Ancient Christian Doctrine

2

We Believe in One Lord Jesus Christ

EDITED BY
John Anthony McGuckin

SERIES EDITOR
Thomas C. Oden

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα Θεὸν
πατέρα, παντοκράτορα,
ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς,
ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀοράτων.

καὶ εἰς ἕνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν,
τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ,
τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα
πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων,
φῶς ἐκ φωτός,
Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ,
γεννηθέντα, οὐ ποιηθέντα,
ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ·
δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα εγένετο·
τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους
καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν
κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν
καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου
καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου
καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα,

σταυρωθέντα τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν
ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου,
καὶ παθόντα καὶ ταφέντα,
καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ
κατὰ τὰς γραφάς,
καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανούς,
καὶ καθεζόμενον
ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ πατρός,
καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης
κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς·
οὗ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος.

καὶ εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον,
τὸ κύριον, καὶ τὸ ζωοποιόν,
τὸ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον,
τὸ σὺν πατρὶ καὶ υἱῷ
συμπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον,
τὸ λαλῆσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν·

εἰς μίαν, ἁγίαν, καθολικήν
καὶ ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν·
ὁμολογοῦμεν ἓν βάπτισμα
εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν·
προσδοκῶμεν ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν,
καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰώνος. Ἀμήν.

Credo in unum Deum
Patrem omnipotentem;
factorem coeli et terrae,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium.

Et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum,
Filium Dei unigenitum,
et ex Patre natum
ante omnia saecula
Deum de Deo, Lumen de Lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero,
genitum, non factum,
consubstantialem Patri;
per quem omnia facta sunt;
qui propter nos homines
et propter nostram salutem
descendit de coelis,
et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto
ex Maria virgine,
et homo factus est;

crucifixus etiam pro nobis
sub Pontio Pilato,
passus et sepultus est;
et resurrexit tertia die,
secundum Scripturas;
et ascendit in coelum,
sedet
ad dexteram Patris;
et iterum venturus est, cum gloria,
judicare vivos et mortuos;
cujus regni non erit finis.

Et in Spiritum Sanctum,
Dominum et vivificantem,
qui ex Patre Filioque procedit;
qui cum Patre et Filio
simul adoratur et conglorificatur;
qui locutus est per Prophetas.

Et unam, sanctam, catholicam
et apostolicam ecclesiam.
Confiteor unum baptisma
in remissionem peccatorum;
et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum,
et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally
begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us
and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified
under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated
at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son
he is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic
and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism
for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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For Helmar Nielsen,
an extraordinary patron of
Early Christian thought
in the New World

Contents

A Guide to Using the Commentaries in the Ancient Christian Doctrine Series

Several features have been incorporated into the design of this commentary series. The following comments are intended to assist readers in making full use of each of the volumes.

Sections of the Creed

The five commentaries are first and foremost a phrase-by-phrase commentary on the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. The portion of the Creed for each individual volume has been set in three languages—Greek, Latin and English—with the appropriate phrase under consideration highlighted in bold font in each language. Numerous English translations have been developed in recent years; we have used the ICET version of 1975 because of its current wide use.

Historical Contexts and Overviews

Following each section of the Creed is a short section labeled Historical Context. Where wording of the Creed reflects the culmination of discussions of highly controverted issues, readers are offered a brief summary of the controversy and the issues at stake in order for them to make more sense of the selections set forth. Where doctrine developed harmoniously without much controversy, that fact is noted and a brief description of the development of the doctrine is supplied. Following the historical context is a section labeled Overview, designed to provide a brief précis of the ensuing section's excerpts. It tracks a reasonably cohesive thread of argument among patristic comments, even though they are derived from diverse sources and generations.

Topical Headings

An abundance of varied patristic comment is available for each phrase of the Creed. At the same time the Creed itself forms a skeleton for supporting the larger doctrinal convictions of the church. Thus the commentary on the Creed can show the full range of the church's systematic theological concerns. For this reason we have broken the sections of the Creed into two levels. First are subsections that group common themes within the patristic comments. Then each individual patristic comment is tagged by a key phrase, metaphor or idea that suggests the essence of the excerpt.

