

The Creed and the Scriptures

Edited by
MARKUS BOCKMUEHL
and NATHAN EUBANK

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament
519*

Mohr Siebeck

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Herausgeber/Editor

Jörg Frey (Zürich)

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ISBN 978-3-16-161598-6 / eISBN 978-3-16-163930-2
DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-163930-2

ISSN 0512-1604 / eISSN 2568-7476
(Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available at <https://dnb.dnb.de>.

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The book was typeset by Martin Fischer in Tübingen using Minion typeface, printed on non-aging paper by Stückle in Ettenheim, and bound by Buchbinderei Spinner in Ottersweier.

Printed in Germany.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations in this book follow the recommendations of *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL, 2014). Additional abbreviations are listed below.

AKG	Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte
AnOx.S	Anecdota Oxoniensia – Semitic series
BCAC	Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World
CLAS	Columbia Lectures on Ancient Studies
<i>CIW</i>	The Classical Weekly
<i>CT</i>	Christianity Today
<i>EAC</i>	Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity
<i>EC</i>	Early Christianity
<i>EoC</i>	The Encyclopedia of Christianity
FKDG	Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte
GRHS	Groningen-Royal Holloway Studies on the Greek City after the Classical Age
HCPT	Holy Cross Studies in Patristic Theology and History
<i>IJE</i>	International Journal of Ethics
IPM	Instrumenta Patristica et Mediaevalia
<i>JAJ</i>	Journal of Ancient Judaism
<i>JEAC</i>	Journal of Ethics in Antiquity and Christianity
<i>JEEH</i>	Journal of Early Ecclesiastical History
<i>JRPC</i>	Journal of Religion and Popular Culture
<i>JTI</i>	Journal of Theological Interpretation
KBAJCL	Kleine Bibliothek der antiken jüdischen und christlichen Literatur
LQF	Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen
MSup	Melilah Supplement
NCBOT	New Clarendon Bible Old Testament
NEIS	The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys
PHR	Philosophie hellénistique et romaine
<i>QL</i>	Questions Liturgiques
RHP	Routledge Handbooks in Philosophy
RM	Die Religionen der Menschheit
SIC	Studies in Classics
SIJ	Studies in Judaism
SLRBP	Sussex Library of Religious Beliefs and Practices
StPBu	Studia Post-Biblica
<i>TCE</i>	The Catholic Encyclopedia
ThBT	Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann
<i>ThesCRA</i>	Thesaurus Cultus et Rituum Antiquorum
<i>TPRR</i>	The Presbyterian and Reformed Review
TSSR	Textual Sources for the Study of Religion
VCSup	Vigiliae Christianae Supplements

Introduction

The Creed and the Scriptures

Markus Bockmuehl and Nathan Eubank

“Scripture and the Creeds” – “Biblical Christianity” – “Creedal Orthodoxy”: mottos like these are sometimes deployed as a way of identifying forms of faith and thought in relation to a recognizably normative Christian tradition, regardless of their place on the increasingly fractured and untidy map of post-Christendom ecclesial identities. Appeals to Creed and Scripture tend in such contexts to carry a kind of self-explanatory objectivity, serving as ideological shorthand to acknowledge and demarcate commonalities of belief and practice.

It may be that such slogans do in some cases serve their desired function in practice. What is typically far less clear, however, is quite how “Scripture” and “Creed” might reference or reinforce each other in contemporary discourse, let alone at their point of origin. Were the creeds designed as summaries of Scripture, perhaps even by encapsulating it as “portable story”?¹ Or, conversely, was the formation of Scripture itself subject to creedal as well as canonical considerations? The interplay between these questions has of course a long history: it is, for example, evocatively raised in an early fourteenth-century manuscript illumination showing the Twelve Apostles each contributing one clause to the creed – a trope previously articulated in a sermon of Ps-Augustine.²

As it happens, the time looks ripe for a historically accountable re-engagement of just that relationship between the Bible and the Creed. Critical scholarly work since J. N. D. Kelly’s landmark *Early Christian Creeds* and Frances M. Young’s *The Making of the Creeds* has made little obvious progress on the Creed’s scriptural intertexts.³ In the present century, Markus Vinzent’s *Der Ursprung des*

¹ See e.g., N. T. Wright, “Reading Paul, Thinking Scripture,” in *Scripture’s Doctrine and Theology’s Bible: How the New Testament Shapes Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Alan Torrance (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 59–71.

