



Tracts for Our Times

I Believe in One God

A Short Commentary on the Creed: Parts 7-9

Tract 8

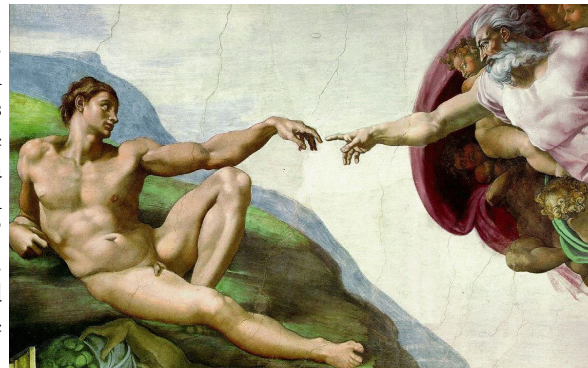
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7: ...And (I believe) in one Lord ...

Whilst the first part of the creed deals with God as Father, the one, creator and almighty, the second part now presents us, with an abrupt transition, a human being: Jesus. The first part was in a sense 'impersonal' but with the confession of Jesus as Lord, we are giving a face to God. God reveals himself in a human being.

Therefore, whilst other religions could profess the same God of the first part of the creed —God is also professed as creator and almighty by other religions—, we are now faced with a statement of Christian faith. Similar to our Jewish brothers and sisters, we confess that God is Father, maker of heaven and earth and almighty. Nevertheless, in the difference, we believe that God has become one of us: human and that the Holy one has become incarnate. Like our Muslim brothers and sisters, we confess that God is almighty, perfect and immortal. With mutual respect, we nonetheless confess that the Almighty has accepted to be fragile, and that the 'Perfection' bore our imperfections. As with other monotheistic religions, we confess only 'one God' but Christians confess that God's oneness is not destroyed by our confession of God as a Trinity of Persons. In a nutshell, we say that God, the Unknowable, has made himself known and has spoken. He took flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord, some two thousand years ago. This is the Christian teaching and the leap of the Christian faith! This is the reason why the transition between the first and the second part of the creed states 'and in one Lord Jesus Christ.'

This title has a dual meaning. On the one hand, 'Lord' is a human title. Jesus, fully human, is confessed by Christians as being the most perfect authority and a revelation of what humanity can attain. But on the other hand, 'Lord' is also a divine title. This was the word used in the Old Testament by the Hebrews and the people of Israel to speak about God.



Therefore, by applying the title Lord to Jesus, the creed is confessing Jesus' divinity. In that respect, to confess Jesus as Lord underlines a deep mystery of the incarnation: God reveals himself in our humanity while also transcending it and all its titles accordingly.

8: ...Jesus ...

'Jesus'. The Name that is unutterable very often lies in the gutter. It exists among other choice words in the considerable vocabulary of swear words in modern usage. Such disrespect for the Holy Name misses the crucial point of its most adorable mention.

Jesus is the Name which is above all other names. It is the Name we daily pronounce to be 'Hallowed'. It is the only Name under Heaven by which we are saved. Even His very Name means salvation. In his commentary on the Creed, Rufinus indicates that 'Jesus' is a Hebrew word that means 'Saviour', as we read in the books of Moses that Auses the son of Nave changed his name to 'Jesus' when he had been chosen to lead the people. This was so that he would bear a name that is proper to princes and generals - those who are looked upon to 'save' their followers. Thus the name 'Jesus' is used in salvation history for two people: the one who lead the people who had been freed from the slavery of Egypt and lived in the Promised Land; and the One who lead the people from the darkness of ignorance and sin to the new life of the Kingdom of God.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (no.2666) concludes a series of meditations on the various titles of Jesus with a prudent reflection on the importance of the Holy Name. The word 'Jesus' is described as the name which contains everything. This Divine Name may not be uttered by human lips, but it was under this Name that our God assumed our human nature, and so the Word of God hands the Name over to us, and we can evoke it - 'Jesus', 'YHWH', the One who saves us.

Within 'Jesus' everything is contained - God, humanity, creation and salvation. When we pray 'Jesus', we invoke His saving presence. This is the name that was given at the Incarnation, pronounced at His birth, crucified on the Cross, risen from the dead, and reigning for all eternity. Through the mention of His Most Holy Name we are redeemed. We have a duty to ensure that the Most Holy Name of Jesus is forever praised and glorified.