Identifying the Patristic Texts

Following the topical heading of each excerpt, the name of the patristic commentator is given. An English translation of the patristic comment is then provided. This is immediately followed

by the title of the patristic work in English and the appropriate textual reference—usually book, section and subsection. If the notation differs significantly between the English-language source footnoted and other sources, alternate references appear in the notes.

The Footnotes

Readers who wish to pursue a deeper investigation of the patristic works cited in this commentary will find the footnotes especially valuable. A footnote number directs the reader to the notes at the bottom of the right-hand column, where in addition to other notations (clarifications or biblical cross references) is found information on English translations (where available) or standard original language editions of the work cited. An abbreviated citation (normally citing the book, volume and page number) of the work is provided. A key to the abbreviations is provided in the front matter. Where there is any serious ambiguity or textual problem in the selection, we have tried to reflect the best available textual tradition. Where original language texts have remained untranslated into English, we provide new translations. Wherever current English translations are already well rendered, they are utilized, but where necessary they are stylistically updated. A single asterisk (*) indicates that a previous English translation has been updated to modern English or amended for easier reading. A double asterisk (**) indicates either that a new translation has been provided or that some extant translation has been significantly amended.

Outline of Contents, List of Ancient Authors and Texts Cited, and Index

In lieu of a subject index, a full outline of the sections and subsections has been included in the back matter of each volume. This should aid readers in finding specific theological content and make the volumes all the more useful for the study of historical and systematic theology. Each volume contains a list of ancient authors and texts cited, as well as a full Scripture index.

Biographical Sketches and Timeline

Many readers will find helpful brief biographical sketches of the patristic writers as well as a timeline placing them within the proper century and geographical location. Rather than repeating the sketches and timeline in each volume, we have decided to gather them at the conclusion of volume five. Similarly, we have supplied the general introduction to the series only in volume one. For any readers who have not purchased the whole set, the general introduction, sketches and timeline may be found online at www.ivpress.com by searching for the series information and following the appropriate links.

Abbreviations

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1946-.
AF	J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, trans. *The Apostolic Fathers*. Edited by M. W. Holmes. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1990.
AHSIS	D. Miller, trans. *The Ascetical Homilies of St. Isaac the Syrian*. Boston: Holy Transfiguration. Monastery, 1984.
ANCL	The Ante-Nicene Christian Library: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1867-1897.
CACC	John A. McGuckin. *St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004.
CCC	J. Stevenson, ed. *Creeds, Councils and Controversies: Documents Illustrative of the History of the Church A.D. 337-461*. London: SPCK, 1966.
CCL	Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1953-.
Cetedoc	Library of Christian Latin Texts on CD Rom. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2000.
CGSL	R. Payne-Smith, trans. *St. Cyril of Alexandria: Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*. Long Island, N.Y.: Studion Publishers, 1983.
CS	Cistercian Studies. Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1973-.
ECF	Henry Bettenson. *The Early Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Clement of Rome to St. Athanasius*. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.
ESH	Ephrem the Syrian: *Hymns*. Translated and introduced by Kathleen McVey. Preface by John Meyendorff. Classics of Western Spirituality Series. New York: Paulist Press, 1989.
LCC	J. Baillie et al., eds. The Library of Christian Classics. 26 vols. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953-1966.
LCF	Henry Bettenson. *The Later Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Cyril of Jerusalem to St. Leo the Great*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
MFC	Message of the Fathers of the Church. Edited by Thomas Halton. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1983-.
NPNF	P. Schaff et al., eds. A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. 2 series (14 vols. each). Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature,

