

## The Apostles' Creed: The Father Almighty, Creator... (5)

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord*

*Who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell*

*The third day He rose again from the dead*

*He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty*

*He will come again 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 the life everlasting*

- In this study, we continue on in our consideration of the first section of the Apostles' Creed, which deals with God the Father. As we consider this section, it is important to note, as Dr. Cornel Venema states in his commentary,

...the Creed, though it is thoroughly Trinitarian in its confession of our faith in God, focuses always on the works of the Triune God in creation and redemption. The Creed is not interested in an abstract consideration of who God is. It is interested in the manner of God's revelation of Himself in His works and in the covenant relationship or fellowship between Him and His people." (pp. 20-21).

Therefore, the works of God—creation, providence, redemption, consummation—are the primary focus of the Creed, not the more abstract discussions concerning His essence and various attributes.

- When we confess that we believe in God *the Father Almighty*, we are specifying the God in whom we believe. This is not just any generic concept of God, but a very specific God...namely the one who has revealed Himself to be the Father in Heaven, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of all who believe.
- One of the most precious things that sets our God apart from all other theistic religions out there is that we worship, serve, and relate to a personal God with whom we can have actual fellowship. This is not the case in other religions. Most religions believe in a "force" or some other kind of impersonal, supernatural power. By definition a power or force can't be personal, and thus you don't commune or communicate with it, but rather you try to manipulate it, harness it, "use" it. Our God has revealed Himself as our "Father" and thus reveals to us that He is a personal God who seeks fellowship and relationship, and, cares for His people as a father does his children.
- When we confess God as "Father" we are not meaning that all people have the right to call on Him as such. He is the universal Father of all mankind by virtue of creation, but now that sin has entered the picture, it is a denial of the fall—and therefore sin—to speak of Him as everyone's Father apart from redemption. As John writes in his prologue to the gospel (Jn. 1:12), *...to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*
- Thus, by virtue of creation, before the fall mankind was properly considered to be the children of God (cf. Lk. 3:38). Now that sin has entered the picture, and we have become children of the devil thereby (cf. Jn. 8:44), the only way back into the family of God—to have Him again as our Father—is by way of adoption (Rom. 8:15; cf. Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5): *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*
- The combination here in the Creed of "Father" and "Almighty" is beautiful in that this means that there is nothing that He can't accomplish on behalf of His children. Think about how an earthly father might desire and promise to be at his child's soccer game, but then get stuck behind a freeway-closing accident on Interstate 25 or some other hindrance that he is powerless to get around. As well-intentioned as he may be, he is not so powerful that he can definitely keep his promises to his children. But, God the Father *Almighty* can! There is nothing that can stay His hand or keep Him from doing whatever He wants.
- This should be a great comfort to all of God's children and make us exclaim as John does in 1 John 3:1, *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!*

- The other major doctrine that is affirmed here in this section of the Creed is the doctrine of creation. Dr. Venema reminds us that,

Luther, in his meditation on God's sovereign and gracious work in creation, once remarked that this confession is in many respects more difficult to understand than the confession of the eternal Son's becoming flesh for our salvation. For when we confess that God created all things by the Word of His mouth "out of nothing," we are saying that God has done something for which there is and could be absolutely no analogy in our experience.

- The biblical doctrine of creation is a major tenant of the Christian faith, and therefore, it is not surprising that it has been under attack for centuries. Indeed it is not just since Darwin that the doctrine of special creation *ex nihilo* (lit. "out of nothing") has been under fire, but throughout history this doctrine has been the arena of much debate, and that is because so much hinges upon it.
- In our day and age, it is considered ignorant and naïve to confess that: "Creation is that act of God, in which, by the all-powerful command of His will, He made out of nothing, and perfected, the whole universe, in the space of six days" (Witsius, p. 181). Thus there are multiple and sundry positions on the subject of creation, some better and some worse.
- One way that men have tried, as it were, to have their cake and eat it too, is to redefine what is meant by "creation". Thus, departing from the biblical concept of creation "out of nothing", there have been and are many views that purport that God in some way created "out of something". In this general category are the theistic evolutionists who say God "created" by way of the evolutionary process, and the heretical school of the Socinians, who follow their leader Socinus (instead of the Bible), held that Scriptures do not teach,

That, in creating and forming the world, God made use of the services of none at all, but only of none that did not entirely depend upon himself, and that had not derived from him the power of doing something towards the creation of the world. (quoted by Witsius, p. 198)

The reason for bringing up the Socinians is that along with rejecting the orthodox doctrine of creation, they also rejected the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and monergistic salvation. That is to say, they are an example of the trajectory that is set in changing the orthodox view of creation. In rejecting the notion that God *alone* created the world, they also would reject that God *alone* provides the salvation we need. In other words, starting at a weakened version of creation they produced a weakened version of salvation. If God could use the service of others in creation, then He could use the works of men in salvation...as long as it all depends on Him. And, therefore, it doesn't need to be God who actually saves us (thus we don't need a divine Christ), we just need a savior who God can use...

- And yet the testimony of Scripture is consistent and monolithic in its declaration that God alone created and created all alone out of nothing: *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* (Gen. 1:1) "*O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; You have made heaven and earth.*" (Isa. 37:16) "*Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it.*" (Isa. 42:5) "*Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself,"* (Isa. 44:24) "*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.*" (Job 38:4) *For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens.* (Ps. 96:5) *By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.* (Heb. 11:3) *...God..., who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.* (Rom. 4:17) "*Worthy are You, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they existed and were created.*" (Rev. 4:11)
- Finally in this study, we'll consider 5 benefits that we gain, or applications for us, from this first section that Thomas Aquinas forwarded in his commentary on the Creed: 1) Knowledge of the divine majesty (God's greatness)—"Surely the Maker surpasses the made." 2) We are led to give thanks—"...surely whatever we are and whatever we have comes from God." 3) We are led to have patience in adversity—we "ought to endure it patiently, both because it comes from God and because the suffering is ordered to the good." 4) We are drawn to the right use of created goods—"We ought to use creatures for the purpose they were made by God. They were made by God for two reasons: For the glory of God...for the benefit of mankind." 5) We are led to a knowledge of human dignity—"...we ought to consider humanity to be more worthy than the rest of creation..." because God made us in His image.