

Doctrine Into Life, Pt. 2

The Apostle's Creed: The Importance of Definition 11AM Monday, January 10, 2011

A. Introduction: Why Do We Need Doctrine?

Notes from an Interview with Alistair McGrath

Rediscovering a vision—what can only the church do and say?
What do we have that is distinctive to offer?

As Christians, we're different, but neither threatening nor threatened, not ashamed.
Not fundamentalists who leave the culture
nor liberals who become immersed in following the culture.

Doctrine: tenets, principles, truths presented for acceptance as the structure of a faith or philosophy. *What we believe.*

People want doctrine and theology to reassure them about the credibility of faith (it's very important that it holds up under scrutiny).

Doctrine needs to make a difference in life. We have to show how doctrine links up with life experience.

Preaching doctrine effectively means reassuring people of the basics and how they apply.

The church needs to rediscover its vision. The dulled penny needs to be reshined.

**Doctrine is the fabric, the network that weaves Scripture together.
Scripture provides the threads in a coat which doctrine has woven together.**

Theology builds on Biblical preaching to put on the coat.

In a pluralistic culture, it is up to every strand to enrich that culture by deciding what it has to offer that is distinctive and attractive.

We must make our distinctive doctrines available to the culture.
Don't sell Christianity short.

Tell out our vision in the risk that people just may become Christians as a result!

In a pluralist culture, we respect all traditions, including our own. This means we talk about what we believe and risk that because of Christianity's attractiveness, people are converted!

Recover Confidence!

Pastors need to be organic theologians, so doctrine emerges naturally in people's minds from people they trust.

B.. The Rule of Faith: History and Observations

What is the *content* of the Christian faith in its essence? That is, what are our essential *tenets*, doctrines? What simply must be said? What are the *borders* of our "realm" of faith which must be defended that the life within may flourish? What are the "*bones*" of our story we must learn and teach in order to give the whole Christ? What is the *narrative* we must tell correctly in order not to be in some other god's story?

This is what drives the formulation of the Apostles' Creed. Portable. Packer calls it a power point. It's also a narrative. Only about 100 words. Three articles, one on the work, the activity of each person of the Trinity.

As we have it, only since 8th century, but its origin goes much further back.

Legend: before the 12 dispersed, they wrote down the essentials of faith and each contributed a clause. Recounted in Rufinus' *Commentary on the Apostles' Creed*. (appx. 404).

"To this formulary, for many and most sufficient reasons, they gave the name or *Symbol*.... [means both a sign, and a collation, or contribution by several] The Apostles therefore prescribed this formulary as a sign or token by which he who preached Christ truly, according to Apostolic rule, might be recognized."

Reality: As the church grew and expanded in its interaction with Roman pagan culture, the need arose for a concise statement of faith. This was particularly needed in terms of catechism of new converts preparing for baptism.

1) **Tertullian** (c. ad 160 to 225) wrote in *The Prescription Against Heretics*, chp. 13: (Roberts, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 3)

Now, with regard to this *rule of faith*—that we may from this point acknowledge what it is which we defend—it is, you must know, that which prescribes the belief that there is one only God, and that He is none other than the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing through His own Word, first of all sent forth; that this Word is called His Son, *and*, under the name of God, was seen “in diverse manners” by the patriarchs, heard at all times in the prophets, at last brought down by the Spirit and Power of the Father into the Virgin Mary, was made flesh in her womb, and, being born of her, went forth as Jesus Christ; thenceforth He preached the new law and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven, worked miracles; having been crucified, He rose again the third day; (then) having ascended into the heavens, He sat at the right hand of the Father; sent instead of Himself the Power of the Holy Ghost to lead such as believe; will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life and of the heavenly promises, and to condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, after the resurrection of both these classes shall have happened, together with the restoration of their flesh. *This rule*, as it will be proved, was taught by Christ, and raises amongst ourselves no other questions than those which heresies introduce, and which make men heretics.

Tertullian: *Against Praxeas*

Chapter II.—The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity and Unity, Sometimes Called the Divine Economy, or Dispensation of the Personal Relations of the Godhead.