	1887-1894; Reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1952-1956; Reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994.
ODN	*Dionysius the Areopagite: On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*. Translated by Clarence Edwin Rolt. London: SPCK, 1920.
PA	*St. Gregory of Nazianzus: Poemata Arcana*. Edited with a textual introduction by C. Moreschini. Introduction, translation and commentary by D. A. Sykes. Oxford Theological Monographs. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
PG	J.-P. Migne, ed. Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca. 166 vols. Paris: Migne, 1857-1866.
PMS	Patristic Monograph Series. Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation: [Sole distributors, Greeno, Hadden], 1975-.
SLS	*St. Romanos: On the Life of Christ. Kontakia*. Translated by Ephrem Lash. Sacred Literature Series. London: Harper Collins, 1997.
TCT	J. F. Clarkson, J. Edwards, W. J. Kelly, and J. J. Welch, eds. *The Church Teaches*. St. Louis, Mo.: Herder Book Co., 1955.
WS	*Woodbrooke Studies: Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic and Garshüni*. Edited and translated with a critical apparatus by Alphonse Mingana with introduction by James Rendel Harris. John Rylands Library. Cambridge, England: W. Heffer & Sons, 1927-.

Introduction

The Church Expressing Its Belief

The expression of the beliefs of the early church[1] was always a question of dynamic confession ("praise" is how we moderns should translate that word) rather than academic systematization. This is not to say that the faith articulations of the ancient Christians were not intellectually demanding; one has only to read the following selections from the theological writers of the early centuries to see that the opposite is true. Indeed, this was always the case from the beginning, since even the homespun parabolic teachings of Jesus are only deceptively simple. It means, rather, that the way the early Christians told and celebrated the story of their faith was invested in a veritable complex of different forms of affirmation, among which the writings of the intelligentsia (those who, after the fourth century, would come to be called the Fathers[2]) were only a small part.

The faith formulas of the Christians, and more than that dry term can possibly convey—their sheer delight and joy in Jesus (their "cheerful light"[3] and liberation, their savior, their anchor, and the other innumerable titles they loved to bestow on him in worship)—flowed out like an irrepressible spring in the liturgy long before they arrived at the stage of literary doctrinal formulations. This is why, for example, the creeds were first and foremost baptismal prayers long before they became conciliar tests of faith to stand against and remedy schools of thought that had been rejected as either peripheral or obnoxious by the common body of believers. It is this common

[1]Its kerygma: insofar as its belief, its preaching or sharing of the Good News and its cause for rejoicing and confessing that Good News were substantially the same "mystery of religion" (see 1 Tim 3:16, where this phrase introduces one of the first of all Christian creeds).

[2]And, thus, patristic literature. The Fathers were, generally speaking, bishops and leaders of Christian communities of worship, but the theory of "patristic literature" signifies far more than the title of honor (*Pateres*, or Fathers) given to them as clerical leaders. By the late fourth century, the term was being used to signify those leaders whose theology was seen to be of such purity and strength that they had a right to be regarded as worthy successors of the apostles. In this way a hierarchy of texts of value was produced: first and foremost the sacred Scriptures, then the creeds and liturgical confessions, then the writings of the notable Fathers. One of the last elements to be added into that developing canon after the canon was the creedal extension comprised by the great councils of the church. All these elements, from the writings of individual theologians to the statements of the bishops gathered at the ecumenical councils, can be found in this present collection.

[3]The title *(Phos Hilaron)* given to the Lord in one of the earliest instances of hymnal praise that constituted the church's "prayer at the fading of the light"—a poem of perhaps the second century that is still used in the liturgical vesperal services in churches of the East and the West.

mind of the ancient church that is often called the *sensus fidelium* ("the instinct of believers"). That sifting, preserving and defending of evangelical tradition we might call other names too, such as the great church, a notion scholars often use in historical contexts, or a term more often used by theologians, the apostolic tradition, the evocation of the authentic spirit of faithfulness to Jesus' teaching and spirit, which the church preserves across its journey through time. Innumerable controversies in the history of the church over what was or was not authentically evangelical should not blind us to the relatively simple fact that in antiquity the great church used a test of common sense to establish that criterion. Did a particular view harmonize with the Scriptures or not? Was a certain belief central, thus needing defense, or peripheral, something that could be left as a matter of divergent opinions (what would later be called *theologoumena*)? The real issue was, what did the sense of the faithful say, in contradistinction to the spirit of the age, which later was not always to be trusted?