² Paris Bibl. Mazarine MS 0924 fol. 150v, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paris_-_Bibl._Mazarine_-_ms._0924,_f_150v.jpg; cf. Ps-Augustine, *Sermo 240 De Symbolo* 4.1 (PL 39: 2189).

³ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London/New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1950). Cf. Frances M. Young, *The Making of the Creeds* (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Trinity Press International, 1991). Her contribution to the present volume is now further expanded in *Scripture, the Genesis of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023), which appeared too late to receive full consideration here.

Apostolikums im Urteil der kritischen Forschung and Wolfram Kinzig's exhaustive *Faith in Formulae* most fully delineate the critical *status quaestionis* about the origin and development of the Creeds.⁴ More accessible accounts include Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski's *Apostles' Creed*, Robert W. Jenson's *Canon and Creed*, and Liuwe H. Westra's *The Apostles' Creed*.⁵

None of these extensive studies, however, foreground the mode and means of Scriptural reception in the Creed. Luke Timothy Johnson's *The Creed* does attempt this, but at a relatively popular and accessible level.⁶ And yet to our knowledge no previous study foregrounds the critical and historical examination of the problem as here presented.

Not just historically but theologically, too, biblical and creedal studies have in recent years remained largely estranged from each other. From this perspective, the task of reconnecting them at the level of scholarship appears to us to hold worthwhile potential for aspirations, voiced at Vatican II (but also in Protestant settings more recently), that "the study of the sacred page" might once again become "the soul of sacred theology."⁷

Appeals either to the Creed or to Scripture, let alone to both of them, typically ignore that even though they do not reference each other, their identities are mutually defining and neither stands meaningfully on its own.

1. The Oxford-Notre Dame Project

All the essays in this volume are the fruit, directly or (in one or two cases) indirectly, of a research project specifically on Scripture and the Old Roman Creed (the main precursor of the Apostles' Creed), jointly designed and led by the Editors at the Universities of Oxford and Notre Dame. The project implementation was made possible by support in cash and in kind at both institutions, and especially by generous funding through a research grant from the Catholic Biblical Association (CBA) in conjunction with the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). To all of these institutions, and to their supporting

⁴ Markus Vinzent, *Der Ursprung des Apostolikums im Urteil der kritischen Forschung*, FKDG 89 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006). Wolfram Kinzig, ed., *Faith in Formulae: A Collection of Early Christian Creeds and Creed-Related Texts*, 4 vols., OECT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁵ Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski, *The Apostles' Creed and Its Early Christian Context* (London: T & T Clark, 2009). Robert W. Jenson, *Canon and Creed: Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010). Liuwe H. Westra, *The Apostles' Creed: Origin, History, and Some Early Commentaries*, IPM 43 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002).

⁶ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why it Matters* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

⁷ *Dei Verbum*, 24.

administrators, we would like here to express our heartfelt thanks – not least for their patience with multiple Covid-induced postponements. Additional thanks are due to Prof. Jörg Frey and our other colleagues at Mohr Siebeck for accepting the volume and providing continued support despite these delays.

The earliest essays of this book took shape as papers presented and discussed at the Oxford New Testament Research Seminar in the years 2017 to 2019. After that, the coronavirus pandemic of 2019–2022 unfortunately cancelled our plans for a 2020 conference at Notre Dame that was intended to feature the remaining papers. With travel restrictions still in place, in July 2021 we were eventually able to hold a somewhat reduced conference in a hybrid format. Editorial work on the submitted essays for the present volume began in earnest in mid-2022. (While the present volume constitutes the project's primary academic output, we also anticipate the publication of a more widely accessible monograph for catechetical use by the USCCB and others.)

2. The Present Volume

The argument of this book proceeds in a succession of four related stages. We open with three groups of contributions that consider the ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman context of Christian creeds before proceeding via questions of origin and function to the Creed's place in patristic reflection about the relationship between Scripture and Christian faith. The remainder of the volume then treats a series of theological topics in the order of their appearance in the Apostles' Creed.

2.1 *Creeds in Jewish and Greco-Roman Antiquity*

First, three opening contributions by Markus Bockmuehl, David Lincicum, and John F. Fitzgerald investigate questions of genre and precedent. Are the Christian creeds entirely *sui generis* as is sometimes claimed? Or if not, what sense, if any, can be made of them in the context of Christianity's Jewish origins – and to what extent might they manifest meaningful points of comparison with contemporary Greco-Roman or other ancient cultures?

Markus Bockmuehl's opening essay turns to the familiar contention that creeds are in essence a Christian preoccupation without obvious correlation in ancient Jewish belief or practice, whether before or after the rise of Christianity.

