

Unlocking Scripture: The Apostles' Creed, Pt. 3
Creator of Heaven and Earth
Genesis 1: 1; Psalm 139: 1-18

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I once heard an account from an obstetrician of a long arduous labor. The mother was a hard woman. A bit rough around the edges. She didn't believe in God. She didn't want prayers. She didn't think her delivery would be anything more than a biological process. And a hard process it turned out to be. Hours passed. Her doctor gave her physical as well as emotional support. This was a messy, demanding passage. The doctor became fully invested in the birth, laboring along with her, acutely aware that it was entirely possible neither the baby nor the mother would survive. At last, the baby emerged, and his cries as he sucked in his first breath assured them all was well. "Oh, thank God," said the doctor, losing any professional detachment. "Yes, thank you God," whispered the now ex-atheist mother as she held her child against her breast.

The miracle of life touches us very deeply. Even the most hardened among us melt before the wonder of this tiny human blinking in his first light, nestling into warm skin after the shock of entering a world a lot colder than the 98.6 of the womb. We see little fingers and nails, and we just feel it in our souls. Thank you God. Oh how beautiful is your creation. Life is a gift. A gift not from a force but from someone personal.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. When we pause just for a moment and consider how enormous is the universe and how tiny is the universe, we get struck anew by wonder. This video, *The Cosmic Eye* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Are9dDbW24>), begins with a girl lying on a lawn and then expands exponentially to a view 10 billion light years away. Then it contracts back to her eye and inside her eye to 1 femtometer of tininess. Take a watch.

So David prayed, "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have made, what is man that you are mindful of him? Yet, you have made him little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor...O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth" (Ps. 8: 3-4, 9). The heavens and the earth cry out in witness to a designer, an

intender, a Creator. We take a radical, revolutionary, energizing stand on the first sentence of Scripture: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” We have a beginning. All that is, once was not. All that is did not have to be. The cosmos is not a given, not necessary. They came into being by the choice of the Creator. The imaginative mind of the Triune God conceived and brought forth all that is. So we praise the Almighty Father who created through his Word, Jesus Christ, in the shaping, forming power of his Spirit.

Creation causes us to rejoice. But there is a joy-stealer in our midst. It wants to undercut the thrill we have in creation. It wants to re-train us away from acknowledging a personal, guiding God. Instead, smart people are supposed to look at the order, complexity, beauty and interconnectedness of the world and attribute it to the random interactions over time of impersonal forces that have always existed without origin. This is the philosophy of materialism. It is a world view. It is a deliberate choice to view the cosmos without a creator. As such, it is not an impartial, unbiased or even scientific view. It is one choice for explaining why there is something and not nothing. But it is by no means the best, most obvious or even the most intelligent choice of worldviews. There is absolutely no reason why the sciences cannot operate with awareness of higher realities. In fact, scientific inquiry thrives when done within the framework of a Creator. Copernicus, Galileo, Pascal, Newton, Einstein and countless others all did some great science while worshipping the Creator.

As those who stand and speak the Apostles’ Creed, we may not give away our trust in a Creator who designed, intended, brought forth, shaped, guided and still shapes and guides the universe. Rather, we only find lasting meaning and purpose to life when we step into awareness of God as our Creator.

David composed Psalm 139 three thousand years ago. Yet it seems like a prayer written for this very moment. This psalm has guided many a lost soul towards home. It has comforted many sunk in darkness with the eternal light of God. It has answered profoundly the identity questions we ask so urgently, “Who am I? Why am I here?” David found comfort in realizing,

For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

He discovered in days of darkness that he was not alone. That he was not adrift. His life was being guided by the God who had made him. His identity had been

imprinted on him since conception: God made me. He wants me. He has plans for me. So David went on:

How precious to me are your thoughts O God!
How vast is the sum of them.
If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
I awake and I am still with you.

David was struck with joyful wonder that God was thinking about him, all the time. As he contemplated how he was created, David rejoiced at the very thoughtfulness of his Creator.

You may not have had a lot of philosophy in your school years, but I suspect nearly all of us have heard of this famous definition of being human. You can probably fill in the sentence, “I think, therefore....” Of course! “I think, therefore I am.” I feel like I first heard that on *Gilligan’s Island* or some other ridiculous sitcom from my misspent childhood. It sounds cool, but I was never really sure what it meant. I learned much later how powerful that little sentence from Rene Descartes has been in shaping our western culture. I think, therefore I am. How do I know I exist? Because I am thinking about existing. I am aware of being alive so I am alive. That sounds so obvious as to be ridiculous. But then scratch it a bit more. Who is doing the thinking? *I* am. *I* compose my life by thinking about it. *I* create my existence as a human because I am self-conscious, able to ponder myself. It’s just a couple of hops from there to claiming that I create my own reality. I determine my identity. My life is a result of my choice. And my freedom to choose trumps everything. Individualism is all. Of course it sounds so thrilling and freeing if you’re just getting out from under your parents’ control. I think, I choose, I decide and therefore I make my life.

Except that it doesn’t work. We go into debt buying stuff to create our lives and yet we still don’t feel fulfilled. We walk out of relationships to find ourselves or to find whatever looks like freedom, only to end up in the same traps. We grab experiences and end up holding an empty bag. We demand that people affirm us but it’s never enough. We swirl around ourselves, “I think therefore I am,” like water going down a whirlpool. Swirling downward into loneliness. And the more we try to create our own meaning, the more meaningless everything seems.

