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Creed

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redemption of men; the final part speaks of the third divine Person, the origin and source of our satisfaction."

The Apostles' Creed and its trinitarian structure grew out of baptismal rites in the early church, Father Marthaler explained. In those rites, the people were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In their earlier manifestations, the creed statements were not declaratory — "I believe" — but rather, interrogatory, asking individuals or groups of people, "Do you believe?" about the faith's key elements. Gradually, a non-question form of the creed evolved.

The key elements of faith stated in the creed are all found in Scriptures, Father Marthaler remarked.

This scriptural basis of the Creed is explored in Alfons Kemmer's 1985 book, "The Creed in the Gospels."

"It will be observed that many truths of the Creed are contained somewhat indirectly in biblical statements; their complete meaning was gradually recognized and then formulated explicitly," Kemmer wrote.

The creed only summarizes the teach-

ings from Scriptures, but doesn't explain much, Father Marthaler added. The idea is that the believer will then delve into Scriptures.

Ironically, however, the creed actually predates New Testament Scriptures, Father Marthaler continued.

Baptisms were being performed years before the Gospels and Epistles were written — and the canon of the Bible was not set until between 200 and 300 A.D., Father Marthaler explained.

"Basically, this came out of the lived experience of the Christian community," Father Marthaler observed.

"While it is evident that the Apostles' Creed as we now know it does not go back to the time of the apostles, use of the name 'Apostles' Creed' is not altogether incorrect since at least some of its articles go back to the time of the apostles," Kemmer noted.

"It's gradual formation corresponds closely to the development of the liturgy of baptism and the statements of instruction for neophytes," Kemmer added.

In addition, Father Marthaler said, in the church's early days when Christians were persecuted, "The creed was a kind of identity card for Christians. It was dangerous to let someone into the worshipping community. They used the

creed as a point of entrance."

The restored Rite of Christian Initiation maintains this aspect of keeping "non-members" separate through the catechumens being present for the Liturgy of the Word through the homily, then leaving the service before the Nicene Creed is recited before the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Father Marthaler said.

During a special service the third week of Lent, however, the homilist explains the significance of the creed, reported Barbara Carroll, diocesan coordinator for sacramental catechesis.

From that Sunday on, the catechumens may stay to hear the creed recited by the community, Carroll observed. This symbolizes the catechumens "moving into the community." At the same time, she added, the catechumens "don't recite that prayer publicly until they're baptized."

Although the Apostles' Creed is the more "ancient" of the two main creeds — in that it arose out of practices dating back to the church's early days — the Nicene Creed was the first formally written.

The Nicene Creed — sometimes called the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed — was created during the Councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381).

"These meetings of the bishops were called to condemn the errors of Arius and Macedonius," Kemmer wrote. "As a result, the fathers of the councils added several statements to the earlier (creed)."

Meanwhile, the Apostles' Creed was not written until approximately 400, and became widespread in Europe in the sixth century.

The Nicene Creed, the one commonly said during Mass, is more of a community prayer, and so begins "We believe." The treatment of God the Father, for example, is expanded to read, "We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen."

Father Marthaler pointed out that the Nicene Creed is actually the more developed of the two creeds.

"The Apostles' Creed is an outline that does not bring the ideas together," Father Marthaler said. In the Nicene Creed, for example, "The third part forms a single unit. It is clearer. The Apostles' Creed just lists the articles."

Moreover, the two creeds — and especially the Nicene Creed — are now playing a role in ecumenical discussions, Father Marthaler said. His own book was prompted in part by a 1983 meeting in Rome of theologians under the auspices of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.

The meeting's goal, Father Marthaler explained, was "to try to find a common statement of faith and use the Nicene Creed as a basis for it."

"The mainline churches," he added, "can agree on the Nicene Creed" — and, consequently, on the Apostles' Creed.

"A common confession of faith in the triune God will be the means and sign of reconciliation of Christians with one another," Father Marthaler wrote in his book. "Although divided Christendom may not yet be ready to agree on the doctrinal implications of every phrase and strophe in the traditional creed, Christians more and more are praying it together."

"The creed in origin and purpose is a doxology that acclaims God's glory," he continued, "a confession of praise and thanksgiving for all that God has done for us and our salvation. To this synopsis of the story of salvation proclaimed in the Scriptures, Christians can but respond with a grateful, 'Amen.'"

Meanwhile, the catechism, citing St. Ambrose, says that for Catholics, "To say the Credo with faith is to enter into communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and also with the whole Church which transmits the faith to us and in whose midst we believe: This Creed is the spiritual seal, our heart's meditation and ever-present guardian; it is, unquestionably, the treasure of our soul."

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