In the course of time, then, the Father forsooth was born, and the Father suffered, God Himself, the Lord Almighty, whom in their preaching they declare to be Jesus Christ. We, however, as we indeed always have done and more especially since we have been better instructed by the Paraclete, who leads men indeed into all truth), believe that there is one only God, but under the following dispensation, or οἰκονομία, as it is called, that this one only God has also a Son, His Word, who proceeded from Himself, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made. Him *we believe* to have been sent by the Father into the Virgin, and to have been born of her—being both Man and God, the Son of Man and the Son of God, and to have been called by the name of Jesus Christ; *we believe* Him to have suffered, died, and been buried, according to the Scriptures, and, after He had been raised again by the Father and taken back to heaven, to be sitting at the

right hand of the Father, *and* that He will come to judge the quick and the dead; who sent also from heaven from the Father, according to His own promise, the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost. That this *rule of faith* has come down to us from the beginning of the gospel, even before any of the older heretics, much more before Praxeas, *a pretender* of yesterday, will be apparent both from the lateness of date which marks all heresies, and also from the absolutely *novel* character of our new-fangled Praxeas. . . .in the case of this heresy, which supposes itself to possess the pure truth, in thinking that one cannot believe in One Only God in any other way than by saying that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are the very selfsame Person. As if in this way also one were not All, in that All are of One, by unity (that is) of substance; while the mystery of the dispensation is still guarded, which distributes the Unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three *Persons*—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: three, however, not in condition, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in aspect; yet of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God, from whom these degrees and forms and aspects are reckoned, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

2. Irenaeus, c. ad 130 to 200, *Against Heresies*, Bk 5, *pref*; Bk 3.1.1; Bk. 1, *chp* 10, 1 & 2.

(Roberts, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1).

Wants to express the “canon of truth,” a condensed summary “fluid in wording but fixed in content.”

JND Kelly *Early Christian Doctrines*, Heretics read a different meaning out of the Scriptures than the faithful. Scripture alone was not enough in the fight with Gnosticism. There needed to be an authoritative, interpretive key to the Scriptures, which were always supreme. This is the rule of faith, the canon of truth, passed down from the apostles in the Church. It sounds a lot like the Apostle’s Creed.

“This canon, far from being distinct from Scripture, was simply a condensation of the message contained in it. Being by its very nature normative in form, it provided a man with a handy clue to Scripture, whose very ramifications played into the hands of heretics. The whole point of this teaching was that Scripture and the Church’s unwritten tradition are identical in content, both being vehicles of the revelation” (p. 38-9).

Heretics were able to make Scripture say what they liked because they could twist Scripture, or wrongly emphasize some passages, because they disregarded the *regula*, the rule of faith. This statement of essentials, then, was key not to overriding Scripture with tradition, but to preserving Scripture as supreme through faithful interpretation, that is, within the boundaries of the apostolic doctrine.

2 Timothy 1: 2 “what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

IN the four preceding books, my very dear friend, which I put forth to thee, all the heretics have been exposed, and their doctrines brought to light, and these men refuted who have devised irreligious opinions. [I have accomplished this by adducing] something from the doctrine peculiar to each of these men, which they have left in their writings, as well as by using arguments of a more general nature, and applicable to them all.

Then I have pointed out the truth, and shown the **preaching of the Church**, which the **prophets** proclaimed (as I have already demonstrated), but which **Christ brought to perfection**, and the **apostles have handed down**, from whom the Church, receiving [these truths], and throughout all the world alone preserving them in their integrity (*bene*), has transmitted them to her sons. Then also—having disposed of all questions which the heretics propose to us, and having explained the doctrine of the apostles, and clearly set forth many of those things which were said and done by the Lord in parables—I shall endeavour, in this the fifth book of the entire work which treats of the exposure and refutation of knowledge falsely so called, to exhibit proofs from the rest of the Lord’s doctrine and the apostolical epistles: [thus] complying with thy demand, as thou didst request of me (since indeed I have been assigned a place in the ministry of the word); and, labouring by every means in my power to furnish thee with large assistance against the contradictions of the heretics, as also to reclaim the wanderers and convert them to the Church of God, to confirm at the same time the minds of the neophytes, that they may preserve stedfast the faith which they have received, guarded by the Church in its integrity, in order that they be in no way perverted by those who endeavour to teach them false doctrines, and lead them away from the truth. (*Ad. Haer.* 5. Pref)

We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those *through whom the Gospel has come down to us*, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the *ground and pillar of our faith*. For it is unlawful to assert that they preached before they possessed “perfect knowledge,” as some do even venture to say, boasting themselves as improvers of the apostles. For, after our Lord rose from the dead, [the apostles] were invested with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came down [upon them], were filled from all [His gifts], and had perfect knowledge: they departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of the good things [sent] from God to us, and proclaiming the peace of

heaven to men, who indeed do all equally and individually possess the Gospel of God. (3.1.1)

1. 10.1 —Unity of the Faith of the Church Throughout the Whole World.

