**The Nicene Creed – “The Father Almighty…”**

* Modern Nicene Creed:
	+ “We believe in one God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things, visible and invisible; and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not created, of the **same essence** as the Father, through whom all things were created; who for us human beings and our salvation came down from the heavens and was made flesh from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into the heavens, and sits at the right hand of the Father, and comes again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there shall be no end; and [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and the life-giver, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father and the Son is worshiped together and glorified together, who spoke through the prophets; and [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 age to come.”[[1]](#footnote-1)
* “We believe in one God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things, visible and invisible…”
	+ “We believe in one God, the Father almighty…”
		- “We believe in…”
			* A communal affirmation which reminds one another of and encourages one another with certain non-negotiable biblical truths.
			* We genuinely believe these truths; not just cognitively understand the propositions nor merely assent to the truths of those propositions, but we rest those propositions rightly understood.
		- “We believe in one God…”
			* Initial affirmation of biblical monotheism:
				+ **Deut. 6:4; Isa. 44:6, 8; 1 Tim. 1:17; James 2:19**
		- “We believe in one God, the Father…”
			* We are now informed that we are actually talking about the eternal Father of the eternal Son, the first Person of the Trinity.
				+ New Testament (NT) witness to the deity of the Father, which was rarely objected to, is overwhelming:

**Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 1:3**

* + - * + NT witness to the personal distinctions between the Father and the Son:

Matt. 28:19; John 1:1-3, 14; 17:1, 5; **Gal. 4:4-6**

* + - * The one God we are affirming has been revealed to us as “Father.” He is not some distant deity but is immanent and personally involved in our lives.
			* What to do with some Old Testament (OT) passages that speak of God as father? Are they referring to the eternal Father of the eternal Son, or simply to a “fatherly” love that the LORD has for his people? It depends on the context![[2]](#footnote-2)
				+ Test cases:

Ps. 68:5; Isa. 9:6; Mal. 2:10

* + - “We believe in one God, the Father almighty…”
			* Almighty is meant to convey God’s perfections; his omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, self-existence, and immutability.
				+ *YHWH*, the LORD

Exod. 3:14-15

* + - * + *El Shaddai*, God Almighty

Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exod. 6:3

* + - * + *Shaddai*, Almighty

Job 8:3, 5; 13:3; 15:25; 22:17; 23:16; 27:2

* + - * + NT use of Almighty, “ruler of the universe”

Rev. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:7, 14; 19:15; 21:22

Rev. 15:3; 19:6 seem to apply the title, “Almighty,” to the Lamb who is the Son.

* + “We believe in one God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things, visible and invisible…”
		- Here we are introduced to one of the most fundamental realities of theology; the Creator-creature distinction.
			* **Ps. 50: 19-21**
		- While creation is a trinitarian act, meaning that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are all involved, Scripture does often attribute the work of creation particularly to the Father.
			* **Eph. 3:8-9; Heb. 2:10**
		- Albert Mohler, quoting in part from Martin Luther’s *Small Catechism of 1529*, has said, “God’s provision is perhaps never more sweetly summarized: I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given me and still sustains my body and soul, all my limbs and senses, my reason and all the faculties of my mind, together with food and clothing, house and home, family and property; that he provides me daily and abundantly with all the necessities of life, protects me from all danger, and preserves me from all evil. Do you so believe? We believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”[[3]](#footnote-3)
* How do these truths make our hearts sing?
	+ **Question 26** of the Heidelberg Catechism, “What do you believe when you say, ‘I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?’”[[4]](#footnote-4)
	+ **Answer 26** of the Heidelberg Catechism, “That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by His eternal counsel and providence, is my God and Father because of Christ His Son. I trust Him so much that I do not doubt He will provide whatever I need for body and soul, and He will turn to my good whatever adversity He sends me in this [beautiful but broken] world. He is able to do this because He is almighty God; He desires to do this because He is a faithful Father.”[[5]](#footnote-5)
1. Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ’s Power: Volume 1 – The Age of the Early Church Fathers* (Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications Ltd, 2016), 240-41. Carl Trueman notes concerning the *filioque* clause (i.e., and from the Son), “Of course, the Western addition of the dual procession of the Spirit (‘Who proceeds from the Father and the Son’) at the Third Council of Toledo in 589 has been a source of East/West contention ever since, but, with this one exception, there is not debate about the rest of the creed’s teachings.” (Carl Trueman, *The Creedal Imperative* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2012], 95) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Louis Berkhoff describes three ways in which the name “Father” may be applied to the triune God generally: “(1) Sometimes it is applied to the triune God as the origin of all created things… [cf. Ps. 68:5; Acts 17:26-28] (2) The name is also ascribed to the triune God to express the theocratic relation in which He stands to Israel as His Old Testament people [cf. Exod. 4:22-23; Deut. 32:6; Ps. 89:26; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:4, 19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; also in relation to the Davidic King; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 28:6]… (3) In the New Testament the name is generally used to designate the triune God as the Father in an ethical sense of all His spiritual children.” (Louis Berkhoff, *Systematic Theology* [Louisville: GLH Publishing], 65 [Kindle edition]) Richard Muller helpfully adds, “Given that God is so frequently identified as ‘Father’ in Scripture, distinction must be made between the ‘essential’ and the ‘personal’ use of the terms – as applied either to the Godhead generally or to the Father personally… when the word Father is attributed to God *essentially*, though all creatures are excluded, yet all three Divine persons are included, because they are co-equal, they have one nature, will and worship; they are one and the same God.” (Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* [PRRD]*: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003], 4:246) Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. Richard B. Gaffin (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2012-2014), 1:51-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *The Apostles’ Creed: Discovering Authentic Christianity in an Age of Counterfeits* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2019), 25 (Kindle edition). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Kevin DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)