship with your own parent or parents inform or distract from calling God “Father”?
 - How would you try to convince a non-believer that the God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament?
-

THE MOST BASIC SUMMARY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

(1) I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. (2) I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. (3) He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. (4) He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. (5) He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. (6) He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. (7) From there he will come to judge the living and the dead. (8) I believe in the Holy Spirit, (9) the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, (10) the forgiveness of sins, (11) the resurrection of the body, (12) and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed — not the longer and more formal Nicene Creed that is usually proclaimed at Catholic Mass — is the most ancient statement of the Christian faith still in regular use in the church today. Children are taught to memorize it, anyone who prays the Rosary says it at the beginning of each set of mysteries, and it remains one of the basic prayers in the Catholic canon. Yet where did it come from, what does it actually mean, and why are we called to believe it? In this well-researched, engaging, and accessible book, author Brian Schmisek carefully explains each of what the church the twelve “articles” of the Apostles' Creed and explores their meaning for a twenty-first century faith. Included at the end of each chapter is a “bottom line” summary of that article of the creed and questions for discussion on how the belief can impact our daily life.

From the foreword to the previous edition:

“Dr. Brian Schmisek has written a very helpful study of the Apostles' Creed and discusses it in a way that it continues to relate to the twenty-first century. I believe all those involved in religious education and evangelization will benefit from this real treasure.”

Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans

Brian Schmisek, Ph.D., is Director of the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University Chicago and the author of *Resurrection of the Flesh or Resurrection from the Dead* and co-author of the *Catholic Biblical School Program*. He and his wife, Marnie, have four young children.

Catholicism/Prayer



ISBN 978-0-87946-571-1

5 1 4 9 5 >



9 780879 465711

www.actapublications.com

\$14.95