

The Creed

by Martin Luther

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.

The First Article: Creation

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

The Second Article: Redemption

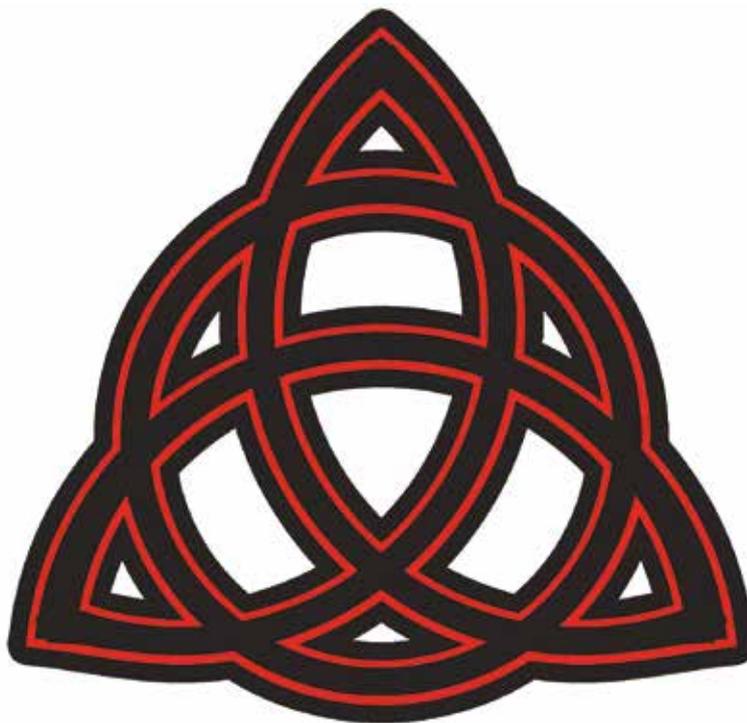
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,

suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell.

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.

What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten



of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness,

innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.

This is most certainly true.

The Third Article: Sanctification

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.

What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He

daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

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We all believe in one true God

by Edward G. Kettner

When Luther outlined the order of the catechism, he noted that first we need to see what God would have us do and leave undone. Then we need to see what provision God has made for us because we have not done or have left undone what God says we should. The commandments clearly give us instruction for our life as we should live it as people of God, and show us that we have not lived up to their standards. From there Luther takes us to the Creed, where we see what God has done to preserve our lives, both on earth and in relationship to Him.

While there are three creeds that have been widely used in the Church down through the ages, the focus in the Catechism is on the Apostles' Creed. This Creed has become the creed used in baptism, the creed which summarizes what the Scriptures teach about the God Who Is, and the God whom we confess as our saving God.

Luther was the first to organize the Creed into three articles. This Trinitarian emphasis sets forth God's three main works on our behalf: creation, redemption, and sanctification. All three persons of the Trinity are involved in all divine works, yet in each of these works one or another member of the Trinity takes centre stage, as it were. And as Luther explains the Creed, he brings out the personal side of faith, as he has us testify that this is all done "for me."

Thus, the first article of the Creed focuses on God the Father, and on the work of creation. God as Father refers first and foremost to His place within the Godhead, yet we are also told that God gives us the blessings of this earthly life out of "fatherly divine goodness and mercy," showing that God has a fatherly relationship to all of creation. Luther reminds us that because God has given us all the

blessings of this earthly life without any merit or worthiness in us, it is our duty to "thank, praise, serve, and obey Him." This article calls us back to the commandments, reminding us of their importance, but at the same time reminding us how far we fall short in our thanks, praise, service, and obedience.

The second article highlights the centerpiece of our faith, the person and work of Christ "for me." Jesus is "my Lord," because he has "redeemed me." The law shows me to be a "lost



The crucifixion of Christ. Woodcut from the 1558 edition of Luther's Small Catechism.

and condemned sinner," but Christ has redeemed me with His "holy, precious blood" and His "innocent suffering and death," to make me His own. So Jesus' Lordship comes about because He has redeemed me. We don't choose to make Him our Lord; He has made Himself our Lord. In so doing we receive life in "everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness."

The third article points out that the Holy Spirit brings the blessings of Christ to me and transforms me through the Gospel as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies me, making

me a member of the Church, forgiving me my sins, and on the Last Day raising me from the dead and giving me eternal life along with all believers in Christ. Note how Luther takes us through each statement of this article and weaves it together, showing the fullness of God's work for us.

In all these articles, Luther leads each of us who has been created, redeemed, and sanctified by the Triune God, to boldly and loudly confess, "This is most certainly true!" This is a declaration of our trust in this God and in His promises to us. It is in fact the meaning of that word "Amen!"

The creeds of the church were developed and honed over the first centuries after Christ's ascension, as the Church saw how important it is to succinctly declare the faith to itself and to the world. The Church has confessed the creeds as we have them for nearly a millennium and a half, putting God's words into our mouths to reinforce the faith in our hearts.

Yet from time to time some have tried to reinvent the creeds to bring the church "up to date," to make it more "relevant" or to try something new in the name of "creativity." These attempts always fall short, whether by putting the focus on the individual and his/her believing rather than on the work that God has done "for me"; or by abandoning the precision of the creeds in favor of expressing faith in some amorphous deity that has done something for us but which is never explicitly stated.

By God's grace, the Christian faith has been preserved and confessed by the Church with these creeds, and, through this, God has preserved His Church. Why would we want or need anything else than this?

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