The notion of Judaism as a fundamentally creedless religion has certainly long circulated in popular as well as scholarly circles. Recent research, however, has been more willing to allow that ideas of religious coherence or identity are not alien to Jewish views of the first three Christian centuries. Viewed on a broader canvas, there are indeed Jewish antecedents in numerous personal and communal texts of a formulaic confessional nature. These might be said to begin

most famously with affirmations like the *Shema Yisrael* (Deut 6) or “my father was a wandering Aramaean” (Deut 26), which already resemble elements of a salvation-historical creed.

Pre-Christian Jewish liturgies of ritual immersion for the conversion of Gentiles do not survive. But the frequently cited novella known as *Joseph and Aseneth* describes such a conversion, and its confessional declarations of monotheistic faith are clearly punctuated with strong affirmations of the creator. More generally, rabbinic texts correlate sound belief with moral uprightness, and aberrant confession or belief with aberrant ethics. Classic apostates like Elisha ben Abuyah are condemned for their doctrinal heresy and wickedness in tandem, while orthodoxy goes hand in hand with piety and moral rectitude in many well-known rabbis.

Blanket affirmations about Judaism lacking creeds are thus unlikely to be serviceable. The answer to the question requires a more nuanced and comprehensive definition of a creed to account for texts that appear to support analogous functions and settings.

Taking up a salient case in point, David Lincicum proceeds in the next essay to explore how both Philo and Josephus deploy theological summaries to characterize the heart of Jewish belief and practice. While ancient Judaism lacks “creeds” in a liturgically formalized sense, these two Hellenistic Jewish authors do attest the making of substantive summaries comprising a standard set of truths, a practice that may have contributed to the development of creeds in early Christianity. Josephus provides interesting (and interestingly diverse) summaries of the Law in *Antiquities* Books 3–4 and *Against Apion*, while additionally promising a treatise on Jewish opinions about God that unfortunately does not survive.

Philo gives priority to the Ten Commandments as the only part of the Law revealed directly by God’s voice, and he also summarizes the Law in several places. Philo’s key theological summary in *Opif.* 172 is a meditation on the creation account in Genesis 1 and frames it in dialogue with Greco-Roman philosophical positions. This summary singles out the doctrines of monotheism, creation, and providence, and seeks to present Judaism in an attractive and understandable way for a wider audience.

Illustrating the relevance of such patterns for the New Testament, Lincicum draws attention to the Apostle Paul’s own remarkably Jewish accounts of Gentile conversion in Romans 9–11 and 1 Thessalonians 2: the faith to which his converts were called was indeed substantively a Jewish one. Despite the absence of any clear creed in ancient Judaism, therefore, Philo and Josephus provide important theological epitomizations that offer insight into the formation of early Christian belief.

Greco-Roman and other ancient religious settings set the context for John F. Fitzgerald’s exploration of whether there are non-Jewish antecedents and

analogies to early Christian creedalism. He suggests that in fact creeds play a significant role in several diverse religions as a formula of affirmation and association, marking out individual and corporate religious identity. Fitzgerald begins by pointing out the Triratna formula in Buddhism and the *Fravarānē* in Zoroastrianism, in contrast to the widely noted absence of creeds in Greco-Roman religions.

Nevertheless, he argues that Christian creeds were not therefore created *ex nihilo*, but do follow several partial antecedents and analogies. The ancient Greeks had a cultural tendency toward simplification, condensation, distillation, and essentializing, which led them to favour the production of abridgements, anthologies, collections, commentaries, digests, doxographies, epitomes, florilegia, handbooks, introductions, lexical aids, lists, and summaries. Greek epitomes of histories began to be compiled during the fourth century BCE, and Roman (as well as Jewish) epitomes are known from the first century BCE.

Fitzgerald suggests that Christian creeds share some similarities with these epitomes, as they condense essential beliefs into brief formulas. At the same time, he acknowledges that the worship services of Greco-Roman religions did not permit verbal confession of the worshippers' beliefs. The gods clearly played a prominent role in Greek life, thought, and culture, but not in the same way as the Christian God. Thus, despite antecedents and analogies to early Christian creedalism in other religions, Fitzgerald suggests that hermeneutical caution must necessarily govern the use of terms like "creeds" and "confessions" in reference to other religions.