But however much the first confessions were rooted in Scripture or liturgy and nurtured by traditions and common sense, it was inevitable that once theological literature had arrived at a form that had been refined and tested by controversies and challenges over several generations (some of which seemed to many to strike at the foundations of the Christian faith itself[4]) they should assume something of a classical status. The authenticity of this later, more controversial, literature as fitting commentaries on the Scriptures was generally admitted, and its effectiveness in combating highly speculative and often ahistorical exegeses of the structures of the Christian faith, particularly those of the Gnostics, made them assume a quasi-canonical status alongside the Scriptures, something that was eventually formally acknowledged, after the fourth century, by affording them patristic standing. By this stage (and it was a concept that was coming to be more and more clearly focused after the third century) it was much easier to chart the main lines of the orthodoxy of the great church, compared, for example, with the various forms of speculative theology that had come to be classed, by contrast, as heresy.[5] Some careless historians have implied that heresy and orthodoxy are anachronistic concepts that arose only after the second-century Gnostic crisis. A cursory perusal of the Johannine letters or the Pauline pastorals will

[4]Gnosticism and Arianism have often been called the proto-heresies of early Christianity, and they certainly form two poles around which many of the confessions in this book will revolve in explicit opposition. In christological terms (against Gnosticism) this meant an unerring stress first of all on Jesus' authentic humanity, that is, his fleshliness and real embodiment in time and space, and (against Arianism) his spiritual glory as of the eternal Word of the everlasting Father, God from God and the selfsame now made flesh within time. To an extent the fourth-century and fifth-century fathers were logically correct when they tended to see all later christological heresy as variations on Gnosticism's and Arianism's foundational premises.

[5]The word *hairesis* in classical Greek tradition simply meant a "different opinion." From apostolic times, however (see 1 Jn 2:18-25), it was invested with a new sense by the early church, to convey the sense that fidelity was a key element in the transmission of the true gospel tradition and that speculative innovation by theologians was a lapse from truth rather than a refinement of it. In this sense the apostolic age invented the concept of heresy as a polar opposite to orthodoxy. The patristic era refined this further, but it did not invent the macro-structure. Irenaeus had discovered it already in the apostolic period and used it effectively against the Gnostics, regarded by most in antiquity as the primal heresy.

show any reader that the clear distinction of orthodoxy and heresy was already seen, by the end of the first century, to be a critical matter if faith in Jesus was to be preserved and handed on. The author of 2 Peter, as well as the writer of the Johannine letters,[6] suggest that heresy is not simply a set of intellectual mistakes about the tradition of the gospel but part of an eschatological decline from grace, something that will always affect the church as it transitions time and space and that always has to be guarded against.

What was at stake in all of this struggle to preserve the authentic tradition, however (even before these intelligent and reflected structures of orthodoxy were eventually set in place in this formal manner in the course of the development of church history[7]) was the fight from the beginning to retain, preserve and faithfully observe the tradition of Jesus as handed to the newly founded churches in and through the apostolic preaching. In short, what was seen to be of the essence was fidelity to apostolic tradition. That largely meant, for the church of the first three centuries, the new understanding of the Old Testament in the light of the great saving mysteries of Jesus and the reading of the events of the Lord's ministry in the light of the apostolic preaching and letters that took shape in the form of the New Testament. The first great fight for apostolic tradition is no less than what we have come to know as the defense of the canon of the New Testament.

Seen in this aspect, the closing of the canon was not a reactionary movement of censorship but rather one concerned with the deepest aspects of quality control. After the elevation of the canon as the first level of apostolic witness, there soon came the traditional prayers and praises and confessions that grew out of the Christian Scriptures, which were finally to grow into creeds, formal theological treatises, books of commentary, eucharistic and sacramental liturgies and many other documentary expressions of a lively and an organically harmonious development of the apostolic spirit through different generational contexts. The third and fourth centuries were often marked by bitter controversies over the fundamentals of the faith, not because, as many postmodern writers have recently tried to suggest, those fundamentals were not there or were so embryonic that no one could agree on them, but on the contrary because the divergences that had appeared among the congregations were widely felt to be so extraordinarily deviant[8] that the more generally accepted tradition of the apostolic literature was felt to be endangered. Indeed, anyone who was happy to accept the so-called Gospel of Philip as satisfactorily apostolic

[6] 2 Pet 1:16–3:18; 1 Jn 4:1-6.

