

# Preface

## 1. Our Problem

For me, God is of central importance to life and thought. As a boy I found that my conviction fitted comfortably with widely shared belief. I did not agree with everything I heard people say about God, but the problem with “God-language” was not much different from other instances of disagreement and confusion.

Today the situation has changed. God remains of central importance for me. But I no longer find that belief to fit comfortably into my cultural context. On the contrary, many people are both skeptical that the word *God* has any reference and very uncertain what that reference would be like if it existed at all. In addition, the word now has a strongly negative connotation for many thoughtful and sensitive people, and I often find myself upset by how it is used.

If the problem were simply linguistic, we could solve it easily. Just use another term: *Creator, Goddess, Great Spirit, Almighty, Yahweh*. Using other names sometimes helps, but the problem is deeper. What has happened?

One problem is intellectual. From the outset of modernity, belief in the biblical God has been problematic. The biblical God is operative in both nature and history, whereas modernity, from its beginning,

denied that God was a factor in what happened in the natural world. That is, it asserts that if you are trying to explain any natural event, you are not allowed to attribute any role to God.

At first, there was one exception. The world seemed so wonderfully ordered that it could not be thought of as coming into existence on its own or by chance. Most people assumed that it was created by an intelligent and powerful being, and did not hesitate to call that being "God." Scientists found that the world was governed by laws, so that the Creator was also the Lawgiver. Some religious people thought that every now and again the God who created the laws intervened and caused something to happen that did not obey them. Thus there were supernaturalists, but the default position was "deism," that is, the belief that God's only relation to nature was the one act of creation and the imposing of natural laws.

At the same time, everyone assumed that human beings were not part of the nature from which God was excluded. Opinions differed on how God was related to human beings. The devout could picture the relation as quite intimate, but the dominant culture encouraged the idea that God had created human beings and had also given them rules to live by. Unlike plants and animals, people might choose not to obey these rules. After death those who violated them were punished, whereas those who obeyed them were rewarded.

Deistic thinking still continues, but it has far less support than in the earlier period. It was deeply shaken by Charles Darwin's demonstration that the world we now know developed in a natural evolutionary way from a much simpler beginning. God was no longer needed to explain the remarkably complex and beautiful world we have around us; it could be explained by natural causes.

Equally important was that human beings are fully part of this evolving nature. If God is excluded from playing any role in natural

events, then God is excluded from playing any role in human events. The default position now is atheism.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, some Christians developed defenses against modern secular thought by affirming a fully supernaturalist Christianity. Here God plays a very large role. This dogmatic theism has contested the dogmatic atheism of the value-free research universities. For convenience I will call it “biblicist,” since treating the Bible as having supernatural authority is a central feature.

Both sides became increasingly rigid, justifying themselves by the distortions of the other side. Those of us who grew up when the situation was more fluid and open have found ourselves alienated from both of these clearly defined positions. We constitute broadly what were once the mainline churches. For convenience I will call them “liberal” since they try to be open to what is becoming the dominant culture. Of course, many members are quite conservative in many respects, although few are comfortable with what I have called the biblicist position.

The greatest philosopher of the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant, provided one solution for liberal Protestants. He wanted fully to support the work of scientists, but he wanted also to make a place for morality and religion. He distinguished between two types of thinking: theoretical and practical. Theoretical reason operates in the way that science has adopted, explaining everything reductionistically. Meanwhile, practical reason governs our lives, postulating personal freedom and responsibility as well as a God worthy of reverence. This dualism provides liberal Protestants a chance to accept evolutionary science without allowing it to affect their faith. It is the most common alternative to atheism and supernaturalist biblicism. Facts belong to science; values, to religion.

Unfortunately, like other dualisms, it has serious problems, because

in actual experience values cannot be so neatly separated from facts. The act of worship loses much of its power when worshipers do not think that what they worship is factually real. I am one of many who have never been attracted by this solution.

Credibility has not been the only problem we theists faced. For many people “God” has become an offensive idea because so many terrible things have been done by his followers. I grew up believing that God was always good and loving. I knew that human beings, even those who worshiped God, had done some very bad things, but I supposed that this was an aberration and that we Christians had repented and were seeking peace and justice everywhere.

