

Reflections on the Creed Week 1 Prayer Materials

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

This initial statement contains, as in a seed, the whole of the Creed. It means that I dedicate myself in complete trust to a power greater than myself. This dedication is a commitment of my whole being – mind and body – from my heart, my innermost being, my “deep heart’s core” to use an expression coined by William Butler Yeats.

Faith is far more than the sum total of beliefs. Beliefs are merely pointers; faith is profound trust in the actuality to which beliefs point. The Creed mentions beliefs, but it is a statement of faith, not of beliefs. There are many beliefs, but there is ultimately only one faith: faith in God. Beliefs are only so many windows toward the one actuality with which faith is concerned: God.

(Brother David Steindl-Rast, *Deeper than Words*)

Fifteen centuries ago Saint Augustine made a distinction between three Latin phrases that might initially seem to mean much the same thing – *credo Deum*, *credo Deo*, and *credo in Deum*. We might translate all three as “I believe in God.” In fact, however, Augustine noted that they mean quite different things. *Credo Deum* means that I accept the reality of God as a fact. “Having examined the evidence and considered the possibilities I have come to the conclusion that God exists.” *Credo Deo* affirms that I believe something because of God. I believe that something is true because God has revealed it. The third phrase, *Credo in Deum*, might be most accurately if, in English, puzzlingly translated as “I believe into God.” It is not about *what* we believe or *why* we believe; it is a commitment to believing. It is a statement of trust and loyalty. We still catch some of this in English when one person tells another, “I believe in you.” This is certainly not a statement that I acknowledge that you exist or that I accept something as true because you tell me it is so. Rather, it is a way of saying that I trust you, I commit myself to you, I am relying on you. Like this third phrase, the “I do” of the baptismal vows and the “I do” of the marriage vows are personal pledges, promises of fidelity, acts of trust.

(Michael Himes, Easter Sunday Reflection)

To say “I believe in God,” is to say to the world at large that I am steering by a star I cannot see but which I am convinced is there because I feel that it must be. The mind boggles at the intellectual poverty of the position. On the other hand, the spirit soars. What kind of God is it who needs to “prove” anything that the human heart already clearly contains. We do not, each of us singly, fabricate out of new cloth the idea of God. We are born into it. We inherit it. I am not alone in my uncertain uncertainty. There is, after all, not a people in the history of the world who have not stood at the same spiritual juncture as I and not made the same choice. We know the unknowable with piercing clarity when, alone in life, we feel that only God stands by.

(Joan Chittister, *In Search of Belief*)

That [God] is Father we know in utmost fullness from Jesus Christ, who constantly makes loving, thankful, and reverent reference to him as his Origin. It is because he bears fruit out of himself and requires no fructifying that he is called Father, and not in the sexual sense, for he will be the Creator of man and woman, and thus contains the primal qualities of woman in himself in the same simultaneously transcending way as those of man. (The Greek *gennaō* can imply both siring and bearing, as can the word for to come into being: *ginomai*.) Jesus' words indicate that this fruitful self-surrender by the primal Origin has neither beginning nor end: It is a perpetual occurrence in which essence and activity coincide. Herein lies the most unfathomable aspect of the Mystery of God: that what is absolutely primal is no statically self-contained and comprehensible reality, but one that exists solely in dispensing itself: a flowing wellspring with no holding-trough beneath it, an act of procreation with no seminal vesicle, with no organism at all to perform the act. In the pure act of self-pouring-forth, God the Father is his self, or, if one wishes, a "person" (in a transcending way).

(Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Credo*)

The word translated 'almighty' in fact in the Greek means 'ruler of everything' or even something like 'holder of everything'; and this suggests a slightly different approach. It means that there is nowhere God is absent, powerless or irrelevant; no situation in the universe in the face of which God is at a loss. Which is much the same as saying that there is no situation in which God is not to be relied upon. ...[B]ear in mind the ways in which we can get the idea of 'almightiness' a bit wrong by thinking of it in terms of a great wish-fulfilling fantasy instead of seeing it as a way of saying that God always has the capacity to do something fresh and different, to bring something new out of a situation – because nothing outside himself can finally frustrate his longings. So almightiness in this sense becomes another reason for trust.

(Rowan Williams, *Tokens of Trust*)

We are no longer a people of clarity who know about this one Lord and who stand in simplicity, without usurping the Lord's rights, without betraying our duty to him, or bargaining. We have become a people of many lords, somehow divided, somehow separated. We could use more than two hands to make it all come out right and make it good. Fear of God does not mean being afraid. It does not mean slavish cowardice or breaking down before God the Lord. Rather, it means knowing the absolute, inalienable dominion of the Lord of all. Much in our lives would be different if more people knew the easy, simple sentence – and vividly understood – that God is the Lord. For anyone who comprehends the fear of God in this way, not only does the slavish fear of God die, but the anxious fear of other people dies as well.

(Father Alfred Delp, S.J., *Advent of the Heart*)

God's love is so complete in itself—he is lover, responding beloved, and union of the fruit of both—that he has need of no extradivine world in order to have something to love. If such a world is freely created by God, apart from any compelling need, then this occurs, from the viewpoint of the Father, in order to glorify the beloved Son; from the view point of the loving Son, in order to lay everything as a gift at the Father's feet; and from the viewpoint of the Spirit, in order to lend new expression to the reciprocal love between Father and Son. Hence, the one triune God is Creator of the world. If this creation is attributed specifically to the Father, then that is because, within God, he is the Origin behind which nothing more can be sought.

(Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Credo*)

The Scriptural expression “heaven and earth” means all that exists, creation in its entirety. It also indicates the bond, deep within creation, that both unites heaven and earth and distinguishes the one from the other: “the earth” is the world of men, while “heaven” or “the heavens” can designate both the firmament and God's own “place” – our “Father in heaven” and consequently the “heaven” too which is eschatological glory. Finally “heaven” refers to the saints and the “place” of the spiritual creatures, the angels, who surround God.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church)