[7] The system of checks and balances for determining what an orthodox conception was: scriptural attestation of doctrine, liturgical support in the tradition of prayer or worship, creedal definition, episcopal consensus and conciliar adjudication—and we may also add the lamentable last stage of imperial proscription that followed after the last of these, after the fourth century, although theologically speaking this is not an integral part of the true discernment of tradition that the church receives as the gift of the Spirit. For an elaboration about the stages of this historical development, see John A. McGuckin, "Eschaton and Kerygma: The Future of the Past in the Present Kairos. The Concept of Living Tradition in Orthodox Theology," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 42 no. 3-4 (winter 1998): 225-71.

[8] Photinianism, Marcionism and Gnosticism gave the proof of this long before the great Arian crisis.

inevitably had to diminish the real significance of the historicity of the passion accounts and the genuine significance of the fleshly incarnation of the Lord.

The Defense of the Apostolic Tradition

This book is a collation of those classical Christian responses of the great church that with elegance, conciseness and apostolic spirit were generally determined to set a bulwark around the foundations of the Christian kerygma, in refutation of all theories and speculations that might undermine its transmission across the generations. The task of sifting orthodoxy and heresy in our own beliefs and confessions (and in those we hear from others, for our age is certainly no less productive of new theologies and insights and confessions than any other preceding us) has especial relevance and continuing importance in our day, at least for all those Christians who have a continuing commitment to the concept of the transmission of the apostolic tradition.

There are many who would regard the very notion as anachronistic, historically unprovable or irrelevant. One of the cottage industries of the present moment among historical theologians is the rehabilitation of the ancient heresies, and often their invention when sufficient evidence no longer remains. We seem to live in a fever of conspiracy theory where orthodox oppressors heavy-handed poor heretics aside, and modern scholars feel obliged to side with the tragic losing side, who are even sometimes elevated as symbols of "God's own poor." The reality was far from that kind of romantic nonsense. If we had to put our finger on who was elitist and who was inclusivist in antiquity, it would have to involve a denunciation of the Gnostics, for example, as the most elitist of all. All credit to the great church who denounced them for it, in the name of a greater inclusivity based on common sense and common education. It was, after all, the Gnostics who derided the larger Christian congregations as the unwashed proletariat. To elevate many of these heretical movements, as often happens today, as harbingers of the common person's freedom is patently fallacious. The battle with these obnoxiously elitist sectarian movements was conducted generations before Christian bishops could ever call on the dubious assistance of secular power to enforce their views. Anti-Gnostic bishops, such as Irenaeus, won the day not least because they talked common sense but because the Gnostics could never win the hearts and minds of the large Christian congregations. The people believed their bishops, because they too felt the self-evident force of the argument that such elitist speculations did not match with the beauty and clarity of the gospel message of Jesus.

The great church labeled movements as heretical or deviant precisely because they were at a considerable variance from the standard tradition of the confession of Jesus as Lord, which had been adopted by the churches in that commonwealth of communities they knew around themselves. This growing sense of commonweal of churches (*koinōnia*, or fellowship) was built up from trade or personal relations at an early date, and eventually by the increasingly effective common nexus of episcopal leaders who were ever more literate after the second century and looked after the literature of their churches with a careful eye, sharing texts and letters and

good practices with one another. Even from the first this commonwealth of churches was an international one. It can be witnessed already in what we now call the canon of the New Testament, from the fifties of the first century. By the third century it was an intercommunicating commonweal of churches spread around the Mediterranean and penetrating more deeply into the land mass of Asia Minor; and by the fourth century it was an intellectual heritage that was being increasingly codified and commented on by the leading intellectuals of the age, as well as enshrined in a form of liturgical prayers that were becoming increasingly standardized around the worship practices of great Christian city cultures such as Antioch, Rome, Caesarea-Jerusalem, Alexandria, Carthage and eventually Constantinople. Christian thinkers of the earliest centuries knew exactly what was meant by the great tradition of the gospel and were not slow to defend it. This book, therefore, is a collation of exactly those texts that were raised up in defense of the central pillars of belief; and nothing was regarded as so synoptic of the main foundations of belief as the baptismal creed, of which genre the creed of Nicaea, after the fourth century, was elevated as the supreme international example.

