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SUMMARY

After some preliminary notes on the significance, use and origin of the *Apostles’ Creed*, this paper argues that there are two significant elements lacking in the *Creed*:

(1) The *Creed* moves directly from God the creator to the incarnation of his Son Jesus Christ without giving any weight to God’s dealings with the nations and Israel between Genesis 3 and Matthew 1, as if these were of no significance. This raises the important question as to the role and importance of God’s revelation in history prior to the incarnation of Christ.

(2) The *Creed* is also silent on Jesus’ Jewish identity and his ministry in and primarily for Israel. Both aspects are essential in the New Testament presentation of the gospel. Moreover, in view of the devastating consequences of excluding Israel and Jesus the Jew for Jewish-Christian relations in much of church history, additions are overdue. Concrete suggestions are provided.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Nach einigen vorausgehenden Bemerkungen über die Bedeutung, den Gebrauch und Ursprung des *Apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnisses*, vertritt dieser Aufsatz die Meinung, dass zwei wesentliche Bestandteile im *Glaubensbekenntnis* fehlen:

(1) Das *Glaubensbekenntnis* bewegt sich direkt von Gott, dem Schöpfer, hin zur Fleischwerdung seines Sohnes Jesus Christus, ohne dass es Gottes Plänen mit den Nationen und Israel zwischen Genesis 3 und Matthäus 1 irgendwelche Bedeutung beimißt, so als wären sie unbe deutend. Da stellt sich die wichtige Frage im Blick auf die Rolle und Bedeutung von Gottes Offenbarung in der Geschichte vor der Inkarnation von Christus.


RÉSUMÉ

Après quelques préliminaires sur la signification, l’usage et l’origine du *Symbole des Apôtres*, l’auteur attire l’attention sur deux points significatifs qui en sont absents. Premièrement, le symbole passe directement de la mention du Dieu créateur à celle de l’incarnation de son Fils Jésus-Christ sans mentionner l’action divine envers les nations et Israël qui se trouve relatée à partir de Genèse 3 jusqu’à Matthieu 1, comme si cette action ne revêtait aucune importance. Il néglige ainsi le rôle et l’importance de la révélation divine dans l’histoire qui a précédé l’incarnation. Deuxièmement, le symbole ne dit rien de l’identité juive de Jésus et de son ministère essentiellement consacré à Israël. Ces deux points constituent pourtant des éléments essentiels de l’exposé néotestamentaire de l’Évangile. Lorsqu’on considère les conséquences regrettables de ces omissions sur les relations entre Juifs et chrétiens au cours de l’histoire de l’Église, il paraît très nécessaire de combler ces manques. Des suggestions concrètes dans ce sens sont ici proposées.
1. Introduction

In many liturgies and church services the Apostles’ Creed – probably the oldest, the most significant and most widely known Christian confession of faith – is regularly used by Christians to confess their faith. As a summary of the essential contents of the Christian faith, this confession cannot be overestimated: its contents are in people’s minds – at least people within the church. Contents of the Christian faith that are not mentioned in the Creed should be attended to in the proclamation and catechesis of the church lest they be marginalised or forgotten.

In past centuries the Apostles’ Creed was generally understood as an apt summary of the faith. A few examples suffice. One of the systematic theologians of Lutheran Orthodoxy, Georg Calixt (1586-1656), claimed that since the Apostles’ Creed ‘served in the patristic era as a baptismal confession, it should be considered as the quintessence of apostolic teaching and therefore an expression of the faith that unites all Christian churches’. The Protestant theologian and leading representative of Neology (1740-1790), Johann Salomo Semler (1725-1791), argued with regard to the reservations of some of the radical Enlightenment theologians that ‘what seems to be lacking in the Apostles’ Creed is either implicitly included or is not a fundamental article of first order’. With regard to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s (1729-1781) assessment, H.M. Barth states: ‘What the New Testament contains over and above the Apostles’ Creed, is according to the opinion of the Ancient Church not necessary for salvation, it could be true or false, or can be understood in various ways.’ The positive assessment of the Apostles’ Creed led at the same time to a reduction of the Christian statements of faith.

This reduction of the wealth of Christian doctrine to the minimal statements of the Apostles’ Creed surely also accounts for the intensity and – at times – the vehemence with which this ‘rest’ has been debated and continues to be debated. This observation also applies to the significance of the Apostles’ Creed in current ecumenical dialogue, since the ecumenical consensus regarding this Creed is closely linked with a reduction in Christian statements of faith.

Despite these positive evaluations of the Apostles’ Creed, I want to argue for additions to the Creed in two areas. These additions are required by the witness of Scripture and by the – at times devastating – Wirkungsgeschichte of the neglect of important biblical truths in the Creed.

