



*Women  
Speak of  
God*

## ***Lesson 5: Susanna Wesley – First Theologian of the Methodists***

Dear friends,

Throughout the history of our Christian family we have produced creeds. And invariably we have written these creeds in response to controversies. Creeds are our attempt to speak in one voice when we have struggled mightily with the many voices around the table. One such attempt to speak with a single voice is the Apostle's Creed, an ancient statement of faith from our Christian family.

In the Apostles' Creed, each phrase is a response to a question or issue raised within the Christian family. For example, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth" is a response to the question about whether the "abba" to whom Jesus speaks in Scripture is also really the creator of the universe. Some Christians argued that a real God wouldn't be involved in creating the material world. These Christians conceived of God as in the "other, heavenly, spiritual realm" and not soiled by the earthly, material realm. In their view the creation of the material world was an activity for the lesser powers. There were even some early Christians who said that the creator God of the Old Testament – *Jehovah/Yahweh* - was an inferior deity not worthy of worship and that the entire Hebrew Scripture and faith should be rejected. The word "Almighty," from the Greek word *pantokrator*, denotes that the God we confess is indeed the ruler of all things. The phrase "maker of heaven and earth" reinforces that our God is creator not just of heaven, but of earth as well, with all its foibles. As a Christian family, we took a stand and continue to profess this claim about the very nature of God.

Yet each generation has to receive the Creed and make it their own. We hear the Creed's words perhaps as both familiar and alien. The words of the Creed may roll off our tongues but find few roots in our hearts. Susanna Wesley wanted to make the Creed her own, and wanted Christians of her day to listen to it carefully, taking seriously its claims for their own lives. So she walks through the Creed step by step, unpacking each phrase. It's a revealing exercise that I encourage you to undertake for yourself or with friends. When we recite the Apostles' Creed, we stand in the great communion of saints, crossing all boundaries of time and space. What roots does the Apostles' Creed take in your heart?

Blessings, for the journey,

*Amy*