2.2 *The Study of Christian Creeds: Methods and Origins*

The following three contributions by Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, Wolfram Kinzig, and Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski now turn to key critical issues in scholarly study of the Creeds. These include methodological contentions in the history of research, the latest scholarship on the origins of the Creed, and questions surrounding its use and function in the early churches.

Andrew Radde-Gallwitz traces scholarly study of how the Old Roman Creed became the Apostles' Creed, with particular attention to late nineteenth-century debates in Germany between Adolf von Harnack and rival interpreters like Theodor von Zahn. Modern scholarship on the Old Roman Creed tends to take as its point of departure a letter of Marcellus of Ancyra, associated with a Synod in Rome in 341 under Pope Julius I. Articulating a position that has remained influential, Harnack argued that the church of Rome began to expand its own Creed with a number of additional phrases before adopting a fuller recension ("T", originating in fifth-century Gaul) and by the eighth or ninth century transferring to it the epithet "Apostles' Creed." In response, Zahn stressed that fourth- and fifth-century authors like Rufinus and Augustine were already tolerant of

variety among local creeds, and that the epithet “Apostolic” should not therefore be singularly associated with the expanded “T”: he argued that it was the substance rather than the precise wording which carried that authority.

Outside Germany, approaches like Zahn’s proved popular in Anglophone and Catholic circles. They also tended to reinforce the nineteenth-century emergence of creedal anthologies, including Denzinger’s long-influential *Enchiridion Symbolorum et Definitionum* (1854). These partly apologetic anthologies favoured extracting abstract formulations of the Rule of Faith from early patristic writings in support of an early date of the Apostles’ Creed. Yet Radde-Gallwitz contrasts this habit of “extraction” with the position of Wolfram Kinzig, for whom there is no evidence for the existence of any declarative creeds (as opposed to interrogatory creeds or formulae) prior to Constantine.

This history of scholarship is taken to demonstrate, not so much the definitive substitution of a narrative of continuity with a critical hermeneutic of suspicion and discontinuity, but to show that each generation’s reception tells us as much about the receiver as about what is received.

Wolfram Kinzig is without a doubt today’s most prolific scholar on the origin of the Creeds. His contribution to this volume builds on his extensive prior studies to return once more to the vexed question of the Old Roman Creed’s origin and textual development. Beginning from the letter of Marcellus of Ancyra (340/341) and subsequent fragments in Rufinus, Kinzig has also identified an older brief interrogatory creed recited during Baptism, contained in the Old Gelasian Sacramentary, which may date from the sixth century.

Complex questions of authorship and text criticism surround various versions of an interrogatory baptismal creed that used to be associated with Hippolytus, the traditional author of the so-called *Apostolic Tradition* (“TA”). The authorship and early date are now widely questioned, although both remain under active debate. The associated creed in TA relates to a substantial number of Latin, Sahidic, and more recently also Ethiopic versions, and there are many questions concerning which of these may have been translated from a Greek *Vorlage* originating in the city of Rome, where the Latin liturgy was only introduced in the mid-fourth century. The Old Roman Creed does have similarities with the TA creed, which it may well have influenced. In addition to presenting a full stemmatic diagram of these versions of the Old Roman Creed, Kinzig concludes that its wording came to be more fixed only in the fourth century as a result of increasing numbers of baptisms. At the same time, he suggests that formulated but variable and not yet entirely fixed baptismal questions with a christological summary can be traced back to the later second-century church in Rome.

Piotr Ashwin-Siejkowski then traverses similar territory from the perspective of how these creedal texts functioned liturgically in the early church. Rufinus of Aquileia prioritized the Roman Creed as more authentic, although the earliest

Greek testimony about this Creed derives from Marcellus of Ancyra's letter to Pope Julius I in 341.

Ashwin-Siejkowski believes the Creed may have its origins in early Christian hymns to Christ, imaginative catechesis, and baptismal questions. As early as Pliny the Younger's famous letter to Trajan, liturgical worship already appears to include a confession about Christ's divine status.

Baptism was also an important part of the transition to Christianity: public confession of belief allowed the believer to join the new community, and the implication of a new identity conveyed by baptism into Christ is of course affirmed as early as Paul's letter to the Romans.

Different groups surrounding Justin Martyr and Tatian, Marcion and Valentinus and their communities, had their own theological opinions and expressions of faith. Overall, the origins of the Apostles' Creed are complex and rooted in various aspects of early Christian life and theology. The Old Roman Creed became a model because it served to strengthen Christian identity and practice, plotting a route through the profusion of diverse second-century philosophical and theological ideas and accounts of Jesus.