However, along with many others, I came to see history differently. In the name of God, Christians had persecuted Jews for most of Christian history. This persecution had reached new heights in what we considered a Christian country, Germany. True, the Nazis were not Christians, but they could show the continuity of their anti-Jewish teachings and actions with statements of Christian leaders, and the opposition to Nazi anti-Judaism on the part of Christians was weak.

I learned that in the century-long theft of the New World from its inhabitants, many Christian missionaries had played embarrassing roles. I learned that, indeed, even the more recent missions to Africa and Asia had often supported colonial exploitation of the people. Even the better missions were often tainted with the sense of Western superiority, and with condescension toward those to whom they were witnessing.

More generally, I learned that over the centuries the churches were usually allied with the rich and powerful. I learned that the enslavement of nonwhite races had been supported as God’s will. I discovered that earlier members of my own family had written pious Christian books in defense of slavery. Even many of those leaders to

whom we looked with admiration, such as Abraham Lincoln, had been racists. The Bible that seemed evidently to oppose such racism had been widely and successfully used to justify it.

In terms of our personal relations with God, I realized how legalistic we pious Christians had become. For example, I was brought up not to play with bridge cards. We played “Rook” with somewhat different cards instead. But on Sunday, all card games were forbidden. We played Parcheesi. Now this kind of legalism did me very little harm, but it illustrates a larger picture of “dos” and “don’ts” that can be very harmful and is clearly opposed by both Jesus and Paul. The legalistic spirit was destructively present in the suspicion of sexuality that led to complete silence about it in my home and to tight rules surrounding its expression.

Closely related to this legalism was the fact that Christianity, from a very early time in its history, had been patriarchal. That is, it had systematically supported the subordination and exploitation of women. The fact that God has always been addressed as male had played a large role, and feminists pointed out that the assumption of any kind of hierarchy as representing God’s will was destructive of the full development of personal potentialities. Most images of the male God presented him as cosmic ruler and called for his rule of human beings as well. This was taken to authorize a male hierarchy in church and state.

In addition to all of this, we came to see that other cultures have developed religious ideas and practices that in some ways are superior to what has been accomplished in Christendom. Whereas, until recently, most Christians assumed that Christianity is the only truly advanced religion, we learned that it is one of several options. Its superiority is not, as I had earlier assumed, immediately obvious.

I could take some pride in the fact that as our consciousness was repeatedly raised on one issue after another, we liberal Protestants

repented. That is, we tried to free ourselves from the ideas and practices that had done so much harm. We tried to reformulate our teachings. But our naïve supposition that belief in God evoked goodness in human beings was shattered. We saw that Christians had viewed God as the supporter of their prejudices more than as their judge. What was left, when we finished the reconstruction?

For many liberal Christians, the answer was “not much.” Those who wanted to continue to participate in a community in which “God” was a central feature of liturgy sought ways to use the word that were free of the many destructive connotations I have noted. Paul Tillich helped some with his “God beyond the God of the Bible,” Being Itself. Others have preferred to speak only of Mystery. Still others emphasize the nonrepresentational character of language, freeing people to use the word *God* without commitment to the existence or actuality of anything. All of these pointed to a God who does nothing. Appealing to such a God can do little harm.

I belong to this liberal group. But I am grateful for the second group, made up of Christians who have held on to the teaching of the Bible as they understand it even when the dominant culture turned against it. I have great hopes that those, within that group, who share my discomfort with its defensiveness, its rigidities, its dogmatism, and its sometimes crude supernaturalism, will find their way to an authentically biblical understanding of God. But since I have never been part of that community, my path has been different.

I learned early in life that the Bible is the library of the ancient Hebrews and early Christians. It needs to be studied with all the critical tools that we use when studying other great literature. When this is done honestly and well, I have long believed, we find that the Bible is the greatest literary achievement of the human race and that keeping its wisdom alive is a matter of great importance. I have been saddened when I have found that some liberal scholarship

has been so driven by reaction against supernaturalist views that it is uncomfortable with the strong claims I have just made for the uniqueness and importance of the Bible.

Much as I appreciate liberal Christianity and recognize it as my home, I am distressed by the direction it has taken. It continues to do many good things, and in its admirable aim to free itself from the many evils that beset our tradition, it has become harmless. But in a world that desperately needs strong and committed leadership and deeply dedicated followers, it has little to offer. It rarely challenges its members to devote themselves to God.