1. The Church, though dispersed through our the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples **this faith**: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His [future] manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father “to gather all things in one,” and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race, in order that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the will of the invisible Father, “every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess” to Him, and that He should execute just judgment towards all; that He may send “spiritual wickednesses,” and the angels who transgressed and became apostates, together with the ungodly, and unrighteous, and wicked, and profane among men, into everlasting fire; but may, in the exercise of His grace, confer immortality on the righteous, and holy, and those who have kept His commandments, and have persevered in His love, some from the beginning [of their Christian course], and others from [the date of] their repentance, and may surround them with everlasting glory.

2. As I have already observed, the Church, *having received* this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet, *as if occupying but one house*, carefully preserves it. She also believes these points [of doctrine] just as if she had but one soul, and one and the same heart, and she proclaims them, and teaches them, and hands them down, with perfect harmony, *as if she possessed only one mouth*. For, although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same

3. Old Roman Creed.

Such re-statements of Biblical truth became more codified in ensuing years. The Old Roman Creed is one of the most influential of these creeds. It has roots in the 3rd century, became widely used in 4th century and our oldest source for it comes

from 404, when Rufinus published his *Symbolum Apostolorum*. (*Commentary on the Symbol of the Apostles, or Apostles' Creed*).

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 under Pontius Pilate was crucified and buried,
On the third day rose again from the dead,
Ascended into heaven,
Sits at the right hand of the Father,
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.
(J.N. D. Kelly *Early Christian Creeds*).

4. Nicaean/Constantinopolitan Creed (325/381)

After more precise definition of the person of Christ, then the Holy Spirit.

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,

Maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,

begotten of his Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God,
begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;
by whom all things were made;
who for us and for our salvation
came down from heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary,
and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered and was buried,
and the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures,
and ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father;
and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead;
whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of Life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son;
who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified;
who spoke by the prophets;
and we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church;
we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;
and we look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen

5. Ambrose and **Augustine** encouraged the use of the creed as a means of daily devotion and spiritual formation. Augustine: **“Say the creed daily. When you rise, when you compose yourself to sleep, repeat your creed, render it to the Lord, remind yourself of it, be not irked to say it over.”** (Kelly, 370).

6. Council of Chalcedon (451)

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach people to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten God (μονογενῆ Θεόν), the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

7. Athanasian Creed 6th century (not written by Athanasius but focuses on the homoousion)

8. Apostle’s Creed as we know it. Latin, 7th century.

Key addition: the Descent into Hell

Compact. Borders. Broader than Nicene, less specific. The big stream.

Note: Regarding our reading of Rufinus’ *Commentary on Apostles’ Creed* (404 or 407?) In Schaff: Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, vol 3. This is not the Roman Creed but a creed from Aquileia (where Rufinus was baptized) and that’s why it includes the Descent. See Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 102.

Note: The Nicene Fathers edition has the date wrong for this work—too early by a century!

C. The Importance of the Whole Story and Its Definition

Now think for a moment about the Creed. Notice that the Creed actually has three parts. Technically, the scholars say there are three “articles” in the Creed. 1) I believe in God the Father. 2) I believe in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord. 3) I believe in the Holy Spirit. Three parts because we believe in the Triune God of grace. Each article begins with one of the Divine persons and then expands on the activity of that person. In that sense, **the Creed is a story**. We talk about the Father’s activity. We talk about the story of his Son Jesus who came among us. We talk about what happens when the Spirit gets busy.

I started looking at the Creed very differently when I thought of it as a story, not a list. The Creed is not static, but dynamic, living, moving, breathing.

Notes from J.I. Packer *Affirming the Apostle’s Creed*

I want to press the question, can you find the gospel in the Apostle’s Creed? And I want to display the Creed as, in effect, a power-point declaration of the basics of the Christian message—in other words, of the gospel itself.

Packer decries 20th century evangelical circles which “boiled the gospel down to an ABC, commonly formulated as follows:

- 1) All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, you included,
- 2) **B**elieve on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved;
- 3) **C**onfess Jesus Christ as the risen Lord, and he will in due course welcome you into heaven.