The importance of these texts, the very reason why they were designated patristic in the first place, is that they have been commonly regarded across centuries of the life of the church as authentic exegeses of the evangelical and apostolic tradition. As such they are the heart's blood of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Christ that is called to make its journey across time and space confessing one and the same gospel in fidelity to its risen Lord, and with sufficient wit to know how to preach the ancient kerygma faithfully, allowing its renovating power to shine out in ever new historic conditions and philosophical environments.

When one looks at the creedal clauses in slow motion (something this book will allow the reader to do preeminently), it is startlingly obvious how almost all of them take their life as meditations on a foundational biblical phrase, most of which, in turn and in their own original contexts, were exclamations of praise. The technical term for this movement to praise in the face of the mighty works of the Lord was "doxology." It is a word derived from the Greek *doxa*, the "glory" of the Lord, which in and of itself evoked the glorification of the wonders of God from the heart of the church. In short, we might well say, the faith of the early church was doxological in essence. We would, indeed, not be going too far astray to infer that all true theology, ever since, has been doxological in essence; and when it has not been so, it has surely lapsed from the highest quality of theological statement, since it has forgotten its *telos* (its end, its goal and its purpose).

The Centrality of Jesus, Lord and Savior

The essence of the Good News that is the Christian gospel is that freedom brought to the world in the community of Christ, by the Lord's life-giving incarnation, ministry, death and resurrection, and the capacity this saving mystery (for it is a unified whole) confers on the redeemed for the true knowledge of God that illuminates, transfigures and vivifies the believer. The Greek patristic writers summed up this whole related nexus of the salvation wrought by Christ as the

economy of salvation.[9] It is the perennial celebration of this economy that marks the christological sections of the creed and that is the recurring leitmotif of all the sections of this present collection of texts. This celebration of the fundamental insight occurs in two main forms: first the insistence, in the teeth of Arianism, that the Lord who came to earth was one and the same as the eternal Word of God who had been with the Father from all ages and who himself had set within the creation the pattern of its inmost order and beauty;[10] and second, the bold affirmation of Paul's apostolic dictum (Gal 6:14) that we ought to make our boast in the cross of the Lord Jesus. The insistence that Christ's sufferings and death were his redemptive triumph was lovingly explored throughout the early church, to such an extent that the theology of the cross (that *theologia crucis* that is so prevalent in the early Christian writers) becomes a veritable theology of glory and triumph.

The suffering Lord is the victor and hero. It is a far cry from the lugubrious theology of the passion of the later Middle Ages. This second aspect, however, is the predominant theme of the following volume in this series, one that is specifically dedicated to the creedal clauses governing the redemptive work of Christ, beginning from the phrase "he was crucified under Pontius Pilate." It is the concern of this present volume to focus more exclusively on the creedal clauses beginning with "we believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ," and concluding with "and was made man."

The dominant note and character of all these extensive patristic comments on the primary christological clauses is their christocentric character. That may go without saying, but it may be significant to observe that their christocentricity is powerfully dynamic in substance and style. Christ is celebrated as Savior by recounting the force of his victory. Without understanding the nature of the conflict and the achievement of salvation he established in the new world order, the early church implies that one cannot properly understand the true significance of Jesus. The achievement of the Christ is of such cosmological importance, and of such importance in the life of God and the regard God has for his entire world, that the real status of Jesus' person is thereby revealed.

Much has been made in the latter part of the twentieth century of the so-called Christology from below or Christology from above. The terms are not ancient; in fact, they first appear in the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, they are not particularly good as tools for exegeting the mind of the ancient Fathers. They largely do not work, and if they presume, as often they do, that the Scriptures (except the Fourth Gospel) tend to be Christology from below, while the Fathers represent Christology from above, then they are simply wrong. Nothing could be further from the truth. Such crude categories have, for too long now, been overlaid on the great sophistication of patristic Christology. It is long overdue for scholars and students to leave the anachronistic categories of the twentieth century to the side and begin to read, directly from the primary

[9] *Oikonomia tēs sōtērias*.