Anticipating the crisis in identity that would come in our age, a half-century ago, a theologian named Joseph Ratzinger offered a correction to “I think therefore I am.” Ratzinger realizes that all we have to do is change one letter in Descartes’

formula. Suddenly the Christian understanding of humanity opened up. In English, it reads this way: “I am thought, therefore I am.”¹ I am thought. Therefore I am. The source of life is not in me. It’s in the one thinking about me. The meaning of my life cannot be found in isolation as a choosing individual. It’s only found in relationship. With the ones who think about me and about whom I think. Most profoundly, the meaning of my life comes from the God who thinks about me. “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God. How vast is the sum of them.”

We all know the power of being thought about. Don’t we love to get the text, “Just thinking of you today and wondering how you’re doing.” Or even better, an actual letter or card in the mail. Or maybe even flowers. Someone thought about me and brought me something. Think how these are the words of lovers. “I couldn’t stop thinking about you. I had you on my mind all day. I keep remembering the evening we had together and I keep thinking about how great you looked and all the things we talked about.” To be thought of is to be alive. To be thought of in kindness is to have meaning. To be thought of in love is to have the sweetness of life.

God thinks of you. All the time. In fact, you and I only exist because God thinks of us. He holds us together by always holding us in his thoughts. In David’s darkness where he could not find any light, when he seemed as alone as alone can be, he discovered that God’s light shines in the deepest, inkiest midnight. All that time I thought I was alone in the dark, you were thinking of me. Your light was upholding me when I could not see it. When I came out of my funk I realized, “I am still with you. I have always been with you, because you, dear Creator, are always thinking of me.”

Let’s go one more place today. Let’s go back to Patrick, the man who brought the gospel to pagan Ireland during the dark ages. Patrick was captured at age 16 by Irish pirates. After six years of slavery, Patrick escaped and returned to England. But then, to his great surprise, he felt led by God to return to his captors. He returned to Ireland preaching the gospel. His methods were brilliant. In one account, Patrick encountered two daughters of a great Irish King. They were intrigued by the God Patrick preached. They asked questions, “Who is this God of yours? Where does he live? In the rivers? Or in the skies? Does he have daughters? Is he old or young? How does he like to be worshipped?” Patrick did not berate the young women for their questions. They spoke out of what they had known. They came from people who worshipped gods in trees and mountains. So, very gently and very shrewdly Patrick said to them, “I see that you are daughters of a king. I would like to join you to the Son of the heavenly King. I see that you love

the rivers and the sky. I would like to introduce you to the God who made all the earth, all the seas, and all the mountains. He is God of all gods and King of all kings. He has his dwelling in heaven and on earth. He is everywhere, for he made everything and everything was made for him. I would like for you to know him.”² Patrick took what they knew of the world and expanded it. There’s so much more than river gods and mountain gods. There is the true Creator who made it all, who sent his Son to die for your sins and then to rise to give you everlasting life. You can be joined to him. You can be royal daughters of the High King.

Isn’t this what we’re called to do? I see you love biology. You ponder how living organisms reproduce. How the DNA from two animals combines in reproduction to become a genetically complete new life. I’d like to introduce you to the source of all information. I’d like you to know the God whose power enables your trillions of cells with the same information to all do different things. He knows your genetic code intimately.

I see you love the arts. You thrill to see how human movement can be harnessed in discipline to create patterns that thrill or soothe or express emotions. You marvel at the leaps in gymnastics, the choreography of a dance, or the coordination in a tennis stroke. I’d like to introduce you to the God who keeps the entire dance of the cosmos moving in interconnected harmony. He sent the electrodes spinning and the giant red stars firing. Yet he attends to each inhaling and exhaling of your lungs. He hears your blood coursing and watches your neural pathways dancing. You can talk to him. He will understand.

I see you love business. It thrills you to see how exchanges work in the market place. You like trading. You love how work turns into money and money turns into goods and services acquired. Your work brings money in and your spending out of money gives other people work so they can take in and spend out currency. Sometimes at night, you marvel how commerce moving across the seas in great shapes or through the cloud by computer key strokes. You marvel at how infrastructure works, the bringing into town of new goods, the removal of waste in sewers and trucks, cycling over and over. I’d like to introduce you to the God of exchange. He created us in relationship to one another in such a way that we only live by trading: we exchange words, touch, affection, service and thereby keep each other alive. He is the God who enacted the most wonderful exchange. He brought outside resources into our world. He resupplied us with love and healing and hope. And he removed the waste of sin, hurt and brokenness. He gave his eternal life on the cross to die so we could live. And he still does it, bringing the

commerce of grace, the astounding economy of the Kingdom of God. You can enter that commerce. You can trade in that economy.

Such news today! I believe in the Maker of heaven and earth. We are not an accident. We are intended. And we are desired. He who formed us thinks of us. He wants us to know him. So much so that he became what we are, so we could see him face to face in Jesus Christ. God made you. God loves you. Can you reply, “How precious to me are your thoughts O God!”

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1968), p. 247. Ratzinger acknowledges that he is taking up the thought of Franz van Baader.

² Adapted from Patrick’s Confessions. See https://www.traditioninaction.org/religious/h121_Patrick_4.htm, and David Adam, *The Cry of the Deer* (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 1987), p. xiv.