The focus of the liberal problem is the understanding of God or rather the lack of any consensus on this topic. I understand “God” as identifying the object of supreme loyalty. Some may use the term *God* in church with a different reference or none at all, but it is evident to the heirs of the Bible that those for whom “God” is the object of wholehearted devotion are not referring to the biblical God. Often they are more devoted to their nation than to what in church they call “God.” Nationalism has been the most common and destructive form of idolatry in the modern world, both in our churches and outside of them.

In my view, the Bible is correct. We are called to worship one God, the God of the Bible. And today, more than ever before, we need this loyalty to the whole to unify our lives and our thought. Our many loyalties are blocking the action required to save humanity from utter catastrophe. We need wholeheartedly to give ourselves to working for salvation. This is hard to achieve without the belief in One who is, or relates to, the whole and is felt to be worthy of our total devotion.

## 2. My Proposal

My proposal is to think about God as Jesus did, and that should have some traction within both groups of Christians. Many in both groups take Jesus very seriously, yet neither group has devoted much attention to Jesus' own understanding of God. Clearly, Jesus was unstintingly devoted to God, and sought to be completely loyal. Perhaps if we could recover his understanding of God, it could evoke devotion from us also. Perhaps it would avoid the many traps that have brought the idea of God into such difficulties today.

To grasp Jesus' understanding requires that we make use of critical methods to distinguish Jesus' thought from the thought of others, especially those others who wrote about him. To do this we have to make judgments about the relative reliability for this strictly historical purpose of various writings. Biblical scholars have achieved considerable consensus on these questions. My intention is to build on that consensus.

Our earliest written sources are the letters of Paul. In them we learn quite reliably of Paul's own experience and about what was happening in some of the early, predominantly gentile, churches. But Paul does not give us much direct information about Jesus' teaching—he did not know Jesus before his crucifixion.

To learn more about Jesus' teaching, scholars turn to "Q," which stands for *Quelle*, the German word for "source," precisely because it is our best source for Jesus' sayings. It is generally supposed that oral collections of Jesus' teachings were put into writing before Matthew and Luke wrote their gospels, and these written sources account for some of the overlap in the reports by Matthew and Luke. Those who collected these sayings probably thought most of them were the actual words of Jesus, but modern scholars are more skeptical. Over time oral traditions begin to vary, and clearly some were modified

in the course of transmission and new ones were added. Still, most scholars believe that we do have some authentic sayings. Certainly, the sayings collected in Q are our best source for reconstructing Jesus' own words.

Of the gospels we now possess, Mark is the earliest. Matthew and Luke seem to have had this gospel as well as Q to help them in the construction of their gospels. These three gospels differ in detail, but they give a similar overall picture of the sequence of events in Jesus' ministry. They are called "synoptics."

The fourth gospel, John, is deeply different. John is not interested in mere factual reports; it is their meaning that matters. What John's community has come to understand about the meaning of Jesus often appears in this gospel on the lips of Jesus. For the purpose of understanding the experience and beliefs of early Christians, and of inspiring later generations, John's gospel is invaluable. But it is not a source for reconstructing the words of the historical Jesus.

Another important question is about the language Jesus spoke. The New Testament consists entirely of writings in Greek. Jesus may well have known Greek, but it is highly probable that in his ministry with the common people of Galilee he spoke Aramaic. This is my assumption. A central thesis of the book is that Jesus thought of God as "Abba," the Aramaic word for father. I am suggesting that his understanding of God comes to expression in that word.

It is somewhat surprising that thinking about God has been so little shaped by the biblical texts and especially by Jesus' teaching. Those who emphasize that our scriptures have a different kind of authority from later writings should listen more carefully to scripture without forcing it to conform to what later came to be thought of as "orthodox."

My belief is that serious attention to the scriptures would free biblicists from some of their less attractive teachings, and this was

confirmed for me by the experience of Clark Pinnock. He began as a fundamentalist, but was led by his belief in the divine authority of the writings to study them carefully. The results are to be found in “open theology,” which I consider a particularly promising evangelical movement.

For most conservatives, including many I have classified as “liberal,” some of five developments in church history have blocked appreciation of Jesus’ own teaching. The first is the Vulgate, the translation of the Bible into Latin by St. Jerome. He was a fine scholar and although translation always involves interpretation, his work is excellent. It has influenced the later translation into Western European languages.

