

I Believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator

John A. Braun

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I cannot count the number of times I have said those words with my fellow believers. I have also taught them to confirmation classes and to adults wishing to join the church. These words begin a long list of beliefs we have learned from the previous generations since the apostles. While the apostles did not formulate this creed, it dates back to about 150 years after Christ.

Saying the Creed reminds me that I believe some specific things. Luther divided the creed into three articles, each article focused on one person of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We have been learning and teaching it that way ever since.

What does it mean to “believe” the specific teachings mentioned in the creed? It means to accept them as true and to trust them as reality. God reminds me so pointedly in Scripture,

Faith is being sure about what we hope for, being convinced about things we do not see. ...By faith we know that the universe was created by God’s word, so that what is seen did not come from visible things. Hebrews 11:1,3 EHV

I did not see God create the heavens and the earth. If I had seen what he did, I wouldn’t have to believe he did it. I would know. My senses would have registered what he did even if I didn’t really understand what I witnessed. If saw it, I could tell others. But they would have to believe that I was telling them the truth. They might think I was just making it up or hallucinating.

I have a lot of questions about what God did and how he did it. A lot of people have questions. Perhaps their questions are the same as mine or perhaps they are different. I would guess that the more someone knows about the sciences, the more profound their questions would be. But we do share one perspective: We weren’t there.

Because we weren't there, we either have to accept someone else's word for how it all came to be or come up with our own explanations. Perhaps we need to explore our beginnings for some wee indication about how we came to be and how our world came to be. Mathematical formulas reveal how vast the universe is, where our little planet resides quietly supporting our lives and the lives of all creatures who dwell here. Chemical analysis can help us understand its composition. Physics can explain how it all works. All these explorations reveal how complex, large, and beautiful it is. But explorations do not explain how it came to be. We have to believe someone's idea about that.

When I confess the Apostles' Creed, I believe what God has revealed about creation. It's different from what many think about origins, but I believe God's account. For one thing, he was there. He knows what he did. Did he tell us about what he did? Yes, he created it. Of course, that still leaves so many questions. All explanations about origins leave questions. God's too.

But I trust what I cannot and did not see. I believe. For another thing, I trust God because he is almighty. I can't even imagine his power, imagination, and intricate planning. His ways, I believe, are far above what any human, even the most brilliant, can do. I don't want to demote God the almighty and make him God the mighty that I can understand and grasp with my mind. He's much bigger than that.

But most importantly, I believe what God says because he promises me forgiveness and eternal life. He loved the world, me included, and gave his Son that whoever believes in him would have eternal life. I am not an eyewitness to the life of Jesus any more than I am an eyewitness to God's creative activity. I believe what he says about Jesus. I am justified. I will live. God has done that for me. I don't want to lose those blessings by discounting his ability to exist or to create. So I confess, "I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

John A. Braun serves as executive editor of Forward in Christ magazine.