In the 20th century, in a church culture, the gospel was streamlined by evangelists for instant comprehension and response.

“How little do we need to tell people for them to become Christians?”

In a post-Christian culture, here’s the problem:

A truncated version of the gospel message, presenting Christ the Redeemer apart from God the Creator, and remission of sins apart from personal regeneration, and individual salvation apart from life and worship in the church, and the hope of heaven apart from the pilgrim path of holiness—

which is what in practice the ABC approach does—becomes a misrepresentation, one that sows the seed of many pastoral problems down the road

The Creed itself was born as an instrument of evangelism—first as a summary syllabus for catechetical teaching of the faith to non-Jewish inquirers, and then as a declaration of personal faith for converts to use at the time of their baptism.

Can you see that there is nothing in the Creed that is not part of the gospel, when fully stated? Today, on our own, we face pagan ignorance about God every bit as deep as that which the early church faced in the Roman Empire. The ABC approach is thus not full enough; **the whole story of the Father’s Christ-exalting plan of redeeming love, from eternity to eternity, must be told, or the radical reorientation of life for which the gospel calls will not be understood, and the required total shift from man-centeredness to God-centeredness, and more specifically from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness, will not take place.** All that the Creed covers needs to be grasped and taught, as an integral part of the message of the saving love of God. (Packer, Intro)

The Question of Definition (Notes from intro to sermon series)

Let’s think for a moment about the whole idea of *definition*. When it comes to things spiritual, people today feel that definition is an enemy of authentic quest and true harmony. Definition, by definition (!), excludes. That’s supposedly the greatest sin.

But consider for a moment the game of tennis. I’d like to make a comparison between the way I played tennis when I first learned at age 9 and the way my son Jacob played tennis at the Division I college level. When we first learned to play, the fun was in hitting the ball as hard as we could. It was fun to get it over the net. It was even more fun to hit over the fence behind your partner. Who needs lines? Let’s just smack it. Of course, after an hour of going to chase balls from other courts and across the street, tennis without definition got to be rather tedious. By contrast, staying within the lines is what creates the interest and hones the skill that makes tennis a lifetime sport. Now Jacob could very easily smack a tennis ball away from his opponent, out of the court, and indeed down the street a hundred yards away. He could say, “Let’s just be free of these exclusive rules and these confining, boring lines.” But that’s no fun. The joy, the pleasure,

the skill arise from playing with the net and in the lines. That's where it takes my breath away watching him play. Spins. Angles. Cross court. Drop shots. 80mph serves. Definition is what keeps the passion burning.

For those of you not sports fans, let's change the image just a bit. This point is so important for all we will be saying that we need to linger over it. There's some land in North Carolina that I've been hiking for more than a quarter century. I know the paths. I know the creeks and waterfalls well enough to tell you whether the water is running high or low. I know where the Trillium flowers will come up in the spring, and I know the places where the little orange lizards called newts will cross the path after a rain. I know the boundaries of this property and a lot of its characteristics. Does this make walking on this land boring? Is tracing those paths a rote exercise without adventure or interest? Am I limiting myself by spending most of my time exploring this same ground? Actually, it's exactly the opposite experience. Knowing the main paths and boundaries opens me up to the deep beauty of the land. Learning the lines so well frees me to see the layers of intricate life within. Walking the same paths causes new wonders within the familiar land to surprise me every time.

Here's my hypothesis for our study of the Creed: the Apostle's Creed is not a fossilized list of outdated beliefs. **The Creed is a map for a robust spiritual quest. It's an adventure in depth. Knowing the Creed teaches us the boundaries of the land, within which the wonders of God's revelation open up to us. The Creed provides the net and the lines that makes the game of faith in Jesus interesting enough to play for a lifetime.**

Let's dig in. The Apostle's Creed begins with the words, "I believe." Now right there you are making a bold, counter-cultural step. Right out of the box you are defying our cultural trend toward never saying anything definite about anything spiritual. You're staking a claim. You're committing yourself. That's huge. I believe. Here I stand. I'm not going to plead ignorance. Some things about God can be known and I'm going to learn them and live from them. But it's more than a stand. It's an advance. Confessing the Creed, we plunge into a lifetime of quest. I believe. I'm moving out of ignorance into exploration. I believe. I'm committing myself to a relationship. I believe. So I enter a living, dynamic, passionate movement out of just slopping around in myself towards someone greater and higher than I am. I believe. I'm in. I'm not hedging my bets. I'm going for it. In today's world, nobody wants to commit to anything, not even Friday night dinner until 15 minutes before you meet for dinner, and even then, something might come up. But this is far bolder. I believe. Not "I have beliefs." But I actively believe in

a way that commits my life. I'm in with God as he has made himself known and this affects everything I do. I've got priorities that shape me every moment.