The problem I am noting here comes from just one of his decisions, one that profoundly affected Christian theology. He faced a problem with respect to one name for God, “Shaddai.” For monotheists, proper names for God are awkward, because they reflect the earlier polytheism. Two proper names appear frequently in the Hebrew Scriptures. One of them is “Yahweh,” and Jerome replaced this with “the Lord.” The other is “Shaddai.” As a conscientious translator, Jerome did not want to use “Lord” for this also. He chose to follow a practice already current, of replacing “Shaddai” with “the Almighty.” The full expression is often “El Shaddai,” and Jerome rendered this “God Almighty.” This decision has led most readers of the Bible in the West to assume that the Bible views God as omnipotent. Many Christians consider any objection to this idea an assault on the Bible, although in fact it is intended for the sake of hearing what the Bible actually teaches.

The second problem comes from the creedal development of the early church. We can recognize the need of the church to settle controversies that arise within it through discussion at councils. We should appreciate their work and respect their solutions to their

problems. Sadly, the creeds coming out of these councils were taken not to be just the best that could be done at the time but the inerrant and final solution to major aspects of Christian thought. Their authority supersedes that of the biblical writers and of Jesus himself. “Faith” is no longer understood, as by Paul, as trust and faithfulness. Instead “faith” came to mean the acceptance of ideas on the authority of the church, even, or perhaps especially, ideas people did not understand.

When Protestants criticized the church’s claim to authority, they should have understood themselves as freed to reconsider the issues discussed at the councils in light of scripture. But they chose not to do so. And even within what I have called the liberal community, there are many who consider deviation from the classical creeds unacceptable. Fundamentalists, despite their prioritizing of scripture, seem just as committed to the traditional creeds as are Catholics, who explicitly give primary authority to the church. I am hoping that the time may finally have come when Jesus can again have priority over the Christ of the creeds.

The third major obstacle is giving special authority to Anselm of Canterbury, an eleventh-century theologian. In the New Testament account, Jesus is pictured primarily as a radical teacher. He regarded his message as supremely important for his hearers and for everyone; so he went to Jerusalem to confront the temple authorities. They decided to eliminate him and persuaded the Roman authorities to carry out the execution. Jesus might have escaped and gone into hiding, but he accepted crucifixion rather than flee or compromise. He did so for the sake of the people, even including the people who killed him. Anselm took the idea that Jesus died for the sake of others and transformed it into a cosmic tale about how God needs a sacrifice of such a scale that only God can make it. Although many reject his details, the idea that Jesus’ death atones for human sins and is

thus necessary for our forgiveness became entrenched in Christian theology. Since Jesus' teaching gives no support to the idea that God demands an enormous sacrifice in order to forgive people, followers of Anselm rarely give much attention to what Jesus himself believed and taught.

The fourth development in theology that blocks attention to Jesus is the adoption of natural law theory as the basis of Christian ethics. Jesus taught that "the Sabbath was made for people and not people for the Sabbath." In other words, any supposedly moral rules are to serve human well-being, not to hinder our expressions of love for the neighbor. Paul was consistent with Jesus and liberated believers in Jesus from Jewish law. But the church proceeded to replace Mosaic law with a complex system of law derived chiefly from Greek thought. This is a problem especially for Catholics, but it has spilled over into Protestantism as well.

The fifth development is actually recent. It is the attempt to identify some source for religious certainty. In my understanding, the Bible presents us a very uncertain world and does so in highly diverse ways. But one segment of Protestantism has declared that God prevented its writers from making mistakes. This blocks serious attention to Jesus' distinctive message, since every sentence in the Bible is equally inspired.

Catholics wisely avoided such bibliolatry but finally succumbed to the claim that under very special circumstances, the Pope can be infallible. His teaching is more authoritative than that of Jesus. In such a context, we cannot expect much serious attention to Jesus' message.

Both claims not only reduce interest in Jesus himself. They can only arouse incredulity and, at best, condescension on the part of most thoughtful people, including thoughtful Christians. Proclaiming infallibility as the basis for Christian theology spreads the incredulity to all the other beliefs now resting on the supposedly

infallible grounds. The chances for Jesus to receive a serious hearing in this context are minimal.