I want to begin with some reflections on the origin and significance of the Apostles’ Creed and on Christian confessions in general. The Berlin church historian and patristic scholar, C. Markschies, summarises the intensive debate of the past hundred years regarding the origin and development of the Creed as follows:

The plethora of relatively similar Western forms in the fourth century A.D. … and their relationship to Eastern forms of the Creed is best explained by the hypothesis that in the course of the third century the Romanum [the precursor of the Apostles’ Creed] merged from a Trinitarian and a Christological part, perhaps also at an earlier stage – due to the lack of information no certainty can be reached. The exceptionally artistic structure of the Romanum argues against a gradual growth of its basic Trinitarian structure.

In what follows we need to take note that the Apostles’ Creed was not produced by a committee of theologians intending to draft a comprehensive and systematic summary of the Christian faith. Rather, like with many other confessions of faith, its content was determined by its origin and development. Its emphasis is on the second article on Christology. Students of the Creed reach different conclusions regarding the third article, which is introduced by a repetition of the formula credo (I believe). Is this third article a combination of different contents and statements or does it also follow a discernible and meaningful structure? In more recent discussion, the second view seems to be gaining ground. Markschies, for example, speaks of its ‘exceptionally artistic structure’.

In more recent discussions, different elements of the Apostles’ Creed have drawn criticism. My case, however, does not involve criticism of existing elements of the Creed. Rather, I want to suggest essential additions. Before doing so, allow me two preliminary notes, in the good German tradition in which massive volumes on a particular subject used to be called Prolegomena. Firstly, if creeds and confessions of faith are to be used widely and are to be suitable for liturgical and catechetical use, they must be formulated succinctly and precisely. In this regard it is problematic to propose additions to the perhaps most important confession of Christianity, as almost all confession of the Church – even the longer confessions and
catechisms in the Reformed tradition—could be supplemented and explicated in meaningful ways. Secondly, many confessions originated under particular circumstances and were responses to concrete challenges to the doctrine of the Church. Against this background confessions were formulated to distinguish sound doctrine from heresy and to express the orthodox faith of the Church in such concrete circumstances, but not to comprehensively describe Christian doctrine. This is the task of the larger catechisms of the Church, of its proclamation and catechesis and of its academic reflection in theology. For example, the Barmer theologische Erklärung, the Barmen Declaration of 1934, arguably the most important German language confession of the twentieth century, had its origin in the confrontation of the Bekennende Kirche holding fast to historic Christianity, the so-called Confessing Church, with the German national and Nazi alienation of the Christian faith by the so-called Deutsche Christen, the ‘German Christians’. Under these particular circumstances the Barmen Declaration formulated central contents of the Christian faith and provided orientation. However, it did not comprehensively lay out all of Christian doctrine. As the Apostles’ Creed derives from an old Roman baptismal confession, the Romanum, which summarises the faith, the second observation is perhaps not as critical as the first.

I cannot provide a nuanced appreciation of the Apostles’ Creed against the backdrop of its origin and development here. It is used here merely as the wide-spread summary of the fundamental contents of the Christian faith which is almost unanimously accepted in the Western churches. Under this premise several well-known contemporary theologians, among others my fellow Bavarian, Joseph Ratzinger, the previous Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, have written introductions to the Christian faith on the basis of the Apostles’ Creed. Such summaries are indispensable for the Sprachfähigkeit des Glaubens, the ‘ability of the faith to articulate itself’, which is conjured up by a number of recent European ecclesial documents on sharing the faith. Under this abstract expression, evangelism – long belittled and ridiculed by many ‘proper’ theologians – is currently receiving new attention in European theology (not always out of deep conviction but in view of the rapidly decreasing numbers of church membership).

My proposed additions derive from the primacy of Scripture over all doctrine; I am pursuing a deeply Protestant concern (sola Scriptura). However, I also acknowledge concerns that are of significance in more recent Catholic theology, although, as far as I can see, my concerns are still underdeveloped in the realm of the Orthodox churches.

The two additions that I want to propose address subjects which – until recently – have only been treated inadequately in theological reflection and confessional formulation in the Protestant tradition. My additions take up two subjects that have, arguably, been neglected in the history of theology and address two deficits that have had a devastating Wirkungsgeschichte.

The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

2. God’s dealings with Israel as an integral part of the Christian understanding of God

Owing to its trinitarian basic structure, the Apostles’ Creed begins its first article with God: ‘I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth’. Next to statements regarding the nature of God (‘the Father Almighty’), the description of God’s action focuses on creation in the beginning: ‘the maker [or creator, as in some versions] of heaven and earth’. This statement takes up a central conviction of the Old Testament, which confesses God in the creation narrative, in the worship of Israel and in many other places as the ‘Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in
them’ (Ps 146:6).