[10] Thereby establishing the grounds of the human capacity for the knowledge of the unapproachable Godhead of the Father, through the revelatory medium of the divine Word who patterned the order *(taxis)* of the creation, and most intimately the human spirit within that created order, as a veritable icon of the Word.

source once more, and with open ears and unblinkered eyes that will be open to the profound weight and immense maturity of early Christian theological reflection. The first thing that will strike the reader is that the early church, in all its christological thought, as can be abundantly seen from more or less any page of this book, has always approached the humble life of its Lord as a manifestation of the divine and transcendent mercy. Yet it understood his glory as part and parcel of his humiliation on the cross. For them, as was certainly true for the apostles Paul and John, the Lord of glory was the man of sorrows, and any separation of the Teacher of Nazareth from the incarnate Word who was, in and of himself, the perfect sacrament of God, was immediately recognized as a deviation from the central Christian tradition, whether one called that lapse Gnosticism, Docetism, Nestorianism, Photinianism or Arianism was of little moment.

The ability to access patristic Christology directly will, I hope, be what the present volume can best offer to the reader who wishes to gain a personal and more or less unmediated sense of the early theologians giving some of their most pithy and direct comment on the mystery of Jesus. Here is a collection of some of the best and liveliest of the patristic understanding of Christ's person and work, gathered around a celebration of the creed as the foundational element of the authentic apostolic tradition. This is not just a historic monument for the delectation of curiosity seekers or aficionados of ancient history. It is, more than that, a wellspring of apostolic witness.

It is one of the great tragedies of the current state of divided Christianity that this patristic literature is so little known by so many, or, worse, regarded as not a real heritage of the Protestant world, even though it might be of the Orthodox and Catholics. This treasure of the early church shines with the grace of the Spirit, and because of this it is the true catholic (that is, universal) heritage of all the churches of God. It is a lamp to light their way to a deeper understanding of the Scriptures. Such a regained sense of apostolicity is, I suggest, the great agenda of the present moment: the true vision of what real ecumenism ought to be aiming for, in a time when the splintered confessions of Christianity need urgently to renew their hope that they can still come together in a single, even though richly stranded, harmony of the confession of the one Christ, the selfsame Lord who still reigns actively over his redeemed church. For those of us who profess "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," it is not beyond our wit (at least if it is within our will) to confess also "one apostolic confession" rooted and founded in the great tradition such as is so clearly represented in these volumes.

The short introductions to the various sections of the creed that follow attempt to give a synopsis of the immediate context to what the various Fathers had to say about different aspects of the person of Christ (his eternal sonship, his incarnation, whether he had a soul, and so forth). These immediate remarks, then, will take a wider perspective and look at the generic christological attitude of the Fathers. There was relatively little speculative spirit in the church of the first ages. But once problems had been noted, answers were always sought after. Whenever there was widespread uneasiness with something that was felt to be a deviant innovation (a heresy), the crisis was usually the stimulus for a flurry of subsequent reflection and writing about what

"ought to be" seen as the correct view. The literary efforts of the Fathers, therefore, and this is true until about the sixth century anyway, tend to be reactive rather than proactive. There are centuries, and clusters of controversies within centuries, that tend to produce flurries of work, and then there are periods of relative quiet, where the poets and liturgists could stand back from the heat of controversy and write more lyrically.

The christological writings of an Athanasius or a Basil, for example (men who spent more or less the whole of their active lives in white-hot controversy), and the literature of apologetics sound a different tone from the beautiful poetry of such as Ephrem the Syrian or Romanos the Melodist. What can also be seen is that the poets and liturgists are faithfully in harmony with these great controversialists. The Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, used in the Eastern churches throughout Lent, is so-called precisely because so much of the magnificent Christology of Basil has been incorporated into it in the form of the great eucharistic prayer. The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, the standard liturgy of the Orthodox church, is a vast and sustained hymn of praise using the patristic Christology of the fourth century as its base material. Far from being dry-as-dust dogmatics, the church shows the authenticity of its tradition by converting it back into the gold of doxology. Anyone who reads the Roman canon can see immediately what a sustained biblical chant it all is. Like one of the psalmists recounting the glorious deeds of the Lord and how he saved Israel through them, so the ancient Latin canon of the mass recounts the whole history of salvation from the righteous Abel, through Melchisidek, to the sacrifice of Jesus.