My project is to bring forth Jesus' Abba as the God we can affirm enthusiastically and worship wholeheartedly. I believe that removing the obstacles I have listed will help. But it is important to recognize that Jesus' claim on believers can break through despite all sorts of theological obstacles. There are now, and have always been, thousands of people with highly varied beliefs who have loved Jesus and understood God much as Jesus did. Although some doctrines and ideas are damaging, I thank God that they do not always prevent devotion to Abba.

I have been encouraged to emphasize Jesus' distinctive understanding of God by a passage in *Process and Reality*, the *magnum opus* of my philosophical mentor, Alfred North Whitehead. He saw that most Western thinking about God was shaped largely by three factors. God was sometimes conceived after the model of imperial ruler, only incomparably greater. At other times God is thought of primarily in relation to giving and enforcing moral law. And another strain seeks the philosophic ultimate, such as Aristotle's "unmoved mover" or Thomas's "Being Itself." In Whitehead's view these approaches have not worked well. He notes, however, that

in the Galilean origin of Christianity [there is] yet another suggestion which does not fit very well with any of the three main strands of thought. It does not emphasize the ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist, or the unmoved mover. It dwells upon the tender elements in the world, which slowly and in quietness operate by love; and it finds its purpose in the present immediacy of a kingdom not of this world. Love neither rules, nor is it unmoved; also it is a little oblivious as to morals. It does not look to the future, for it finds its own reward in the immediate present. (*Process and Reality*, corrected edition, p. 343)

It is noteworthy that at this point Whitehead does not mention Jesus.

He neatly bypasses the question of whether this understanding of God was original with Jesus or a product of his community. For all we know, Jesus learned how to think of God from his mother. To me this does not matter. We can learn about this fourth strand of thought only through Jesus.

I make a great deal of the fact that Jesus called God “Abba” or in English, “Papa.” This is, of course, masculine. Because of this, I have held back on writing this book for many years. Few people believe that God is in fact gendered, and we have learned of the great damage that has been done by thinking of God as male. Several of the liberal denominations have worked carefully to rewrite hymns and retranslate scripture so as to remove the masculine bias. Progress in opening the doors of the church to the leadership of women has been astonishingly rapid. Some feminists have gone much further in rethinking the faith of the church.

However, on this point they have not been as effective, and the effect of neutering God has been disappointing. The worst example was replacing Lord with “Sovereign One.” Better is switching to a biblical term like Creator. But a very important difference between Jesus and the Hebrew Scriptures of his time was the shift from monarchical language to family relations. “Creator” abandons that advance. Sadly, the English word *parent* lacks the relational connotations of “mother” and “father” that are so important here. Perhaps someday we can call God “Mama,” but I think that, despite feminist victories in other ways, that day has not arrived. I have come to the conclusion that at this level, the use of Jesus’ name for God, despite its being male, is an advance over the present situation for feminists as well as the whole church. I will wait no longer.

### 3. The Book

Chapter 1 of this book will talk about “Abba” and about Jesus. How is “Abba” different from “Pater”? What did belief in Abba mean to Jesus? What did Abba call him to do? What led him to his crucifixion? How are we to understand his resurrection, given his understanding of Abba? This direct discussion of Jesus’ life with Abba is, of course, central to the book as a whole. Everything else hinges on this.

I am calling on us to follow Jesus in our thinking about God and our relationship with God. Some may suppose that this is what Christianity has always been about. It is partly true that Christianity has always been about God and our relation to God, but what believers have understood by “God” has very often not been what Jesus understood by “Abba.” That is why I have written this book.

It will be difficult to return to Jesus unless we understand what happened in the church that intends to honor him in the highest of terms. Paul did understand Jesus—remarkably well. Abba was known and worshiped in the communities he established. But although that understanding never disappeared, and the words of Jesus were remembered and have moved many people, Jesus’ distinctive thinking and feeling faded. People brought to the understanding of God what they learned elsewhere—sometimes from the Hebrew Scriptures, sometimes from philosophy. The new ideas took on a life of their own, and from early in the church’s history, beliefs in God derived from sources other than Jesus played a greater role than Jesus in determining the understanding of God.