9: ...Christ ...

To understand this word requires some knowledge of the history of the Jewish people and their understanding of God's action.

“ The Name that is unutterable [Jesus] very often lies in the gutter in modern usage. ”

The English word Christ is derived from the Latin *Christus* which corresponds to the New Testament Greek *Christos* meaning ‘anointed’. The New Testament Greek itself translates a Hebrew word *masiah* from which comes the English word “messiah”.

In the Old Testament, the Israelite king is called *masiah yhwh*, ‘the anointed one of God’, because he is consecrated by an anointing on his ascendance to the throne. The king and the priests were anointed. For kings, the right of succession to the throne was assured by the ceremony of anointing, by a priest or by a prophet (as David was anointed by Samuel). The peculiar significance of this anointing was that the one anointed king became God’s chosen one, invested with his spirit and guarded by his special providence. The king was a leader who was divinely endowed to carry out the will of God. Others also could be ‘the anointed one of God’, such as patriarchs or even a pagan like Cyrus, King of the Persians (Isaiah 45:1).

When the kingdom of Israel was attacked and eventually devastated by its powerful neighbours, the appearance of a future king or ‘messiah’ whose rule would be glorious and secure was foretold by Isaiah (8 cent. BC), Jeremiah (7 cent. BC) and Ezekiel (6 cent. BC). This hope did not die; it was still alive at the time of Jesus. In the last century before Jesus, the hoped for saviour of the Jews who would restore the throne of David was called simply *hammassiah*, ‘the anointed one’, or in Greek *ho Christos*. At this time there were several different kinds of Jews, as there are several different kinds of Christians today, and there were correspondingly diverse expectations about what the ‘messiah’ would be. Some thought there would be ‘two messiahs’, a priestly one and a kingly one. Some thought he would be a symbolic figure presiding over an ideal socio-religious order. For some the ‘messiah’ had military and political overtones. For others it was more mythological and apocalyptic.

“ He is “King of kings” and yet he identifies himself with the low, the outcast. ”

When the disciples of Jesus recognised him as the promised saviour, they proclaimed him as the ‘messiah’ or Christ (see Mark 8:29, Acts 5:42, 9:22). They seem to have thought he would establish an earthly kingdom, though Jesus himself was wary of giving them this idea. His own messiahship is paradoxical and strange. His crown is made of thorns. He enters Jerusalem in triumph but on a donkey, and he attacks the central institution of Jewish religion, the temple. He is anointed, not by a priest but by a woman who is socially a nobody, even a sinner (see Luke 7:36-50). He is the ‘king of

kings’, and yet he identifies himself with the low, the ignored, the outcast, the sinner, the victim of violence.

Christos was originally a descriptive term. However, when the Greek-speaking pagans began to become Christians, the Jewish notion of the Messiah meant little to

them, and they understood Christos as though it were one of the saviour's names. This may have been because it sounded practically the same as the personal name *Chrestos* which means 'good, or kind', as though Jesus' name itself is goodness and kindness. This pagan lack of understanding of the meaning of *Christos* is why it is often found in the New Testament without the definite article *ho*, 'the', either alone or together with the name Jesus: hence 'Christ Jesus' and then the way in which he is best known, 'Jesus Christ'. ✠

HYMN TO THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS

St Bernard of Clairvaux

Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills the breast!
Yet sweeter far Thy face to see
And in Thy presence rest.

No voice can sing, no heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find,
A sweeter sound than Jesus' name,
The Savior of mankind.

O hope of every contrite heart!
o joy of all the meek!
To those who fall, how kind Thou art!
How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find? Ah! this
Nor tongue nor pen can show
The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved ones know.

Jesus! our only hope be Thou,
As Thou our prize shalt be;
In Thee be all our glory now,
And through eternity. Amen



"The following Tracts were published with the object of contributing something towards the practical revival of doctrines held by the great divines of our faith."

This was the intention of Cardinal Newman and his companions
(known as the Oxford Tractarians) when they began publishing their *Tracts for the Times*.

The Port Elizabeth Oratory, faithful to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church
and the spirit of Saint Philip Neri, hope to contribute something to the
faith and understanding of the People of God in Port Elizabeth,
conforming their hearts and minds ever more closely to the Person of Jesus Christ.