After referring back to the creation account in Genesis 1-2, with its far-reaching theological implications, the second article of the *Apostles’ Creed* immediately addresses the Son and his incarnation: ‘And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord …’ This means that the remainder of the Old Testament, the history and story between Genesis 2 and the memorable events in the temple of Jerusalem, when the angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah and later to Mary the miraculous birth of the Messiah, does not feature in the *Apostles’ Creed*. This is surprising in view of the widespread Old Testament confessional tradition which confesses God not only as the creator of heaven and earth, but speaks of him time and again as the ‘God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’, as the God who chose Israel and acted on Israel’s behalf as her Saviour, and of his dealings with this people: God is the one who delivered Israel from the house of slavery, who promised and gave to Israel the land, and so on. For example, the introduction to the Decalogue states: ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me’ (Ex 20:1-3) or, as a further example, Hosea 13:4: ‘But I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge no God but me, no Saviour except me.’ Psalm 136 opens with praise of God the creator (v. 1-9). This praise is directly followed by a reference to God’s salvation in and from Egypt (v. 10: ‘to him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt’) before Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness and the giving of the land to Israel are mentioned (v. 16-22). Even the commandments of the so-called *Holiness Code* are connected back to God’s deliverance of Israel out of Egypt (Lev 18:1-5). Even up to the late period of Israel, the outstanding significance of God’s saving acts in the exodus – the encounter with the Saviour-God at the beginning of Israel’s history – is remembered and forms part of its confession and identity (Neh 9:9-15; Judith 5:9-11).

The lack of reference to these foundational confessions of Israel in the *Creed* is surprising in view of the role that the Old Testament plays in manifold ways in the New Testament and in view of the fact, that – despite various questions, challenges and attacks – from the second century onwards the Church retained the Old Testament without deductions.

Are there explanations of this exclusion? The formation of Christian doctrine was initially strongly influenced by the acute needs of the congregations and by christological issues. Early Christianity before AD 66 and beyond was strongly shaped by early Judaism. In this setting, the Old Testament understanding of God and the history of Israel were presupposed as a matter of course. That the Old Testament and the actions of God on behalf of Israel and the people to which it testifies had a significant role in early Christianity is evident from the many quotations, allusions and echoes of the Old Testament and the references to the history of Israel in the New Testament. As early as the end of the first century, the first Jewish war, which climaxxed with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and other factors led to an increasing separation and estrangement between synagogue and Church and to a Christian demarcation from Judaism.

In addition to these and other diverse historical developments, we should also note the reduction inherent in the traditional Christian perception of the Old Testament as primarily a christological testimony which is already to be discerned in the New Testament itself. Although it is in its full extent part of the Christian canon, the Old Testament appears in the New Testament and in the theology of the Church not for its own sake, but in its nature as a promise and pointer to its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, in the coming of the Holy Spirit, in the Church, its universal mission and the eventual consummation. The allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament, which started as early as the second century AD (typology already appears in the New Testament), led to a diminished interest and even neglect of its literal sense and of its reference to Israel as the people of God. Already at that early stage, there existed the claim of the Church that it now was God’s chosen people; theories of supersession in various forms began to develop. (The German term *Enterbungstheorie* is even more drastic, as it contains the word *Erbe*, German for heritage, which is used in the Old Testament for the land as Israel’s inheritance and in other Israelite contexts.) This mixture of historical and theological factors helps to explain why the Old Testament, Israel and references to Israel played no direct role in the formulation of confessions such as the *Apostles’ Creed*.

In view of the biblical testimony and of the developments just outlined, I wish to argue that it is mandatory to add to the *Apostles’ Creed* statements on God’s universal history with humanity in the *Urgeschichte* of Genesis 4-11 and, above
all, on the election of Israel and God’s dealings with his chosen people for his own and their sake and for their significance for the Christian faith. The words chosen by the former Tübingen New Testament scholar, Peter Stuhlmacher, in his Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments point in the right direction. He summarises the message of the New Testament as follows:

The one God who created the world and chose Israel to be his covenant people has accomplished eschatological salvation once and for all, for Jews and Gentiles, in the sending, the ministry, the vicarious propitiatory death and the resurrection of his Son.

Drawing on this designation of God – the one who created the world and chose Israel to be his covenant people – the following addition to the Creed would be sensible:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, who following and next to his dealings with all humanity, chose Israel and revealed himself to this people through his word and acts in grace and judgment, displayed his covenant faithfulness to her and prepared Israel for the coming from her midst of the Messiah for Jews and Gentiles.