2.3 Early Christian Writers on the Function of the Creed

Frances M. Young, Khaled Anatolios, and Blake Leyerle next draw our attention to three case studies illustrating how leading early Christian writers deploy creedal considerations in their engagement with scriptural and theological topics.

Frances M. Young points out that the Rule of Faith was never a precise formula with fixed wording. Instead, this summary of Apostolic teaching developed across parallel communities, but held content and significant shared wording in common. Irenaeus and Tertullian both deployed versions of the Rule in their anti-heretical polemic. Their versions share a threefold structure populated with key catchphrases. In relation to the second article, they include: born of the Virgin, suffered, died, rose again, ascended to heaven, and will come again in glory. These phrases tend to predate the version of the Rule in which they appear; they are typically anticipated in earlier Christian writings, but ultimately derive from oral confessions.

Young describes this communal idiom of doctrinal summary as a kind of Christian "in-language" to designate core fundamental teaching of the kind that became embedded in canonical Scriptures and articulated in the Rule. Similar patterns of shared anti-heretical definitions and summaries of the apostolic teachings continued to characterize the great fourth-century creeds.

Instantiating this relationship between the Rule of Faith and the creeds of the fourth century, Irenaeus's longer second part of his *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* proves the truth of his earlier Scriptural exposition. Like Justin Martyr, who also establishes the story of Jesus Christ with proof drawn

prominently from the Old Testament, Irenaeus similarly locates that proof in the scriptural oracles now fulfilled in Christ. He concludes, for example, that the Son of God was involved in creation and in the subsequent story, from Abraham at Mamre and Jacob's ladder to the Prophets and the Psalms. Beyond mere 'co-inherence' of Scripture and the Creed, even at this early stage the three articles of the Rule articulate the Trinitarian baptismal confession as enshrining the argument or fundamental plot of Scripture.

Khaled Anatolios relates the Apostles' Creed to the fuller hermeneutical developments at Nicaea and Chalcedon, which in his view are today widely misunderstood. The original Trinitarian grammar reflected in the Old Roman Creed furnished interpretations adopted in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, among which Anatolios singles out the understanding that the Creed in its entirety represents a program of Trinitarian *theosis* or "deification."

Origen uses Wisdom 7:25–26 to illustrate what it means for God to be "Almighty": there must always have been a created universe over which God is all-powerful. The fact that the Son is here identified as Wisdom renders that "Almightiness" a function of rationality rather than of brute force, as confirmed in the fact that the exaltation of Christ is accomplished by way of his self-emptying (Philippians 2). Only through Christ's work on the Cross does God become fully Almighty through the Son.

For Athanasius, by contrast, the fact that God is eternally powerful to create does not require the eternal existence of a creation. God's creative work is instead grounded in God's intrinsic fruitfulness, expressed above all in the Father eternally begetting the Son: God's creating is contingent on God's begetting. And God's joy and delight in the world derive from the Father's eternal delight in the Son. Grounded in the Father's eternal generation of the Son, human beings become sons of God by receiving the Spirit of the Son into their hearts.

Adopting and going beyond the substance of Ephesians 1, Nicene interpretation affirms that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit enjoy full and eternal possession of the divine life into which they include created human beings. Overall, the threefold divine titles of the Apostles' Creed come to be developed as enfolding God's omnipotent and saving relation to the world within the Father-Son relation.

In the final case study for this section, Blake Leyerle illustrates patristic use of the Creeds by considering the role of creedal language in a catechetical homily delivered by John Chrysostom, the Bishop of Constantinople, during Lent of the year 388. Stressing the importance of a "strong confession of faith," Chrysostom spells out a quasi-creedal summary of Trinitarian doctrine. Although his statements do not coincide verbatim with earlier creeds, his variant formulation nevertheless sheds light on the way creeds functioned and gave shape to thought and theology. Leyerle instantiates this interest by investigating why Chrysostom's summary unexpectedly substitutes the phrase "took the form of a slave" for the authorized creedal formulation "born of the Virgin Mary."

Finding no obvious reasons for the omission of the latter, Leyerle turns instead to the attraction of the substituted clause. Paul served as a model catechist for Chrysostom, which lends possibility to his adoption of the phrase “took the form of a slave” from Philippians 2:7. The language of slavery and domination pervades his writings, and Chrysostom compares baptism to military enlistment, marriage, and especially to the acquisition of slaves, whose willing submission to their master he sees as a model for the Christian’s submission to Christ. Chrysostom’s substituted phrase draws attention to both the divinity and humanity of Christ in the incarnation, but also facilitates the believer’s existential and moral union with him in the experience of baptism as well as in social solidarity.