It is important to understand also how atheism became such an important part of the now-dominant culture. Much of the denial of God was justified, and attempts to defend some of the traditional doctrines that atheists are rejecting are convincing only to those who want very much to be convinced. I am not calling for that kind of

theology. Instead, in chapter 2 and elsewhere I argue that the God that has evoked incredulity and hostility is not Jesus' God. If we affirm Jesus' Abba, the discussion about God is different and highly rewarding.

Critical historical study, including critical study of the Bible, has enabled us in recent times to clarify the various ways that "God" has been understood and also to articulate Jesus' understanding. This makes the thesis of this book possible. What is distinctive in this book (not unique) is the strong appeal to appropriate for ourselves the beliefs of Jesus that came to expression in his name for God: "Abba." Chapter 2 assumes the understanding of Abba developed in chapter 1, and describes how Christians compromised Jesus' own message and replaced it with less defensible ones. It is my hope that when we understand our history, we will rejoice in the renewed possibility of understanding Jesus' Abba and devote ourselves to the God of Jesus.

Chapter 3 tests Jesus' understanding of Abba against our individual experience. The experience I know best is my own; so chapter 3 is the most personal portion of the book. Its difference from most discussions of "religious experience" is that I focus on experience that is not typically considered religious.

These chapters can be read as my confession of faith, and those who find it sufficient may decide to skip to chapter 6. But I and many other believers in today's world have another need. Theologians sometimes call it "apologetic," although it is quite different from what we mean by an apology in ordinary language. It is a matter of giving reasons for holding to our faith in a context in which others think it is false or damaging. In today's context, as described in the first section of the preface and in chapter 2, my confession of faith may be tolerated as an expression of my idiosyncratic opinions. But most cultivated people will dismiss it as just that. They will assume they know that what I consider my experience of God can be explained

psychologically. My apologetic is not apologizing for believing as I do, but rather claiming that those who dismiss my theism are mistaken. My defense is an offense, arguing that the assumptions underlying their modern understanding of reality are mistaken.

I have written about Abba realistically, that is, I have treated Abba as a real factor in Jesus' experience and in mine. Modernity declares that God cannot have such a role. Chapter 4 responds to this challenge with a counterattack on the dominant assumptions of the modern world.

The counterattack has two stages. Rather than begin with a critique of late modernity's a priori exclusion of God as a causal factor in the world, I take up a broader a priori exclusion. Modernity excludes subjects of any kind from playing a causal role in the world, accepting explanations only in terms of objects. Since Abba is a subject, if we adopt the modern position, the issue of Abba's playing a role cannot even arise. The first sections of this chapter argue that the rejection of the causal action of subjects is implausible and does not fit with the evidence.

However, by itself, recognizing the efficacy of subjects does not show that God plays a role. There are many who agree that subjects play a role, but think the only subjects are individual animals, including, of course, members of the human species. The latter sections of chapter 4 show that there are aspects of the public world studied by science that call for a theistic explanation, and that introducing such explanations is not harmful to science.

I noted in section 1 of this preface that the problem for people affected by modern, especially late modern, thinking is not only that of credibility but also that of desirability. Responding to this criticism is another task of apologetics, and I take this up in chapter 5. I hope that it is evident that understanding God as Abba will work against repetition or continuation of the crimes that Christians have

committed in the name of God. But one question stands out. Does calling for devotion to Abba require undoing all the progress we have made in appreciating other great wisdom traditions? I think rather that the more we love Abba the more open we will be to appreciate and learn from others.

I indicated at the beginning of this preface that belief in God has never been more important. This is a historical statement. Faith in the biblical God has always been bound up with history, and today, what we have known as history is profoundly threatened. Our responses thus far have been woefully insufficient at least partly because serious commitment to the whole has faded.

Chapter 6 is about Abba and history. Loving the God of the Bible has been the major basis for developing historical consciousness. Today we need that consciousness as never before. But loving an omnipotent God, or a morally judgmental God, or an exclusivist God, or a God who demands sacrifice in order to forgive, can be harmful. Abba is none of those things. I believe that loving Abba is the best hope for the world's future, and loving Abba means working with Abba.

Abba cares much more about the future of the world than about who believes in him and who does not. We who love Abba will eagerly cooperate with those who do not, if they are working to save the world. But today we may rejoice that the leading voice in the movement to save the world comes from one who loves Abba: Pope Francis. It is my hope that my tiny effort to renew and strengthen the worship of Jesus' Abba will also build support for the great work of Pope Francis.