Deficiencies in the first article of the Creed have been observed and addressed on several occasions; for example, the Evangelisches Gottesdienstbuch: Agenda für die Evangelische Kirche der Union und für die Vereinigte Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands (2000) contains a confession based on the Apostles’ Creed in which the first article reads:

We believe in the one God who created heaven and earth and us humans in his image. He has chosen Israel, has given her his commandments and granted his covenant with them for the blessing of the nations.

One should add to this confession the particular character of the Old Testament as pointing forward and beyond itself, which guides not only the Christian understanding of the Old Testament but which is also significant in the various eras of Judaism, even though to a lesser degree.

Before I turn to the second article, let me briefly sketch the implications of this first addition. With the additions here proposed, the significance of Israel and the Old Testament for the Christian faith would become intelligible and would remain in view of the Church confessing her faith. Furthermore, Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, but also of the Church consisting of Jews and Gentiles – the content of the second and third articles of the Creed – would appear in a broader salvation-historical perspective.

In addition, Christians whose confession includes Genesis 3 – Malachi 3, God and his people Israel – in the words which I propose or otherwise, express that they are not the first and – with regard to Romans 9-11 – not the only people chosen by God. In this context we refer with pleasure to the progress made in Jewish-Christian dialogue in the past five decades, including both the actual dialogue between Jews and Christians and – as its foundation and in its wake – the new and positive consciousness and repositioning of the Church with regard to Israel.

The additions which I am proposing also indicate and remind those confessing their faith that there is no biblically founded Christian faith without God’s special relation to Israel. A Christianity without Israel, without the Jew Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah for the world, is not biblical Christianity, whatever else it might be. A general faith in God as some higher being, an ‘allgemeine Gottgläubigkeit’, as it was propagated in nineteenth and twentieth century Germany – among others by Nazi ideologists – as a deliberate alternative to the confession of the Christian Church, with or without creation, by-passing Israel and God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, is far off any Jewish–Christian understanding of God. Nazi henchman Adolf Eichmann’s last words before his execution in Jerusalem in 1962 are telling: ‘Gottgläubig war ich im Leben, und gottgläubig sterbe ich’ (I believed in god in my life, and I die believing in god), even though they are not necessarily representative or indicative of a compelling connection.

3. Jesus the Jew and his earthly ministry in Israel

In view of the Jew Jesus of Nazareth just mentioned, at least two additions would be necessary to the second article of the Creed. It confesses in this regard: ‘... and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried ...’ This article does not allow for a comprehensive appreciation of these statements against the backdrop of New Testament Christology. However, I
would like to propose the following additions and consider their implications.

3.1 The Jewish identity of Jesus
In addition to the mention of divine sonship and the birth of Jesus by the virgin Mary, a clear reminder that the Son of God was born by the Jews Mary of Nazareth as a Jew would be important: ‘... born of a woman, born under law ...’ (Gal 4:4). According to his human origin, Jesus was from the House of David (Mt 1:7-16; Lk 1:27; 2:4; Acts 13:22-23; Rom 1:4) and, as this Son of David – and only as such – he fulfills important Old Testament promises. In order to do justice to the witness of Scripture and in order to express explicitly what it implicitly says, should we confess something like this: ‘Born as Jew (or as part of God’s people Israel) in Israel by the virgin Mary, from the House of David and living under Jewish law’?

The Maasai Creed drafted in 1960 in East Africa shows that such an addition would not be without precedent. This creed draws on the second article of the Apostles’ Creed and formulates: ‘We believe that God made good his promise by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, a man in the flesh, a Jew by tribe.’

The twentieth century provides ample evidence that Jesus’ Jewish identity and, in particular, a high esteem of it, is not self-evident for Christians but requires regular reminders. Recent history included attempts of German theologians in the late thirties and early forties, influenced by German nationalism and Nazi racial anti-Judaism, to reconstruct the Jewish Jesus into a pure-bred Aryan of the favoured Nordic race. Unfortunately, until recently, Jesus’ Jewish identity hardly played any role in Christian theology as much as his human origin deserves to be mentioned by name!) in order to point out that they took place at a particular and, moreover, a special place, with a special role in salvation history – therefore: ‘suffered under Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem’?

Another important issue is whether credal statements should also include statements on how Jesus and the early Christians interpreted the significance of these bruta facta, this death, burial and resurrection, in view of the Old Testament promises. After all, ‘Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification’ (Rom 4:25).

However, at the moment my concern is neither with Jesus’ death (which is at least mentioned in the Creed) nor with its interpretation. I am concerned about his earthly ministry which does not appear in the Creed: from the birth of Jesus through the virgin Mary, it moves directly to his suffering and death by crucifixion, as if the approximately thirty years of his life and in particular the period of his public ministry in between these events were and are of little or no significance. That the earthly life of Jesus is indeed meaningless for the Christian faith has been argued by prominent theologians in the twentieth century. But, following the second article of the Apostles’ Creed and adding significantly to it, the Maasai Creed, which we have already mentioned, continues the above quotation: ‘... born poor in a little village, who left his home and was always on safari doing good, curing people by the power of God, teaching about God and man, showing the meaning of religion is love’. Although I would formulate differently in view of New Testament terminology, this creed at least refers to the deeds and teaching of Jesus between his birth and passion.