I believe in God. Now right there you've stated which side you're on of a line that divides the human race. About half of the world is monotheistic, that is, believing in one supreme God. The other half does not believe in a personal God, that is, a God who is a being with personality, mind and intent. For them, either no god exists, or god is more of the great all, the oneness that is the universe. But confessing the one God means you are plunging into a life that orients around the reality that God is not just a feeling within me. God is Someone out there. God is beyond me, above me, greater than I am. And this God has a mind and a will and a purpose for me.

One of the most encouraging books to come out in the last few years is philosopher Antony Flew's *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed his Mind*. Flew once took on, and by some accounts, beat, C.S. Lewis in a debate about God's existence at Oxford. Professor Flew was such a towering mind that by comparison today's best-selling skeptics like Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett are just "girly atheists." Flew's conversion rocked the cozy club of self-assured nonbelievers. Many simply turned age-ist and said the 80 year old Flew had gone senile. So he wrote his lucid little book in which he affirmed that the same principle which led him to give up God led him back to God: to follow the evidence wherever it leads. The world itself, with its intricate laws and the delicate balance that makes for life, led him to conclude that there must be a Mind behind it all. **He writes, "I have followed the argument where it has led me. And it has led me to accept the existence of a self-existent, immutable, immaterial, omnipotent, and omniscient being."**ⁱ Rock on, Tony!

But let's also note that the spiritual daring of our creed goes far beyond simple acknowledgement of a Supreme Being. Each time we say the Creed, we plunge into a stunning assertion, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." We are not engaging a powerful but remote Deity. In the Creed, we are leaping towards the arms of the one who invites us to call him Abba, Father. This is an almost scandalous intimacy. That the Almighty God should be addressed as Father!

In our Scripture this morning, Paul writes, "For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Corinthians 8: 5-6). Yes, the people of the world

acknowledge many gods. There are all kinds of beliefs around. But for us, there is only one God. He is the Father. The Father is the source. From him come all things, and we exist for him.

When we say, “I believe in God the Father Almighty,” we are saying that we know God to be our loving heavenly Father. I know that all good gifts come from him. I know that his eye is on the sparrow and his eye is on me. I know that he holds the whole world in his hands. I know that nothing can snatch me out of the Father’s hands. He loves me; he is with me. He is raising me up as his own beloved child in Christ. As another very old creed says, “he protects me so well that without the will of my Father in heaven, not a hair can fall from my head; indeed everything must fit his purpose for my salvation.”ⁱⁱ

Think how daring this is in a world of suffering and chaos, where the wrong seems to prevail, and the clamor and the noise seem to drown out all hope of goodness and peace. We whisper amidst the shouts, “This is my Father’s world. He shines in all that’s fair. This is my Father’s world. Though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet. This is my Father’s world. The battle is not done. Jesus who died shall be satisfied and earth and heaven be one.”

Think **what this means in terms of speaking with people around us**. We see those who are anxious in this economy, and we have a word for them. For we have been on the spiritual adventure of confessing that God is our dear Father. We know from experience. Your heavenly Father will take care of you as you look to him in faith and trust. He loves you. He knows what you need. We have a word for people undergoing surgeries or facing illnesses. For our Father does not spare us the same sufferings as the rest of the world. But we know his sustaining power. He will see you through. All the way through this life and to the next.

In this world, people wonder if they are all alone in the universe. They wonder if there is a God, and if so, whether or not he cares. They wonder what’s beyond this life. The lack of definition all around them is not comforting. Making up a religion that suits you seems so fun, except that it’s not good when the chips are down, for you know you made it all up. We who confess, I believe in God the Father have taken the plunge into the adventure of trusting that there is a God, that he is personal, that he is our Father who loves us. That changes everything for us. It gives us something people around us are yearning to hear.

Blessed are you, the risk takers, the questers, the adventurers, willing to embrace your need for creed. You're on the journey that begins with these astounding words. "I believe in God the Father Almighty."

ⁱ Antony Flew, *There is a God* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), p. 155.

ⁱⁱ *The Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), Question 1.