2.4 Thematic Studies in the Creed

Elizabeth Klein relates the first article of the Creed to questions of martyrdom and Canon. Marcion famously believed that Jesus and his teachings must be completely severed from the Hebrew Scriptures. This belief was refuted by the early Church Fathers, who maintained that the Christian God as the Creator was part of the doctrinal fabric from which Christianity was woven and therefore required Christians to retain the Old Testament in their own canon. In this connection, the doctrine of creation played a key role in the orthodox rebuttal of Marcion and of many Gnostic groups.

The same doctrine also, just as interestingly, held pride of place in early baptismal creeds and baptismal theology. Belief in the Christian God as the Creator requires the Hebrew Scriptures to be maintained in the Christian canon. The theme of God as Creator powerful to raise up the martyrs is, for example, attested in 2 Maccabees 7, a pre-Christian Jewish text whose influence on Christian concerns is already evident in Hebrews 11:35b. This was also an affirmation frequently articulated through standardized phrases in the confessions of early Christian martyrs. These confessions came to exercise the function of a kind of public liturgy, analogous in certain key respects to the rites of initiation in baptism and Eucharist.

Jennifer Strawbridge explores the phrase “begotten, not made” in the Nicene (rather than the Apostles’ or Old Roman) Creed. Scholarship has tended to view the hermeneutical tonality of creeds as primarily Johannine rather than Pauline, a distinction found here to require greater nuance. Colossians 1:15–20 represents a New Testament “Creedal Formula” that stands at the heart of the Arian controversy, which Wolfram Kinzig sees as catalytic for a whole series of creeds. John Barclay contends that on this point Colossians encouraged the idea that Christ was in a different category from creation. Despite its evident relevance, however, Colossians 1 appears to stand in a somewhat complicated relationship with early creedal formulae, since its verbatim language does not in fact feature in early Christian creeds or, for that matter, in modern creedal commentaries: George

van Kooten, for example, notes the disappearance of Pauline phraseology from Nicea.

In this connection Michael Peppard points out the apparent mixing of metaphors of adoption and begetting. In the linkage of “making” with “creating,” he suggests that the uncreated Christ’s divine sonship came by the fourth century to derive from begetting, while human sonship came by adoption. Athanasius supports this distinction in his contention against the Arians, distinguishing God’s “true” (ἀληθινός) Son from “adopted” (θέσει) human sons. Athanasius’s main argument is that the Son of God is son by nature and not by adoption, while human salvation is by adoption into the divine life.

All that said, Strawbridge questions the presumed dichotomy between Johannine and Pauline language in this context. In fact, it is significant that neither John 1 nor Colossians 1 use the language of “begetting” to describe Christ. By themselves, adoption metaphors could support either a divine or a human Christology.

John Sehorn next examines the question of how the incarnation operates as a creedal criterion of canonicity for Origen – a biblical scholar with a deep interest in Scripture without, however, a clear concern for precise boundaries of the biblical canon. Origen trusted the judgment of his inherited patristic tradition, and therefore did not prioritize the adjudication of debates around the scriptural status of several early Christian writings. It was the Rule of Faith that in his view secured the biblical canon’s theological coherence as well as its defence against detractors.

In his Preface to *On First Principles*, Origen emphasizes the importance of guarding the apostolic preaching handed down through the order of succession in the churches. The one God and creator of all things is also the Father of Jesus Christ, and the one who gave the Law, Prophets, and Gospels. The unity between the Testaments is for him not finally a literary judgment, but anchored in the unity of historical persons and above all in the self-emptying incarnation of the Son: the Old Testament contains the words of Christ, and the suffering of prophets and apostles undergirds their trustworthiness as bearers of the words of Christ.

Origen goes on to find the incarnation critical even for the first article of the Rule of Faith, since the fullness of God is only accessible through Christ. Appeals to Old Testament fulfilment by Matthew as well as Jesus and the apostles show the gospels to be inalienably grounded in the God of Israel. Indeed, the coherence of the apostles, prophets, and the canon of Scripture is construed in analogy to the unity of divinity and humanity in Christ. This makes for him even the Scriptural canon’s unity and intelligibility contingent on the self-emptying of the Word in the incarnation.

Two essays then address a much-debated late addition exclusive to the Apostles’ Creed: the affirmation that Christ “descended to hell” between his death and his resurrection.

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