In terms of genre, the Gospels are essentially passion-, death- and resurrection narratives that have been ‘projected forward’ to include aspects of the identity and ministry of the person who experienced the events of particular interest. But this ‘forward-prolongation’ is comprehensive. Of what importance is the life and ministry of Jesus between his birth and suffering? After all, thanks
to its relatively broad presentation in the four gospels, the description of this period of Jesus’ life constitutes a major part of the New Testament. What is the significance of his deeds and his teaching for the Christian faith and, in particular, the fact that this ministry occurred in Israel? How important is it for the Christian faith that Jesus understood his calling and his ministry first and foremost to be the eschatological gathering and restoration of Israel? Can we understand his whole ministry and, in particular, his proclamation of the reign of God, but also the events in Jerusalem, apart from this context?

3.3 Pointers in the early Christian kerygma

The early Christian proclamation of the Gospel provides important clues. In Jerusalem, Peter summarised the ministry of Jesus – with which the audience was familiar – from the perspective of divine affirmation: ‘Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs which God did among you through him’ (Acts 2:22). In Peter’s sermon before Cornelius in Caesarea, the portrayal of the ministry of Jesus is more detailed, although even there the audience was familiar with it:

You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached – how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem (Acts 10:37–39; see also 13:27, 31).

Here and in the other missionary speeches of Acts – in particular in the sermon in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (13:16–41) – the extent to which the Jewish context of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth is emphasized is noteworthy: ‘... throughout Judea ... in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem’. These references concern the following issues:

Firstly, the Jewish identity of Jesus the Saviour. Jesus comes from Nazareth (2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9). His ministry began in Galilee after the baptism that the Jewish prophet John the Baptist preached and practised in all the country around the River Jordan (10:37; Lk 3:3). Jesus appeared to those who had travelled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem (13:31). From David’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus (13:22–23).


Thirdly, the Jews as the primary address of God’s salvation: When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to the Jews to bless them (3:26). God gives repentance and forgiveness for sins to Israel (5:31). ‘God sent the message to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ’ (10:36). The apostles received the commission to preach to the people [of Israel] (10:42). Before the ministry of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel (13:24). ‘What God promised to our fathers, he has fulfilled for us, their children’ (13:32–33). Jesus proclaims light to his own people and to the Gentiles (26:23). In this primary focus on Israel, God’s promises to the fathers came to fulfilment (13:28, 32–33).

The missionary speeches of Acts indicate the thoroughly Jewish origin of Jesus, his ministry throughout Judea, Galilee and Jerusalem and the Jews as the primary addressers of salvation. Only after God’s salvation had come to Israel and after she had been gathered and restored in the ministry of Jesus and of the apostles, did this salvation venture forth also to the Gentiles. Throughout the whole of Book of Acts, this salvation and its recipients remain bound to Jerusalem.

Through the mention of the patriarchs (3:13), of Moses (3:22; 13:39; 26:22) and of David (2:25,29,34; 13:22,34–36) in the context of references to Jesus, he is placed in the wider context of God’s saving actions on Israel’s behalf; he is clearly set in salvation history which so far is the history of Israel. The Norwegian exegete, Jacob Jervell, has rightly observed that Luke ‘did not write the history of a religious movement or sect, but the final part of the history of the people of the God of Israel’. To play on Jervell’s words: Luke wrote neither a biography of Jesus nor the history of early Christianity (as many have suggested). Rather, Luke wrote a further chapter in the history of the people of the God, Israel. The present and the future of Israel and of the nations are now determined by the risen Christ.
3.4 Implications
The implications of this Jewish emphasis for evangelism and mission are remarkable: Despite all the necessary and certainly legitimate efforts in contextualising and acculturating the Gospel, the Jewish origin and identity of Jesus and of this Gospel, as well as the salvation-historical priority of Israel, must not be neglected. Apart from the Jewish Saviour from and for Israel and the nations, there is no Christian Gospel. Neither the ‘de-judaised’, ‘aryanised’ (entjudet, arisiert) Jesus of Nazi-ideology and national German Christian lore (where the systematic deconstruction of the Jewish identity of Jesus probably had its all-time low) nor the ‘Jesus’ constructed by other ideologies or of secularism, nor the decidedly African, Asian or Latino Jesus is the Saviour of the world, but the descendant of David, Jesus of Nazareth, first sent by God to the people of Israel, ‘for salvation is from the Jews’ (John 4:22).

