

Preface

This work was to be written in the years 2014–16 when I was on a two-year sabbatical leave, generously supported by the Volkswagen Foundation. However, when I set out to write it, I quickly realized that not only would I first have to finish my collection *Faith in Formulae*, but that some of the topics which I wished to cover in my history needed further investigation. Over the years this history kept being postponed, because the research involved proved to be so complex and extensive that I had to publish its results in separate studies and even another monograph, on the Creed of Constantinople. This additional research was made possible by a fellowship at the Heinz Heinen Kolleg of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies in 2020–2021 for which I am very grateful.

Only now am I able to conclude the work for the time being. Originally, I had planned a monograph of the size of J.N.D. Kelly's famous *Early Christian Creeds* which in its third edition runs to 458 pages. In the end, I have overshot that target, not least because the number of relevant sources has increased enormously over the last fifty years. Nevertheless, I hope that the book can serve both as an academic textbook and as a reference work for those who wish to find out more about specific creeds and their history. For this purpose, I have translated all Greek and Latin texts into English such that this work can also be used by those who possess no or little knowledge of these languages (although some knowledge would be preferable). I have also tried to design it in such a way that it can be used independently from *Faith in Formulae* – important creeds and credal passages are always cited in full. Some readers might have liked to see source texts cited more, but this would simply have made the book bulkier than it is already.

In writing this book I have plundered my own earlier scholarly work, especially the three volumes of *Neue Texte und Studien zu den antiken und frühmittelalterlichen Glaubensbekenntnissen*. I felt entitled to this ruthless act because much of what I have written on the subject is published in German and may not be easily accessible to an English-speaking audience. I therefore ask my German-speaking readers for indulgence for certain repetitions – however, I have brought everything up to the latest state of my knowledge, given that over the years my views on the history of the creeds have developed further. Most importantly, I no longer think that the Roman Creed as a declaratory formula stems from the fourth century or began with Marcellus of Ancyra. In addition, the discovery of a shorter version of the Creed of Constantinople which is more than a simple abbreviation of that creed forced me to reconsider its history.

The secondary literature on the subjects which I touch upon in this book is simply enormous. In order to keep footnotes to an absolute minimum, I have abstained from extensive engagement with ideas of others that deviate from my

own. Experts will notice where I disagree, and non-experts probably won't care in any case.

A book such as this by necessity leads its author unto fields usually ploughed by specialists in biblical studies, ancient history, law, art, music, papyrology, Christian liturgy, and the history of the oriental churches. When stumbling across such fields I have been comforting myself with the thought that in all probability no single person possesses the kind of comprehensive expertise which would *really* be necessary to study the subject in all its ramifications. In other words, this book could never have been written without a certain scholarly impudence. I hope my critics will take into account this predicament when pointing out my mistakes and shortcomings in areas that are not my own.

On a technical note, I have not tried to attain overall uniformity in the spelling of Latin and Greek texts. In general, I have reproduced that of the editions used, but in Latin often altered 'v' to 'u' to be as consistent as possible.

I wish to express my gratitude to a number of organizations and individuals. The Volkswagen Foundation and the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies kindly supported sabbatical leaves which gave me sufficient room to ponder some of the problems that are dealt with in this book. Prof. Dr Dr Hubert Kaufhold (Munich) generously took the time to read my chapter about the reception of the creeds in the oriental churches, saving me from a number of blunders. Dr Matthias Simperl (Augsburg) kindly sent me his as yet unpublished doctoral dissertation on the Synod of Antioch (325) and shared valuable information regarding the textual tradition of its synodal letter. Susanna Kinzig (Tübingen) gave me good advice on reshaping the introduction and proofread some chapters with a sharp eye for inconsistencies. Dr Thomas Brüggemann (Bonn) read the chapter on Nicaea, offering some helpful suggestions. Dr Maria Munkholt Christensen (Bonn) not only read the entire book but helped me in many ways which would take too long to detail here. Nathalie Kröger (Bonn/Bordesholm) carefully went through every chapter and assisted me with preparing the manuscript for publication as well as with compiling the indexes. Johanna Schwarz (Bonn) also gave invaluable support in indexing. Thomas Jibin Abraham (Bonn) carefully proofread chapter 9. Anna-Lena Steuckart and Michael Ehret very diligently and efficiently ensured that I would not run out of books, which involved a lot of legwork to and from the many libraries in Bonn. Anke Grimm-Haddouti (Bonn) was as reliable as ever in all administrative matters.

A special word of gratitude goes to my brilliant language editor Dr Kathrin Lüdecke (Oxford) who not only turned my clumsy English into a readable book, but with her expertise in classics even pointed out some inconsistencies in my translations from Greek and Latin.

Dr Albrecht Döhnert (De Gruyter) graciously accepted considerable delays in the completion of the manuscript. The team at De Gruyter headed by Jessica Bartz and Anne Stroka (Integra Software Services) once more turned my manuscript into a wonderful book.

To all of them: *Herzlichen Dank!*

This book is dedicated to my wife, Carmen. She endured my mental and physical absence during its writing; she never complained about weekends cut short before and during the editing process; and she encouraged me and gave me comfort when I could not see the light at the end of the tunnel: *muchas gracias*.

As we approach the anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council, it is my sincere wish that this book may serve as a useful starting point for the history of the early Christian creeds, may stimulate further research on these fundamental texts, and may help in promoting ecumenical fellowship.

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Wolfram Kinzig