The following short introductions that open each major section will try to contextualize the different sections more discretely. When a particular argument sprang up (for example, whether the divine Logos was eternal or time-bounded), a large body of literature issued to meet it and work the question out from Scripture, where possible, or deduction from scriptural principles. Often that first question produced others, equally urgent. If the divine Logos was not eternal, for example, to what extent was the adjective "divine" appropriate? If the Logos was time-bound, surely that was the equivalent of confessing the Logos as a creature under God? Such was the logic of Arius, and some of the greatest of the fourth-century Fathers rose to the challenge of refuting him with sophisticated arguments about the nature of procession and order within the timeless Godhead, being themselves timeless things. To attempt to explain why a timeless ordering of the divinity (what we now so blithely, and often without much thought, call the Trinity) can allow for the Father to originate the Son, while the Son is not thereby rendered secondary or inferior by nature to the Father, is certainly of an order of difficulty far more advanced than Arius's sea chanties that he taught his parish in Alexandria, reducing the whole gospel to the axiom that "There was [a time] when he [the Logos] was not."

The wit of the followers of the great tradition inserted a "not" at the front of his slogan and it now became even more condensed: "There was not when he was not." But Athanasius, while knowing that he had to answer such logical puzzles for the sake of quieting the scandal among the faithful, if not for the sake of honing the expression of authentic Christianity for the intelligentsia, was not ever led astray that this level of apologetic was the best way of interpreting the

apostolic tradition. His wider writing, therefore, has a far greater range. The patristic Christology is seized with a more universally cosmic spirit, and it lifts its head from abstruse metaphysic, however important that may still be, and often enters the domain of magnificently elevating mystical discourse. This is often the case with the greatest of the orthodox theologians—they merge with high poetry. This is because the Logos of God is not merely the ultimate Truth but also the perfect beauty of God.

Not everything the Fathers have to say is equally convincing to the ears of moderns. It could hardly be expected to be so. Much of the argument is set within the conventions of a form of rhetoric and logic that may appear strange and archaic to most readers today. Their use of scriptural proof texts may also come across as odd to generations who have been accustomed to reading the Bible with the unimaginable luxury of a Bible of their own, and thus to reading with an eye to the wider context than the ancient church, which heard the Scriptures read to them in the course of public worship, generally had. We need to make allowances for them, just as we often need to make allowances for novels from other times and ages. But it is that making of allowances that so often educates us by making us stand a little apart from our own time and condition and, perhaps, our own limiting prejudices.

I hope that this entrance into the world of some of the great Christian spirits of the past will provide exactly this alienating education. They believed that the enlightenment provided by authentic theology was a divine gift, an enlightenment gifted by the Spirit of God. Many Christians are accustomed to such thoughts when reading the holy Scriptures, though even here perhaps that sense of the holy is being diminished in recent times by the prevalence of radically secularized styles of exegesis. Few, I suspect, would be accustomed to regarding the collection of patristic literature as akin to this, but many of the wisest Christians of times past saw the work of the Fathers in exactly that light: the writings of the saints of God who had come to share the mind of Christ[11] and were thus in a vantage position to explain the nature of Christ to others. Perhaps one can explain that patristic spirit more clearly by ending with the words of Athanasius of Alexandria, when he was commenting on how to read the Scriptures. His argument is that it is not enough to make a record of the words; what really matters is the conforming of the mind and heart to the spirit of what is signified. This, I think, is the essence of what is meant by the apostolic tradition in Christianity, and more simply, the essence of what is meant by passing from Christian dogmatics to Christian discipleship. It is also the root, therefore, of how theology can rise from being merely tedious dogmatizing to ascend even into the presence of God; being transfigured, by the grace of God, so as to pass from mere comprehension into godly illumination:

> Above all, you should live in such a way that you may have the right to eat of the tree of knowledge and of life, and thus come to eternal joys. . . . But for the searching of the Scriptures and for true knowledge of them, an honorable life is needed, and a pure soul and that

[11]See Phil 2:5.