A popular worship song from the 1980s addresses Jesus as follows: ‘From heaven you came, helpless babe, entered our world, your glory veiled’. But even under these particular circumstances his human identity was clearly determined: this helpless babe entered the world through a Galilean Jewess Mirjam of Nazareth, he was born and spent the first days of his life in Bethlehem, the city of David, he was circumcised on the eighth day, as demanded by covenant and law and received the common Jewish name Jesus (Lk 2:21), which embodied the Jewish hope, anticipation and yearning for God’s salvation for his people Israel (Mt 1:21). Shortly thereafter Jesus was taken to the temple in Jerusalem in order to be consecrated, ‘as it is written in the Law of the Lord …’ (Lk 2:22-23). No doubt, Jesus will be a light for revelation to the Gentiles (2:32). However, Simeon’s canticle links this light inseparably with ‘glory for God’s people Israel’ (2:32; ‘a light of revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel’). As such, Jesus came to Egypt, to Africa, before he returned to Nazareth and to the temple in Jerusalem (2:39-51).

Therefore Jesus cannot and must not be incarnated in African, American, Asian Australian or European soil, as has occasionally been demanded. Jesus is not the ‘helpless babe’ which the peoples of this earth can adopt and – thoughtlessly or consciously – shape into one of their own. He was incarnated on Jewish soil (and was born as the Son of God) in Bethlehem (Lk 2:4-7); he ‘was born of a woman, born under law’ (Gal 4:4). However, as such – and only because of this identity as God’s Saviour for Israel – he is and he can be the universal Saviour and Lord of all (Acts 10:36). As such, and only as such, the peoples of this world must adopt him. No doubt, the good news of his coming, of his present and of his future ministry can be and must be ‘sown’ on the various ‘soils’ of this world (Lk 8:11).

The whole earthly life of Jesus up to his ascension took place in Israel and there, on Mount Zion, the apostle Paul expects his parousia as ‘the deliverer from Zion’ (Rom 11:26). This country is in between the continents as they were known in the ancient world; it is an area which, many centuries before, had become the Promised Land for Abraham and his descendants. Therefore one might say that Africa, Asia and Europe had Jesus in their midst, together to behold, to hold and to cherish, to worship and to follow him and to wait for his coming in glory, but not to turn him into one of their own. Where people and the peoples of this world seize him, divest him of his Jewish identity and assimilate him as theirs, he no longer is the Christ of God for Israel and the nations.

4. Conclusion
In view of the deficits which we identified, we understand the practical theologian Henning Schröer when he demands that ‘[t]he factual monopolisation of the Apostles’ Creed has to be cancelled’. Schröer further demands: ‘Not a repeal of the Creed, but its intensive exposition is required.’ I have pleaded for a different way forward, since one can only exposit what actually occurs in a given text. In view of the additions for which I have argued, I question Schröer’s conclusion that the Creed cannot serve as an authoritative pattern.

After the long history of the Apostles’ Creed, including the various discussions and arguments regarding its content and in view of the futile attempts of churches past and present to agree on the exact wording of the Apostles’ Creed, it would be naïve to expect that much will become of the additions to the Creed which I am proposing. Yet in order to articulate itself inside and outside of the walls of the church, the Christian faith needs confessions which summarise its essential contents and keep them in the thoughts and daily lives of the Church. That was the case in Early Christianity and has led to the formation of confessions early
in this sense, confessions are the ‘emergency portion’ of Christian faith. With their use in services, in catechesis but also in the mission of the church, essential contents of the faith are and remain alive. For this purpose the additions which I have suggested would be helpful; we may certainly also consider others.

These additions entail a new orientation but also a fresh self-assertion vis-à-vis the Old Testament, the Jews and Israel and – closely linked to this – the re-discovery and adequate understanding of the Church’s relationship with the roots that support it (Rom 11:17-24; ‘… consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you’, 18). They also entail a fresh appreciation of the salvation-historical place of our Christian existence and of the Christians’ place in the grand narrative for which they and many of our post-modern contemporaries are yearning.

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Endnotes
5 Barth, ‘Apostolisches Glaubensbekenntnis II’, 562.
9 Already during the age of Reformation, there was discussion as to whether the Apostles’ Creed contains the fundamental articles of the Christian faith; see Barth, ‘Apostolisches Glaubensbekenntnis II’, 558: ‘Nach Auffassung der orthodoxen Lutheraner war dies nicht der Fall: Es fehlte nicht nur die explizite Trinitäts- und Satisfaktionslehre, auch von Erbsünde und Rechtfermigung war nicht die Rede. Je nach Perspektive wurden Beanstandungen vorgebracht, die Lehre von der communicatio idioma- tum oder auch Wiedergeburt, Buße und Heiligung konnten vermisst werden.’ Barth further notes: ‘Die aufkommende historische Kritik an der Bibel zog notwendig auch das stark an biblischen Aussagen orientierte Apostolikum in Mitteilungsdem’ (562).
10 See the entries ‘Bekenntnis I.–V.’ in RGG 1, 1246-1264.
12 See C. Nicolaisen, ‘Barmen II. Barmer Theologische Erklärung’ in RGG 1, 1112-1115; W.D. Hauschild, ‘Bekennende Kirche’ in RGG 1, 1241-1246 and J.D. Douglas, ‘Barmen Declaration’ in S.B. Ferguson and D.F. Wright (eds.), New Dictionary of Theology (Downers Grove: IVP, 1988) 76: ‘The declaration did not purport to be a comprehensive statement, but against contemporary deviations it stressed the headship and finality of Christ, and the pre-eminence of Scripture for belief and as the guide to practical action for Christians’. The same would apply to the Belhar Confession, issued by the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in 1986 and by the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa when they joined to constitute the Uniting Reformed Church in 1994.
14 See on this the entries ‘Apostolisches Glaubensbekenntnis’ in TRE 3 (1978) 528-571.
15 See W. Pannenberg, Das Glaubensbekenntnis – ausgelegt und verantwortet vor den Fragen der Gegenwart (GTB Siebenstern; Gütersloh: Gütersloh, 1979); T. Schneider, Was wir glauben – Eine Auslegung des Apostolischen Glaubensbekenntnisses (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1985); H. Küng, Credo – Das...


17 The Apostles’ Creed is present in the Church also because of its close relation with the liturgical year. H. Schröer, ‘Apostolisches Glaubensbekenntnis III. Praktisch-theologisch’ in TRE 3 (1978) 566-571 (569; italics CS) notes that ‘Das Kirchenjahr … ist aber eine sich übers Jahr hinüber erstreckende Begehung des Apostolikums.’

18 A search for the expression Sprachfähigkeit des Glaubens in search engines like Google indicates how many recent ecclesial documents employ it (e.g. www.kirche-im-aufbruch.ekd.de/praxis/glauben.php).

19 Barth, ‘Apostolisches Glaubensbekenntnis II’, 558 comments on the relativisation of the Apostles’ Creed in the era of the Reformation: ‘Es hatte seinen Namen nicht auf Grund einer etwaigen apostolischen Verfasserschaft, sondern nur materialiter ratione dogmatum, aufgrund seines dogmatischen Gehalts. Damit war klargestellt, dass es theologischen Kriterien unterworfen bleiben musste und diese nicht seinerseits erbringen konnte.’ In the age of the Enlightenment there were both high appreciation and efforts ‘es zu ergänzen oder überhaupt durch Neuformulierungen zu ersetzen’ (559; italics CS).


21 For an appreciation of the first article see the historical commentary in Vokes, ‘Apostolisches Glaubensbekenntnis I’, 545-546.

22 I quote here from the version adopted by the Lutheran Church. The particular confessional version of the Creed is of little significance as my additions concern parts of the Creed that are not disputed among the various Christian denominations.


24 E.g. in Psalms 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 95:4-5; 102:6; 115:3; 136:4-9.


29 See Deuteronomy 26:5-9; Judges 11:16-22;

Aber die Befreiung aus Ägypten gilt durch Israels Geschichte hindurch als die grundlegende Erwägungstat ..., und das Bekenntnis ‘Jahweh, der Israel als Ägypten geführt hat’ wird, gemessen an der Häufigkeit seines Vorkommens, die wichtigste theologische Aussage des AT, die weite Bereiche durchzieht und gleichsam zum Grund der Erwägung wird.

I gratefully acknowledge the guidance provided by my retired colleague in Old Testament studies, Dozent Bernd Brockhaus.


41 See e.g. F. Crüsemann et al. (eds.), Ich glaube an den Gott Israels: Fragen und Antworten zu einem Thema, das im christlichen Glaubensbekenntnis fehlt (Kaiser Taschenbücher 168; Gütersloh: Kaiser, 1999). Despite the promising title, none of the essays in this collection directly addresses the issues with which we are concerned.

42 Edited by the Kirchenleitung der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands und im Auftrag des Rates von der Kirchenkanzlei der


The mere terms Christianity, Christians and the adjective Christian point to the Christ, the anointed one of God, the Messiah (cf. Acts 11:26). This concept cannot be understood apart from the Old Testament and early Judaism; see the surveys in Stuhlmacher, Biblische Theologie I, 107-111 and in M. Hengel and A.M. Schwemer, Jesus und das Judentum (Geschichte des frühen Christentums I; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007). In this regard the introductory formula to the confession of faith ‘Let us now confess our Christian faith’, used in many Christian services, already serves as a reminder that this faith has its temporal roots long before the confessing church and God’s saving action in Christ to which the New Testament testifies.

H. Arendt, Eichmann in Jerusalem: Ein Bericht von der Banalität des Bösen, 5. ed. (Ser. Piper 4822; München, Zürich: Piper, 2010) 371. The German adjective Gottgläubig was a welcome (self-) designation for people who – for a variety of reasons – had turned their back on established Christianity and wanted to demonstrate this, yet without breaking with some kind of faith in (a) god.


This was also emphasised by the young Martin Luther in his treatise Dass Jesus ein geborener Jude sei from 1523. In contrast, there are massively anti-Jewish statements in the late Luther; for example in Wider die Irreldern der Juden from 1543; see Junge, Christen und Juden, 130-136; H. Kremers (ed.), Die Juden und Martin Luther, Martin Luther und die Juden: Geschichte, Wirkungsgeschichte, Herausforderung (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1985); T. Kaufmann, Luthers Judenschriften: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer historischen Kontextualisierung (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) and P. von der Osten-Sacken, Martin Luther und die Juden neu untersucht anhand von Anton Margarithas ‘Der gantz Jüdisch glaubt’ (1530/31) (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002).


This creed was drafted in collaboration with missionaries from the Congregation of the Holy Ghost. ‘The creed attempts to express the essentials of the Christian faith within Maasai culture’, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masai_Creed (accessed 8 February 2012). It is astonishing that a confession drafted by Christians under Catholic influence would dismiss the virgin Mary so readily.

These words replace the traditional words ‘born of the virgin Mary’ for expressing the real humanity of Jesus.

This confession underlines Barth’s estimate (‘Apostolisches Glaubensbekenntnis II’, 560): ‘...der Rückgriff auf die altkirchlichen Bekenntnisse konnte auf die Dauer die theologische Bemühung nicht ersetzen; die Erarbeitung einer eigenen “Basis“ erwies sich als notwendig’. Also the first half of the Maasai Creed (based on the first article) is worth noting:

We believe in the one High God, who out of love created the beautiful world and everything good in it. He created Man and wanted Man to be happy in the world. God loves the world and every nation and tribe on the Earth. We have known this High God in darkness, and now we know Him in the light. God promised in the book of His word, the Bible, that He would save the world and all the nations and tribes. The source reference in the Wikipedia article is J. Pelikan and V. Hotchkiss (eds.), Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition (Yale: Yale UP, 2003). On confessions of the so-called ‘young churches’ see also H. Schwarz,


56 The reference to Pontius Pilate serves to indicate the time of these events as between AD 26 and 36; see Vokes, ‘Apostolisches Glaubensbekenntnis I’, 548. The birth of Jesus during the reign of Herod the Great (Mt 2) and the beginning of his public ministry mentioned in the synchronisms of Lk 2:1-2 and 3:1-2 have a similar function.


59 Through the many readings from the Gospels the life of Jesus is present in the liturgy and the proclamation of many churches.

60 Vokes, ‘Apostolisches Glaubensbekenntnis’, 552, identifies as one of the few shortcomings of the *Apostles’ Creed* that ‘it contains no reference of any kind to the teaching of Jesus …’.

61 Fortunately this is emphasised in many of the recent studies of the historical Jesus; see e.g. Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum* and C.S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 33-46, 178-185, 214-222.

62 See the survey and evaluation by C. Stenschke, ‘... by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead …” (Acts 4:10); Jesus in the Missionary Speeches of Acts’, *Swedish Missiological Themes – Svensk Missions Tidskrift* 99 (2011) 267-294.


64 This emphasis on Israel is probably behind Peter’s surprised astonishment in Acts 10:43-44 which appears at the beginning of the only missionary speech in the narrow sense of the word that takes place before a Gentile audience. Although Peter proclaims Jesus as the Lord over all (10:36) and as the appointed judge of (all) the living and the dead and speaks of forgiveness of sins through his name for everyone who believes in him (10:42-43), the presentation of Jesus and his ministry has a distinctly Jewish note.


67 Slightly revised according to Stenschke, ‘Sharing the Gospel’, 32.


74 Schröer, ‘Apostolisches Glaubensbekenntnis III’, 568 notes that ‘Revisionen und Reduktionen des Apostolikums haben zu Recht kaum Anklang gefunden. … Zugleich hat die Bemühung um Neuformulierung auch des Credos im Zusammenhang mit den Versuchen neuer Katechismen seit der Aufklärung eine beachtliche Geschichte’; compare also the discussion on p. 569.